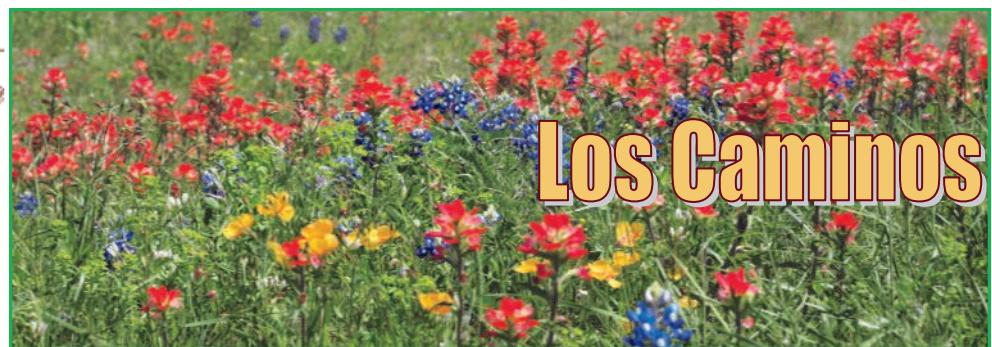


T E X A S



The Texas Master Naturalist program activities are coordinated by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. Texas Master Naturalist and Extension programs serve all people regardless of socio-economic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.



Celebrating and sharing our experiences along "the roads" we take through nature.

Award Winning Newsletter of the El Camino Real Chapter

Milam County Texas Master Naturalist Spring 2015

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Did You Know?

What is the largest land based arthropod?

See last page for the answer.

What's the BUZZ?

by Barbara Cromwell

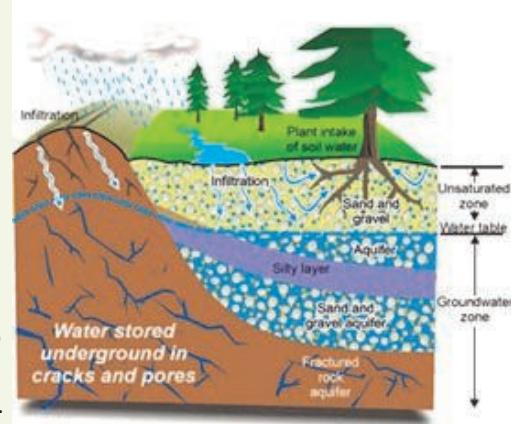
The Situation of Water in Texas

A statement I've heard a lot lately is "the rain is interfering with our plans" but "I'm not complaining about the rain" is how those statements almost always end. We are all grateful for the rainfall as of late.

What concerns me is that the influx of water in Milam County may make us complacent about the shortage of water in Texas statewide. According to the Texas Water Development Board in a report released February 16, 2015, 39% of the state is still currently in a moderate to exceptional drought. On March 9, 2015, Gov. Greg Abbot renewed

the Emergency Disaster Proclamation certifying, "Exceptional drought conditions pose a threat of imminent disaster in specified counties in Texas." Milam is not one of those counties. Most of them are west and north of Milam County. So why worry? Four of the five largest cities in Texas are in those regions; Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, and Ft. Worth. Where will they get water? The competition for water is intense.

As drought, climate change, emerging technologies and population growth continues across the state, the issue of access to wa-



ter will continue to be at the forefront in the future. In the half-century from 1913 to 1963, Texas added just fewer than 6 million residents. In the 50 years following it grew by 16 million and by 2 more million the past 4 years. Great for the economy, but it is easy to see that the amount of water available per person is on the way down, and fast. Since the Industrial Revolution began around 1750, human activities have contributed substantially to climate change. New technologies such as the explosion of hydraulic fracturing as a way to crack open difficult to obtain shale deposits of oil and gas under

Texas has further stressed our state's freshwater supplies, as the water is a crucial part of the fracking fluid. Greenhouse gas emissions such as CO₂ and other heat-trapping gases have increased the greenhouse effect and caused the Earth's surface temperature to rise. The primary human activity creating greenhouse gas emissions is from the burning of fossil fuels. According to the Environment America Research and Policy Center, Texas and Florida are the two states that have had the greatest increase in the emission of fossil

(Continued on page 2)

fuels. If carbon emissions in Texas continue on their present course, the number of annual days over 100°F could almost quadruple by mid-century in Texas, according to the National Climate Assessment recently put out by the federal government. All of these factors continue to contribute to the "situation of water" in Texas.

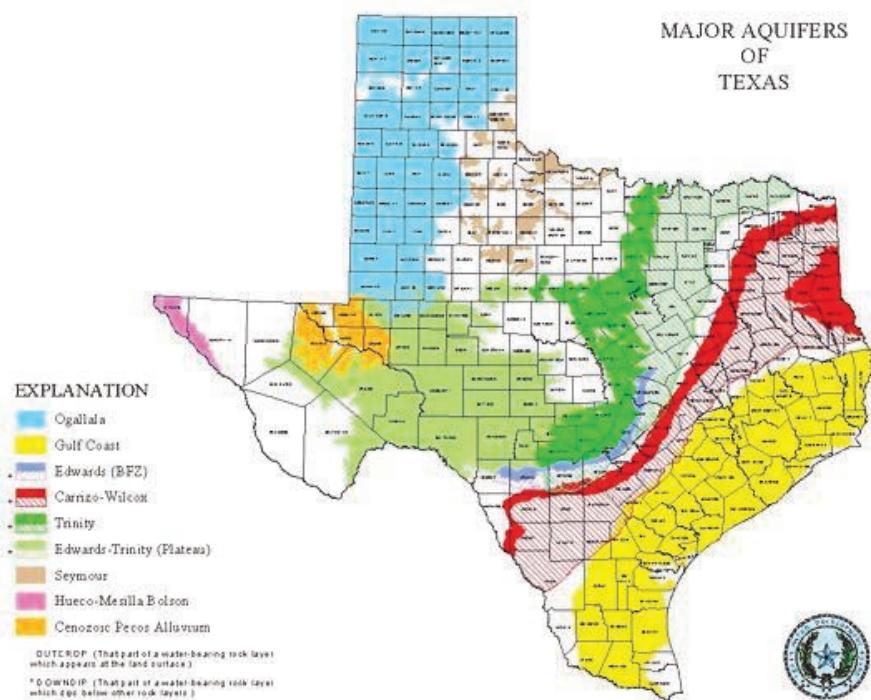
In Texas, there are two principal responses to the problem: use less water and find more water. It is this pursuit of water that may affect Milam County. Many cities large and small are on the hunt for water, and ground water is the target. In Texas, water rights depend on whether the water is groundwater or surface water. Generally, Texas groundwater belongs to the landowner. Groundwater is governed by the "rule of capture," which grants landowners the right to capture the water beneath their property. The landowners do not own the water but have a right to pump and capture whatever water is available, regardless of the effects of that pumping on neighboring wells. Surface water, on the other hand, belongs to the state of Texas. A landowner only with the state's permission can use it. Unlike the surface water in rivers and lakes, government access to groundwater in Texas is controlled by a network of groundwater conservation districts (GCDs). GDCs were first created in Texas in 1949, when the Legislature passed a law creating a process for designating groundwater management areas and authorizing the creation of special underground water conservation districts. Their purpose is to maintain a balance between protecting the rights of private landowners and the responsibility to protect the water resource. Texas is further divided into Groundwater Management Areas (GMA's). These are regions that are experiencing - or are expected to experience within the next 25 years - critical groundwater problems, such as: surface or groundwater shortages; land subsidence; and contamination of groundwater. Milam County belongs to GMA 12.

Despite the existence of these water districts and that in 2013 Texas voters approved a \$2 billion state water bond, the scramble for groundwater is revealing gaps in Texas water laws, which threaten to undermine groundwater's reliability and exacerbate water shortages in rivers. When one source dries up or is claimed, cities hunt elsewhere for new supplies that will compensate for the loss. The newest reports show that according to LCRA data (a region very near to Milam County), the amount of water flowing into the authority's six Highland Lakes reservoirs during the last seven years is shockingly low: 60% less than the worst period of the landmark drought from 1950 to 1956. The LCRA reservoirs supply more

than 1 million people and 91,500 acres of farmland, as well as the South Texas nuclear power plant in Matagorda County on the Gulf Coast. Austin is on the hunt and it's coming to surrounding counties to look for water. A heated debate is taking place in Hays County, south of Austin, for example, over a developer's plan to tap an unregulated area of the Trinity Aquifer to supply growing suburbs. LCRA entered into a contract with Alcoa in 2012 to buy their land and all their water and power rights. That deal fell through but negotiations are underway again. Also, there are attempts by End Op, LP to grab water resources from GMA 12 (Groundwater Management Area 12 — Bastrop, Brazos, Burleson, Falls, Fayette, Freestone, Lee, Leon, Limestone, Madison, Milam, Navarro, Robertson and Williamson counties) for the IH-35 growth corridor from Hays to Bexar counties.

The transportation of groundwater will cost millions of dollars in pipes and permits. This water will require its own water treatment facilities as it creates a change in method of treatment with the difference in the mineral compositions of the water. More importantly the groundwater districts will be in conflict with the landowners who claim rights to pump and sell water beneath their land. There was a meeting at the Milano Civic Center earlier this year. I didn't know about it until it was over; hopefully there will be more. We need to stay abreast of the "situation of water in Milam County" and know where our water is going.

[Editor note: A major issue is that hundreds of landowners are selling their water rights to these developers at some pretty good prices, which is their right under current law. This leaves neighboring landowners and all of us with a potentially serious problem. When will your well run dry?]



What's in the Water?

By John Pruett

The previous riparian installments of this column dealt with the biology and physical structure of the riparian ecosystem. In this issue I will discuss past and present blunders by man that threaten this marvelous resource. When I was a child I would sit on the riverbank and dream. Dream about how long this river has been flowing through Milam County. Thinking that a Native American probably sat in the same place thinking the same thing. The tune playing in my head was always "Ol' Man River" (music Jerome Kern, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, in 1927 for the musical Show Boat). Like most songs, all I knew from memory was the chorus "Ol' Man River, that Ol' Man River, He must know somepin', but he don't say nothin', He just keeps rollin', he keeps on rollin' along".

The San Gabriel River and the Little River have in fact been rolling along in Milam County for some time. Due to the more recent (geologic time) weather cycles for our part of Texas, predictable droughts have caused at least the flow of the San Gabriel to be intermittent. During my lifetime I remember that type event in the extreme drought of the early 1950's. Otherwise, the flow has remained steady throughout my life, and I presume eons before. However, beginning in the twentieth century through the lack of public understanding of this fragile resource, arrogant engineering, and growing greed for resources, our surface waters, specifically our rivers are severely threatened.

There are many examples of man-made ecological disasters associated with rivers. I will not address the horrendous sto-

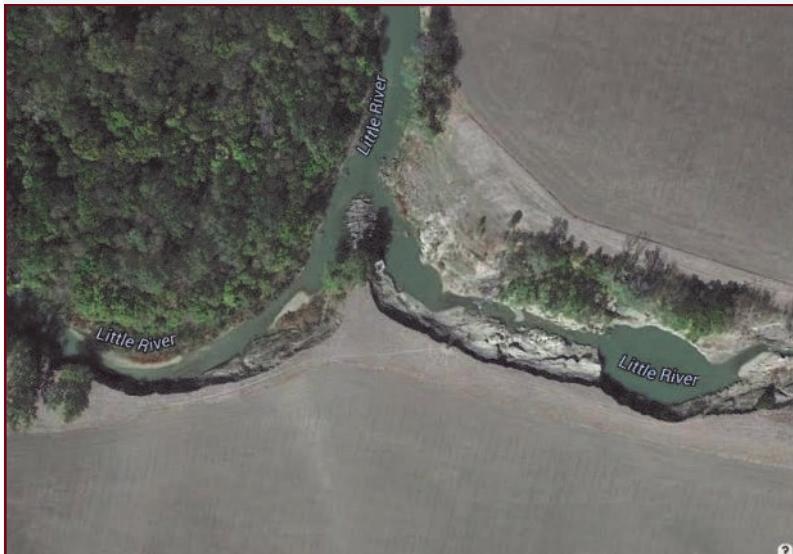
ries of pollution, whereby our rivers have been used for all types of waste disposal. Rather I will limit my comments to engineering and farming decisions that have led to erosion problems, and the demand for groundwater that threatens the alluvial aquifers and the very flow of the river.

In the 1920's on the North Sulphur River in East Texas the river meandered through a swampy drainage system. As I mentioned in a previous issue this meandering in effect slows down the flow of water reducing erosion. Well, people wanted to reclaim

this riparian, wetland ecosystem, for farming. So they had the river dredged to reduce the meandering distance to one-half, by making a straight streambed. It was dredged 20 foot wide and 10 foot deep. Of course the flow of water was increased and during periods of flood, erosion ensued. The channel is now 200-300 foot wide in some locations. It is estimated that 30 million tons of topsoil has been lost to the erosion.

Closer to home, Gene H. Linn in a commentary in the Farmer Stockman talked about the loss of Milam county bottomland. Ageless flooding on the rivers of Milam County accounted for the silt enrichment of bottomland. These bottomlands were great for agriculture, but the frequent and uncontrolled flooding created problems for agricultural production. So the Belton and Stillhouse reservoirs were created for flood control and irrigation resources in support of agricultural interest. However, in the ensuing years the agricultural interest was supplanted by municipal, industrial, and recreational interest. In 1973, the conservation pool level of Belton Reservoir was raised 25 feet. This reduced the available storage for floodwaters forcing the rapid and prolonged release of water from the dam to get the lake back down to the conservation level. The result has been devastating losses of bottomland due to erosion. This is quite visible as one floats the river and notices the steep eroded banks and the rate at which trees have fallen in the river. It also makes the river less accessible to man and livestock.

Another serious erosion threat to the river is created when farmers clear and cultivate right next to the river. With the elimination of the trees and vegetation along the riparian zone there is nothing left to hold the soil, and erosion of valuable land is unavoidable. These man-made erosion threats, which destroy the valuable riparian zone are indeed significant, but in time repair-



ble. The river will continue to meander and find its course. The plants will recover in time. However, the pumping of groundwater poises the most significant irreversible problem.

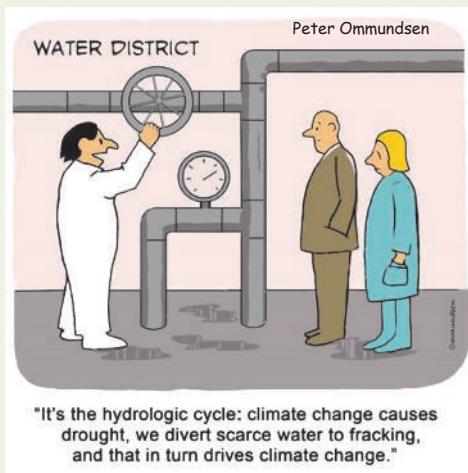
The environmental impact that the pumping of groundwater has on surface water is rarely discussed in regulatory meetings that I have attended. As suggested by Robert Glennon, that is because most states, and Texas water law does not recognize the hydrologic connectivity between surface waters, which are regulated by river authorities, and groundwater, which now are regulated by groundwater conservation districts. Most would agree that intense removal of groundwater over time will have a significant impact upon seeps, springs, stream flow, stream temperature, and inevitably the flora and fauna of the riparian ecosystem. I would suggest Robert Glennon's book, "Water Follies: groundwater pumping and the fate of America's fresh waters", for a thoughtful presentation of these issues and their consequences.

What will save the flow of surface water and preserve our ageless streams, and keep them rollin' along? As municipal, and industrial demands upon water increase, and as water becomes scarcer, water previously considered a matter of public good, is rapidly becoming a commodity to be exploited. Obviously we need to change that paradigm. However, do we have

the political will to throttle our current economic model of unsustainable development? Before that economic model pushes us to environmental disaster, and then what? Only time will tell. We the people need to seriously examine the reality of the situation. We need to be careful of the testimony of those who will economically benefit from water issues when they assure us that everything will be all right. In the words of Rachael Carson, "Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species - man - acquired significant power to alter the nature of this world".

References:

1. Mark Harlett, July 15, 2013. North Sulphur Project had Unintended Results. <http://ketr.org/north-sulphur-project-had-unintended-results>.
2. Gene H. Linn, January 2009. Texas' Little River Bottomland Vanishing. Letters and Opinions. www.TheFarmerStockman.com.
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Prairie Tracks

By Katherine Bedrich



Save the Frog Day --- April 25, 2015

When I was in Jr. High, I had a wonderful art teacher. She taught us many different aspects of art. We designed our own patterns to cut into leather, we pounded and shaped clay bowls, we drew pastel portraits of each other and we learned about the importance of the "keystone" in architecture.

The keystone is the top stone in an arch. It is the essential part on which the other stones depend. Without the keystone, the arch would be weak, unstable and eventually fall.

Within nature there are keystone species. Frogs are one of those species.

Frogs are among the oldest living creatures on our planet. They are a critical link in the food chain. They feed on algae, plants and insects. Without frogs, mosquitoes and other insects would be out of control. Snakes, alligators and birds rely on frogs as a food source.

Remove this 'keystone' and the delicate balanced ecosystem will fall.

And for another opinion on the subject from someone just a little bit younger than me, here's a poem I found and got permission to re-publish:

Let's talk about frog dissections

"To a Seventh-Grade Heart Breaker"

A new poem by the 2014 SAVE THE FROGS! Poetry Contest Grand Prize Winner, Kiana Shurkin, age 23.

You run the scalpel over my chest
Watch in wonder as my heartbeats slow, then cease
Then you set my heart aside
And proceed to disassemble me
Piece by tiny piece

Because the teachers told you
That your life's worth more than mine
And you will get an F
If you don't perform this crime

Because you are too curious
And CGI* won't do
Nor a model of a frog
To substitute for true

Because to change is hard
And often very slow
And this is how it's always done
Because my kind seems low

No matter that I sing at night
Or eat the bugs that bite

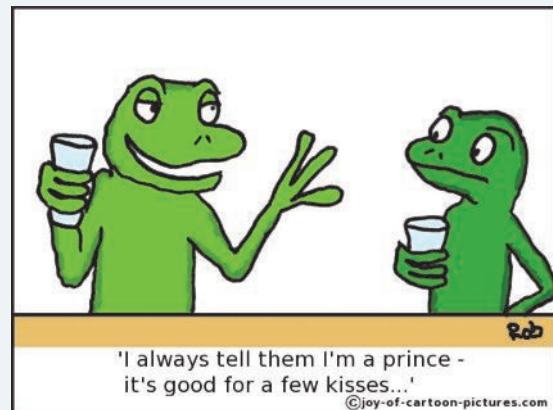
No matter that I matter, too
And that this isn't right

You run the scalpel over my chest
Watch in wonder as my heartbeats slow, then cease
Then you set my heart aside
And proceed to disassemble me
Piece by tiny piece.

*CGI- short for "computer generated imagery". Some schools use computer software to replace live frog dissections with videos and interactive animations from which students can learn without harming any real creatures.

Save the Frogs Day – April 25, 2015

<http://savethefrogs.com/day/>



'I always tell them I'm a prince -
it's good for a few kisses...'

©joy-of-cartoon-pictures.com

Sweet's Nature Shenanigans

By Sheri Sweet

OK, so I'm walking across the gravel driveway and suddenly something hits my foot. I looked down and this creature is shrieking, "PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE!" and flopping around on the ground and going away from me. Uh, oh! I obviously must be extremely close to baby birds or eggs! It's a Killdeer, the master of deceit! *Charadrius vociferous* is a distinctive bird, about 10" long, with a brown back and head, a white chest and tummy, with two black bands below its neck and two black bands along the sides of its face. There is also an orange area on the upper tail and lower back when its wings are spread and an orange eye-ring. It is the largest member of the ringed plover family.

Although my research indicates that they never form large flocks, there have been a couple of dozen of them around our place here outside of Lexington! They like open ground, gravel roads, and roof-tops that are graveled. They forage on short grass fields, bare dirt, and other open areas. They eat mainly insects. In populated areas, they will forage at night in parking lots that are lighted. I had wondered why I could hear the Killdeers calling at night. Now I know it is because we have a light on our pole in the yard!

The Killdeer's range is across the Western Hemisphere, from Canada in the north during the summer, to Central America and as far south as Peru in the winter. They are considered shore birds, but frequently live far away from water! Its nest is a scratched-out depression fringed with rocks and grass. They generally lay from 3 to 5 beige eggs heavily speckled with black, which camouflages them as stones and

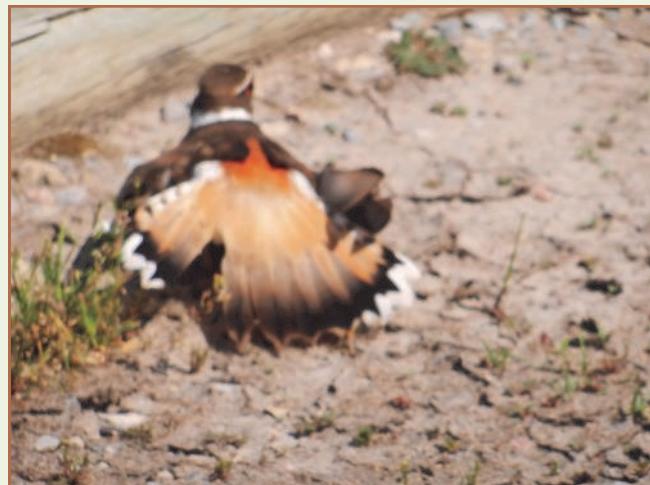


rocks. Killdeer hatchlings are precocial, being able to see and run within 5 minutes of breaking out of their egg.

From experience, I've noted that the babies are delightfully cute miniature replicas of their parents, without a whole lot

of sense! The babies get confused easily and can't decide which way to run to get out of the way!

They are named after their call, "killdeer". If the killdeer feel threatened, it will display the "broken-wing action", dragging its wing on the ground and flopping along, shrieking frantically. A predator then thinks it is easy prey and follows after it. If the parent bird sees that the predator is not fol-



lowing it, then it comes closer and gets louder until it has the predator's attention. Once the bird has led the predator to a safe distance, it magically "heals" its broken wing and flies away!

I've included a few pictures I took of this killdeer, its eggs, and its injured actions.

My sources were Wikipedia; The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America; The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America; and Golden - A Guide to Field Identification Birds of North America.



Monarchs and Wildflowers

by Debbie Harris



On March 1st, our chapter members and guests had a unique opportunity to learn how to create their own masterpiece! Using acrylic paint on a 20" x 20" canvas, we each created a Monarch & Wildflowers in Nature painting.

We were led by the talented Heidi Easley from Texas Art and Soul. Her words were "Thanks so much for painting with me today! Y'all are so creative!" Her web site is www.texasartandsoul.com and she also has a Facebook page by that name.

These group pictures show some of the beautiful creations by these talented nature lovers.

[Editor note: We tried to get folks to send in some photos of their paintings so you could see them in better detail, but were not successful, so I have included a photo of Debbie's.]



"Lucy's Wonderings"

by Lucy Coward

Have you ever wondered where a spider keeps all that silk that it uses when it wraps its food? After it wraps its meal and makes an egg sack, the spider does not last long enough to see the babies born. The spiders die.

You see this soft animal who looks cuddly and then when you get up close you see it's black and white, and one of the things that then comes to mind is how did that sweet soft animal get such a bad rap—to



Wikipedia



Wikipedia

stink so bad it burns your eyes. Yes, we are talking about a skunk.

On a clear night, back in the distance from out of nowhere you hear this lonesome cry and it puts the hair on the back of your neck going up. You listen and it's a pack of coyotes moving through the night. It is such a lonely sound that you just have to stop and listen to them until the end.



Christopher Bruno

Earth Day at the Library

By Katherine Bedrich



I was asked if our chapter could contribute to the Earth Day recognition at the Cameron Public Library. I had some members send in some of their favorite nature photos for posting, seen here in the display setup by Chris Wilson, one of their librarians (but who was not there that day). Marie Christopher, another librarian, is in this picture with me.

During their Weekly Story Time for the kids, they asked me to speak about Earth Day and I did that and told the group about the importance of frogs. This photo includes Kim Wise, another librarian, Marie and me.



Wikipedia



New Hours Reporting System

by Don Travis

By the time you'll be reading this, our chapter will have started logging our volunteer and advanced training hours via a new online web based system called Volunteer Management System (VMS). And it's goodbye to our old Windows/XP based system that did serve us well for many years.

So why are we doing this?

While the hours we log do gain us individual recognition by the way of nice nature themed pins and certificates for milestones including even a letter signed by the President after 4000 hours of service, that is only one reason. The real reason is that our TMN Program is funded by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Division (TPWD) and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Their funding comes from a couple major sources—one being our legislature which is always looking for ways to cut money from various budgets to balance the state budget, and the other from various organizations that provide grant money to help fund projects they support. It is these organizations that are (rightfully) looking very carefully at those who ask for money and demand to see details behind their efforts and actually perform audits of volunteer hour records. There is also some level of funding to TPWD (not necessarily TMN) based on hunting and fishing licenses, themed license plates and others.

In order for us to show our legislature how much good we do in various areas, and to compete with many others also asking for grant funding, we need to have our act together in terms of proving how much effort we are expending on the areas in which they are interested. Our and other chapter's past processes of monthly or so emails or hand written logs of summarized hours is not what they want to see. They expect to see hours entered under direct authority of the individuals performing the work, and on a daily log not monthly or longer basis of precision. This new online system accomplishes both, as well as providing a much more centralized and consistent way of pulling needed reports from all the chapters instead of asking them to create them (from a variety of different processes).

So what does this mean for me?

It means being trained how to use the system, which is pretty basic although it is different from what you were used to. And it means keeping track of your hours on a daily log basis, even if you actually only sign in and enter them once a week or so. As before, all activities and advance training you take part in where there is a sign in sheet, those hours will be submitted for you. You will also be able to track your total hours submitted and approved for any timeframe you wish, to keep up with your progress towards certifications and milestones. So that's about it.

I know some of us nature lovers don't get really excited

about the pins and milestones, and everyone understands that, but it is important to help all of us in the Texas Master Naturalist program by getting trained and doing this on a regular basis. Once you get started it is not that big a deal.

You can find more information about this on our webpage at <http://txmn.org/elcamino/volunteers/volunteer-hours-reporting/>. Or contact Cindy Bolch or "yours truly".



Search ID: pknn132
"Hello, technical support?
Which one is the 'any key'?"



A New Plant is Discovered

By Genie Lindberg

New Plant Discovered in Valentine, Texas *Solanum cordicitum S. Stern*

The plant, named *Solanum cordicitum S. Stern*, (pronounced So-lay-num core-duh-SEE-tum) was discovered by botanists conducting field research near the community of Valentine, Texas (pop. 134, about 60 miles west of Alpine) in November of 2013. This is the first time the commonly misidentified plant has been found since 1990, providing botanists an opportunity to properly identify its unique characteristics. A study identifying it as a new species was published in the August, 2014 issue of the Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas. Two previous examples of the plant were discovered in 1974 and 1990, but those plants were repeatedly misidentified over the years as members of several different species. The first two were found in West Texas but were incorrectly identified until now. The specimen found in 1974 is at the University of Texas at El Paso. The 1990 specimen is at the University of Texas at Austin.

Texas botanist Jeffrey Keeling came across the wilted plant after scouring a 10 acre plot of land in the Valentine area. He searched at least 8 hours a day for 10 days. Finally, at the end of his last day he discovered the plant for which he was searching. After collecting the specimen, Keeling pressed and mounted it, then sent it to botanist Stephen Stern at Colorado Mesa University. Another botanist and Biology Professor Lynn Bohs at the University of Utah is also a member of the study. She says *Solanum cordicitum S. Stern* was named in

honor of the town where it was found. *Cordicitum* is derived from *cordicitus*, Latin for "from the heart," but is altered to *cordicitum* because it must end with the same syllable as *Solanum* to comply with naming rules. The plant has no common name. The derivation of *Solanum* is unknown, but may be from *sol* for sun or from *solamen* for consolation, comforting or quieting. Professor Stern is the lead researcher in this study and thus had the option of adding his name to the species.



Solanum cordicitum S. Stern is a gangly looking plant that grows only to about 14 inches. It is hairy like its closest relative, the eggplant, but it is covered with thick spines and is thought to be poisonous to humans and animals alike. It is an annual. Because it blossoms once and dies it has been hard to find. The new species belongs to the genus *Solanum*, which includes 1,500 species of mostly poisonous plants, including nightshades. But it also includes gardener favorites - tomatoes, potatoes, chili peppers and eggplants.

Numerous plant species are discovered each year. What makes this discovery so interesting is that it is a new species from the United States (most new discoveries are from the tropics) and that the plant appears to have a very restricted range and be relatively rare within

that range.

The botanists mentioned above say the discovery of a new plant species is always significant in terms of finding something we didn't think was there before. The discovery of *Solanum cordicitum S. Stern* provides insight to the range and adaptability of that species. To have a greater knowledge in

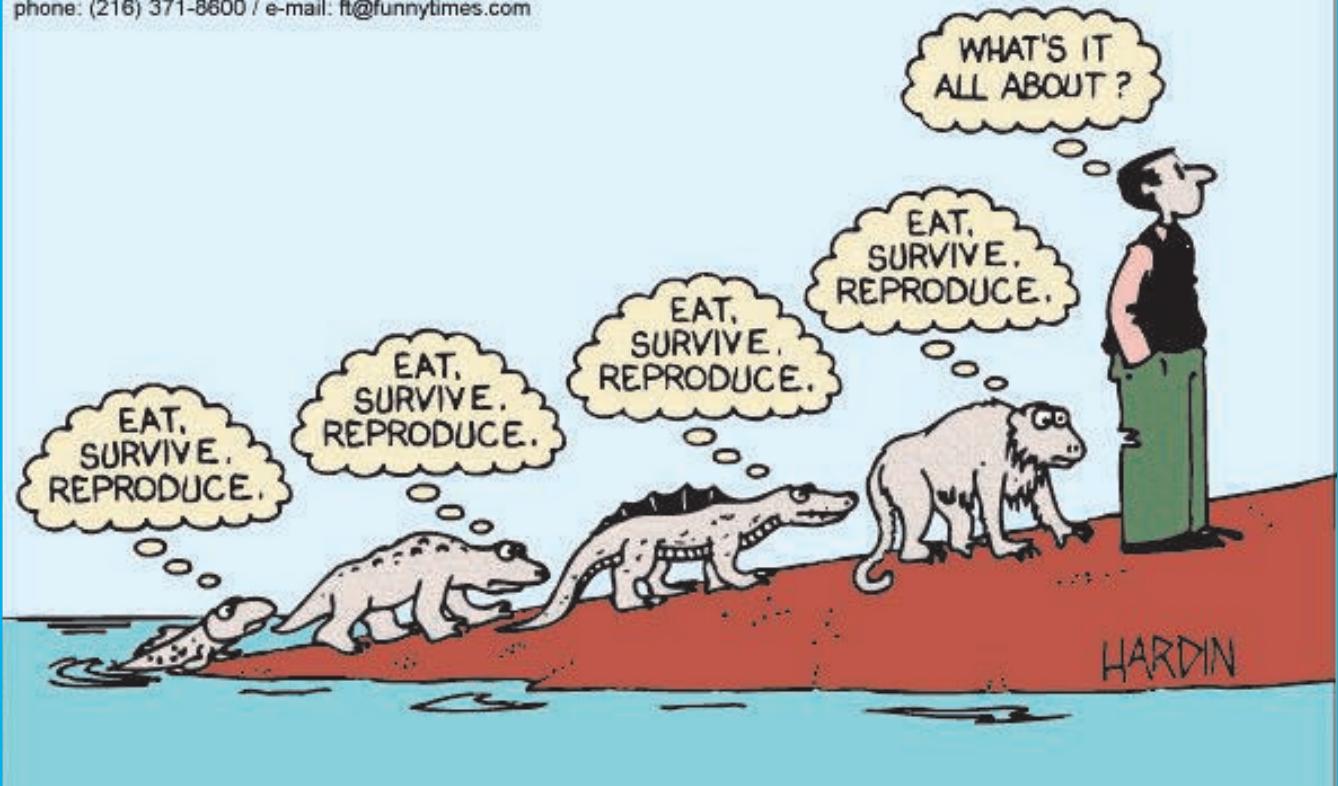
terms of distribution and adaptability in this part of the world is significant. West Texas can be an inhospitable place to live.

This thorny "pathetic" specimen of *Solanum cordicitum S. Stern* was found in Valentine, Texas on Boyd Elder's property

On Natural Selection

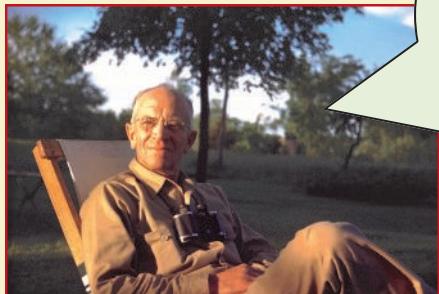
By Don Travis

Reprinted from The Funny Times / PO Box 18530 / Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
phone: (216) 371-8600 / e-mail: ft@funnytimes.com



Aldo Leopold Says:

"Conservation will ultimately boil down to rewarding the private landowner who conserves the public interest."



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Los Caminos is a quarterly publication of the "El Camino Real Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists", a 501(c)(3) nonprofit volunteer educational organization.

Certifications, Etc. By Dorothy Mayer

New since the Winter 2015 newsletter are in this color.

New Member 2014/15 Class Certifications: Darlene Anglen, Sheri Sweet, Wesley Sweet, Nancy Adcock, Clyde Adcock, Mini Pesl, **Debbie Rolan and Kimberly Westbook**

2015 Re-Certifications (Bluebonnet pin). **Lucy Coward, Cindy Bolch, Don Travis, Dorothy Mayer, Katherine Bedrich, Linda Jo Conn, Debbie Harris, Donna Lewis, Ann Collins, Sheri Sweet, Wesley Sweet, and Mini Pesl**



Highest Lifetime-to-date Milestone Achievement Levels earned by current members as of March 2015 include:

5000 Hours—Katherine Bedrich

4000 Hour Presidential Award—Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch

2500 Hours—Don Travis, Ann Collins, Donna Lewis, and Debbie Harris.

1000 Hours—Paula Engelhardt, Donna Lewis, Sue Taylor, Lucy Coward, Dorothy Mayer and Phyllis Shuffield.

500 Hours—Anne Barr, Barbara Cromwell, Linda Jo Conn and John Pruett.

250 Hours—Lucile Estell, Shawn Walton, Vivian Dixon, Sandra Dworaczyk, Cindy McDaniels, Janice Johnson, Gary McDaniels, Kim Summers, Rusty Thomas, Cindy Travis, Sherry Colley, Kathy Lester, Sheri Sweet, Wesley Sweet and Pam Neely.

Our March 2015 Year-to-Date and Total Accumulated hours for Advanced Training are: **300 and 5,969** respectively. Our March 2015 Year-to-Date and Total Accumulated hours for Volunteer Events are: **1764 and 47,997** respectively.

Congratulations to All

Did You Know?

What is the largest land based arthropod?



With the exalted title of the largest land based arthropod in the world, it's a wonder that the Giant Coconut Crab doesn't get more press than it does. These animals are generally nocturnal and live in many coastal and forest regions of Indo-Pacific islands. Some of its "island names" are the Robber Crab or Palm Thief because of its reported habit of taking anything it can use, specifically shiny items. But they get their common name from their ability to climb Coconut Palm trees, clip off the Coconuts, return to the ground, peel the husk from the coconut, and hammer them open by dropping it repeatedly on rocks, or banging them open with their large claws. The rest of their diet is primarily fleshy fruits, nuts and seeds. Though they are omnivores and will consume other items as well. Coconut crabs have a body length of about 16 inches, a leg span of 3 feet, and can weigh up to 9 pounds. Though there are accounts of them reaching upwards of 6 feet across and weighing up to 30 pounds. They can also live more than 30 years. Coconut Crabs can't swim, even smaller crabs drown in water, though they require water to survive.

Though an adolescent has many predators, the only danger to a fully grown Coconut Crab are human beings. As the crab is a delicacy as well as an aphrodisiac in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Particularly if the eggs can be harvested from inside the female Coconut Crab. [Excerpted article and photo from Mathew Crawford, via Hubpages.com]