

GOOD WATER MASTER NATURALIST



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RIPPLES

Williamson County

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT, WAYNE RHODEN

Welcome to 2013. As your new president I wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year. First I want to thank all of the officers and chairpersons who served in 2012. For a young chapter we have come a long way. We have a new year to show our community how we can serve it with our volunteer efforts. I challenge all of you to do more to support our chapter this year. We have about 38 members, certified and non-certified, and many projects we have committed to staff with our volunteers. We may need to reevaluate some projects if we do not have leaders and volunteers to staff them. Please *beat the bushes* so we can fill the class starting on March 6th with willing eager volunteers to contribute to the conservation and education of our county. We hope for 30 students who are really interested in outreach and public education. Thanks to members who graciously serve as chairpersons and those new to the board who have come forward to help make GWMN one of the best chapters in the state. Monthly meetings will continue to be held on the 4th Thursday of each month except for November and December when holidays necessitates adjustments. We are looking for exciting speakers for advanced training; send suggestions to Larry Swift, the new Vice President. Thanks to Winnie Bowen for chairing the Communications Committee and will be editor of the newsletter. Let her know of any newsworthy articles. Our Junior M N Program is going strong and looking to expand this year. I look forward to having a great year and hope to see you at our monthly meetings and at volunteer activities this year.

NEW OFFICERS FOR 2013

New officers for 2013 were elected at the December meeting. To lead us next year will be Wayne Rhoden, President; Larry Swift, VP; Judith Currier, Secretary, and Nancy Phillips, Treasurer. Other board members include: MaryAnn Melton, Youth Education and AT coordinator; Winnie Bowen, Newsletter; Sterlin Barton, volunteer hours, Ben Marrou, membership; Judy Grimes, outreach; Pam Goolsby, class recorder; Gail McAdoo, historian; Al Kirchner, state rep; Bonnie, Betty and Pat, hospitality. Donna Howard and Ray Waherbrock, members at large.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Berry Springs Trail Day	1/21
BSP Plant Survey NPSOT	1/21
January chapter meeting	1/24
Williamson Audubon	2/18
Bastrop tree planting check with Heather Brewer	
B Springs spring cleanup	3/2
Archeology days	3/22/23

NOW U KNOW

You will never see a cougar, but he will see you.

Male bumblebees emerge from unfertilized eggs, females from fertilized eggs.

YOUTH EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MaryAnn Melton, chair

The Good Water Chapter Youth Education Committee had its first meeting on November 29, 2011 with seven members, and grew to seventeen members. (10 active, 7 for special projects.)

Our first programming began with a two-hour Spring Break Camp and five Summer Camp sessions for the Georgetown Rec Cen. Topics were hawks and owls, butterflies, snakes, bats, birds, and seed balls with 1-3rd graders and 4-6th graders.

We began planning a nine-month Junior Master Naturalist program to begin in September 2012 at the Georgetown Rec Cen. The program started with 8 participants. The first field trip to Berry Springs to monitor amphibians was a huge success.

Eager to take advantage of any opportunity to teach children about nature Winnie, MaryAnn, David and Angelika assisted with the Cub Scout Day Camp in June. MaryAnn and Sterlin presented bat presentations at two Round Rock schools. Sterlin has been active in the angler education program.

2013 promises to be an even busier year with community youth.

POLLINATOR GARDEN ----- A COOPERATIVE EFFORT

By Sterlin Barton

The newest public service project of the Good Water Master Naturalists has been the establishment of a "pollinator garden" at the Williamson County landfill, located on county land between Hutto and Jonah off FM 1660. This was in response to a request from County Judge Dan Gattis.

The goal was to use native plants that once established basically maintain themselves with minimal watering. GWMN teamed up with NPSOT in discussions for design. Some evergreen plants were essential for the garden not to look barren during winter. We selected plants for bloom and color most of the year. Bluebonnets, our state flower, and varieties of milkweed, the host plant for Monarchs, our state butterfly were a must.

The Waste Management Company, operators of the landfill, scraped the ground removing the uppermost surface before rebuilding the berm with good quality soil. Waste Management also paid for plant materials. The elevated and tapered oval mound has been sown with wildflower seeds appropriate for Texas. A large selection of salvias and native grasses was recently planted. In the spring a post supported screen will be added to the east end of the berm to support coral honeysuckles.

Waste Management will add the pollinator garden to school tours of the landfill. We will provide a manual of notes on the various plants for the tour leader's use. We plan to install a couple of bee blocks for native bees in the spring. We aim to obtain certification from Texas Parks and Wildlife and the National Wildlife Federation as a native habitat.

On planting day, when plants had blossoms, four different species of butterflies were identified. Other days, additional butterflies and at least one solitary bee have been seen.

Work days will be scheduled each spring and fall for weeding, pruning, and replacement of mulch. We are excited about this work in progress which will be a real community asset.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

BURROWING OWL

By Jim Hailey

This bird can be found in open fields of the Granger area in winter. This year three established territories were located --one near the intersection of CR 359 & 360, another on CR 347 and one on Alligator Road in Bell County.

These small owls prefer open, grassy, dry and sparsely vegetated areas, even desert habitat. In central Texas, they like open farmland in the Granger area. They live in burrows usually constructed by other mammals or in old, empty farm buildings. They are often found in proximity to other species of birds live---Horned Larks who prefer similar surroundings.

Burrowing Owls inhabit the western regions of the United States and southern Provinces of Canada. Generally they breed on the Great Plains, usually near Prairie Dog towns. Rarely found west of mountain ranges in western states, they migrate to warmer regions to winter

Frequently found on the ground, they are slightly larger than Eastern Screech-Owls but smaller than Barn Owls. These small, compact owls are often referred to as a “potato” or “loaf of bread” because of their posture. Long, featherless legs give the appearance that the birds are larger than they are. Bright piercing, yellow eyes and their crouched position provide a sinister appearance. Large white spots liberally spread over their brown body, and they are heavily barred below a dark chest.

Although often sighted atop a pile of rocks, on riprap, or a fence post, they really prefer to be on the ground. Both diurnal and nocturnal feeders, they primarily feed on small mammals, but can be seen darting into the air to snatch insects. Solitary by nature but in breeding season can be found in colonies near their principal food source—Prairie Dogs. When nervous they appear to bounce up and down in a nervous twitch and fly to their burrow to disappear when threatened. This “cutie” may be seen now to March before heading back to their breeding grounds.



FLOWER OF THE MONTH



SALVIA GREGGII

By Armand Hufault

Salvia Greggii is described as *Autumn Sage* because of its aromatic foliage and its major bloom in the fall. Salvia Greggii is a major food source for hummingbirds and butterflies. Deer generally leave Salvia Greggii alone because of its aromatic offerings.

Salvia Greggii, a much-branched perennial (generally evergreen) was introduced into cultivation 1885. It grows up to 36 inches high and has soft oval leaves with tiny fine hairs. Flowers in shades of pink and red are most common but it also comes in white, yellow, orange and purple. In our harsh Texas ecosystem, salvias have adapted into many forms from low growing and mounding to upright, and strong to 4 foot.

This plant requires minimum maintenance and only occasional watering during extended low rainfall. They do well in rocky and poor soils. They can be cut back anytime if they get leggy, but perform best if cut back in February and August and side dressed with a good quality compost or Dillo Dirt.

References: Manual of Vascular Plants of Texas D.S. Correll and M.S. Johnston (U.K.)

A Book of Salvias Betsy Clebsch (California)

The Gardeners Guide to Growing Salvias John Sutton

2012 IN REVIEW

The year, 2012, was a busy and eventful year. A new class for MN began in March with 16 participants. The Youth Education Committee is up and running—see pg 2. Many attended a FireWise training as well TPWD's Angler Education, Amphibian Watch and Flying Wild trainings. Several have attended the Center for Environmental Research Lunch lectures and MaryAnn has become a Qualified Interpreter.

A cooperative effort with NPSOT and Waste Management brought the pollinator garden to fruition—see pg 2. The nature trail at Our Lady of the Rosary Prayer Garden was a major project. Many members spent several days working on the new nature trail at Berry Springs Park.

The chapter had a major presence in March at Archeology Day and in September a large presence at NPSOT's Education Day. Chapter members manned the McNeil Bridge bat fly out on Friday evenings during the season. The Rivery Park Pond invertebrate monitoring continued all year and several members have removed invasive plants there. Jim Hailey, a birder, led a group on monthly bird surveys at Rivery Park. He also conducts monthly bird hikes from the Rec Cen. Nature talks were presented to the senior group at the Rec Cen March-May.

Several members participated in propagation at Joss Growers during the year, in wildflower surveys at Blackland Prairie Park, seed ball making on Dino Day in Champion Park and during spring break at the library. Others worked with the Urban Forester's Trail Tamers, and the chapter had a large presence at the spring and fall clean ups at Berry Springs Park.

Bat presentations were given at two Round Rock schools. Sterlin has handled a full angler education schedule.

Bird talks were held at Hutto Lake Park in the summer. Taylor Middle School students were taught to make seed balls for both Taylor Park and the burned Bastrop State Park. The same Middle School children learned about native grasses. A Taylor member helped coordinate Murphy Park tree planting on Arbor Day.

Various members have participated in seven different Citizen Science programs/projects.

Seven members attended the annual MN meeting and retreat in October with one member giving a presentation and another volunteering during the weekend.

MEMBER PROFILES

WAYNE RHODEN



Our new president, Wayne, has been a MN for twelve years and a MG for 17 years. He did his MN training in the Gulf Coast chapter near Houston. Wayne and his wife have lived in Georgetown for 7 years. After 40 years with ATT he retired. His particular interests include flowers, gardening, butterflies, bugs and hiking. He is past president of the state MG, Ft Bend MG and Williamson Co MG.

LARRY SWIFT



Larry is Good Water's new VP and is a graduate from our most recent class in 2012. He has a BS in biology and a MA in planning. Most of his career he worked in community based development. He also is a recent retiree living in northeast Austin. Larry volunteers for Habitat for Humanity. Besides all of nature he has a particular interest in Native Americans

