



# Highland Lakes Steward

December 2010

Volume 1, Issue 9

## MISSION

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas AgriLife Extension and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The mission of the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas

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## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Billy Hutson



Well we ended the 2010 year with Phil Wyde not mispronouncing any ones name, we got word that the Inks Dam Friends group got their 501(c)3 status and over 70 members attended the annual awards meeting. And what an elegant meeting it was with real utensils, plates and even glass wine glasses. Many thanks to Helen and Lyn for these classy ideas. And I believe they volunteered to do it again next year even though the LCRA Bldg may not be available. I look forward to it.

I also look forward to this next year and the challenge to assist in all of our chapters facets. We have some new ideas and we are very open to discuss your ideas with you, so please let me know what you would like to add to our schedule.

Recently I was invited to sit in a meeting with our county commissioners and judge for Burnet county. Like the HLMN officers, they are elected officials and have

the purpose of serving their driving cause. I would just like to say that two things evolved from the luncheon. First, they are now very aware of our extensive efforts and second, Sue Kersey and I will be working with the county commissioners as part of some new public awareness possibilities. We are open to ideas of how we can get our image out to the general public to improve our exposure. It would be great if everyone knew what a Master Naturalist is. Our County Commissioners and judge now know.

All of us officers are open to discuss your concerns at any time in person, on the phone or by email so lets all stay in touch and keep up the great volunteer work and camaraderie.

## JANUARY MEETING PROGRAM

Billy Hutson

On Jan 5th, 2011 John Goode will talk to us on "Interpreting Nature" and comes quite capable on the subject from his many years in the National Park Service. I've met and interviewed John, who is now retired and living in Burnet, and I know the talk will be interesting, useful, and entertaining. I know it's a busy time of year but try not to miss it. John's an old timer and has a few stories to tell to get his point across.

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## **RIPARIAN AREAS: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LARGE SHARHOLDER**

Sammye  
Childers

Riparian areas provide important watering sites and significant forage for livestock. However, riparian areas are also especially sensitive to range use practices. As a result, riparian areas should be the focus of sound range management planning and should be given special consideration when developing range use plans. While the last 100 years has brought significant change in the way rangeland is properly maintained, it has only been in the past 25 years that riparian areas have become a focus of concern. Even when upland areas are being well managed, many riparian areas are still being grazed too heavily causing a decline in health and proper function in these zones.

Most riparian ecosystems include moist lower slopes and terraces that border the stream, wetland, or lake which have vegetation distinct from that of the surrounding uplands. These ecosystems are tran-

sitional between the wet aquatic feature and the drier surrounding uplands. Although upland ecosystems are not part of the riparian area, those upland ecosystems immediately adjacent to the riparian area should be included in any sound riparian area management plan. It is important to note that not only must we manage the riparian area itself more successfully but it is essential to understand that the management of the upland areas directly impacts the riparian system's health and function.



Photo courtesy of Jim Hoorman-Ohio State Extension Ed

Vegetation is a principal factor that should be evaluated when assessing or monitoring the properly functioning condition of any habitat. Vegetation condition should be evaluated by comparing the composition and structure of the current condition of vegetation to the composition and structure of the desired plant community. The desired plant community should have similar composition and structure as the 'natural' plant community (a community that has not been degraded by heavy grazing). In many cases, the 'natural' plant community can only be estimated, due to the area having been grazed for many years and the introduction of invasive species. Properly functioning condition in a riparian zone also depends on several additional vegetative attributes:

- Plant vigor
- Plant diversity
- Adequate reproduction of key riparian trees, shrubs, sedges and grasses
- Strong, deep rooted riparian plants which can stabilize banks, provide adequate shading for temperature control and resist erosion and excessive trampling.

(Continued on page 3)

- Adequate plant residue after grazing to dissipate energy and trap sediment

Riparian areas in deteriorated conditions are even more sensitive to improper livestock grazing than the upland areas. Damage to riparian ecosystems through improper grazing can be severe, long lasting, and in extreme cases nearly irreversible. Unmanaged grazing practices can damage the structure and function of riparian areas in several ways:

- Be aware that live stock can transport weeds and noxious invasive plants into riparian areas.
- Livestock tend to selectively congregate in riparian areas, especially during hot weather, compacting soil, making paths that facilitate erosion and degrading water quality by increasing suspended sediments and damaging the channel shape and structure.
- During hot, dry weather, livestock selectively graze on the more palatable species found in moist riparian areas, in preference to woodier or more mature plants found in upland areas. If this disproportional grazing continues over a long period of time, the more desirable riparian grasses and sedges are lost, less desirable plants take their place and proper riparian function is impaired.
- Livestock trample on moist riparian soil, causing soil compaction which hinders plant growth and breaks down streambanks. This can lead to the loss of vital deep rooted vegetation, down-cutting and loss of water table.
- Congregating livestock deposit manure and urine in and near streams, creating higher bacterial counts.
- Overgrazing can decrease the vigor of riparian vegetation, alter the plant community and its diversity, can lead to the establishment of invasive species and the replacement of riparian vegetation by introducing and encouraging non- riparian upland species.

Following are some important rangeland management guidelines for promoting riparian health and proper function:

- Provide alternative water sources. By providing livestock with water away from the banks, it keeps them from trampling soil and vegetation. It also provides them with cleaner water, resulting in fewer vet bills and more productive growth.
- Create separate riparian pastures so that creek areas can be properly grazed.
- Plant palatable forage species on adjacent upland

areas.

- Graze riparian areas when upland vegetation is abundant and riparian vegetation is in peak growth. High risk times include when the soil is wet or partially frozen, when plants are emerging or setting seed or when plant vigor is limited because of drought .
- Use prescribed burning on upland areas to enhance forage production and palatability. As upland forage quality improves, animals will be less likely to selectively feed on riparian plants.
- Place feed supplements such as salt, grain, hay, or molasses in upland areas away from the riparian zone.
- Place brush or boulders along streambanks to discourage livestock from grazing and congregating in riparian areas. Controlled access also decreases the risk of injuries to the animals.

Unless properly managed, livestock grazing can result in long-term changes in the landscape and the loss of productivity. To be effective, management practices must be based on knowledge of local climate, native vegetation, current and past health and function of the landscape and livestock behavior.

Areas that are badly degraded or have been abused for many years will take a long time to recover. Riparian areas in more fragile environments, such as arid regions or areas with long winters, will take a longer time to recover than areas with more moderate climates or more humid conditions. Degraded areas should be rested until vegetation provides a complete cover over the soil surface and at least half of the vegetation is composed of natural species. The rest period should also allow for the establishment of sufficient vegetation to stabilize the streambank, filter sediments, and allow nutrient recycling.

Locally appropriate management requires ongoing monitoring of livestock and riparian health. It also requires the flexibility to revise management practices based on your observations and management objectives. AgriLife Extension Educators, Natural Resource Conservation Service grazing specialists, and other experienced graziers can help you monitor and adjust your grazing practices. Grazing groups provide an excellent opportunity to learn from the experience of others, while providing you with the opportunity to ask questions about proper management practices. More research is being done than ever before. Make it your objective to stay informed about the most up to date practices and procedures.

Reviewed by Steve Nelle, NRCS biologist

# 2010 HIGHLAND LAKES MASTER NATURALIST AWARDS BANQUET

Photos by Jerry Stone

## 1000 Volunteer Hours Award!



Recipients: Ray Buchanan, Terry Bartoli, and Jerry Stacy  
Also pictured: Wade Hibler

## 500 Volunteer Hours Award!



Recipients: Helen Smith, Sherry Bixler  
Also Pictured: Wade Hibler

## 250 Volunteer Hours Award!



Recipients: Connie Barron, Susan Bartoli, Mike Childers, Sammye Childers, and Fredi Franki.  
Also pictured: Sue Kersey

## Initial Certification as a Master Naturalist



Recipients: Marjorie Dearmont, Pam Walt, Judy Parker, Jan Warren. Not present were: Jeff Anderson, Deborah Douglas, Laurie Connally. Also pictured, Wade Hibler, Phil Wyde, and Ray Buchanan.

## 2010 Recertified Master Naturalists



Recipients: Jeff Anderson\*, Maggie Booth, Ray Buchanan, Cynthia Castleberry, Laurie Connally\*, Ann Cook, Jennifer Daniels, Marjorie Dearmont, Deborah Douglas\*, Blair Feller, Arlene Garey\*, Melanie Huff\*, Lee Kinard, Al Kirchner\*, Ben Kowing, Carol Kowing, David Lagerman\*, Marilyn Lagerman\*, Deb McClintock, Sam Mowery\*, Ed Myatt\*, Linda O'Nan, Judy Parker, Pam Walt, Jan Warren, and Terry Whaley  
Also pictured, Wade Hibler, Sue Kersey, Phil Wyde. \*Not Pictured



Outgoing 2010 Chapter President Phil Wyde was honored by Lyn Davis and Helen Smith with gifts including loads of chocolate!



New 2011 Chapter Officers L to R: Billy Hutson - President, Fredi Franki - Vice-President, Sheri Bixler - Secretary, Jerry Stacy - Treasurer.



Thanks to the Awards Banquet Committee and helpers: Helen Smith, Ben and Carol Kowing, Sue Kersey, Judy Bloomquist, Cindy Sterling, Sammye Childers, Blilie Gunther, Fredi Franki, Jan Warren, Lyn Davis, and Sherry Bixler.

## COMMON LOON (*GAVIA IMMER*)

Sherry Bixler

With rare exceptions, the Common Loon is the only one of five loon species to winter in Texas. The first loons of this season were seen in early November at Inks Lake and Lake Buchanan.

Loons seen here are almost always in winter plumage and may be confused with the cormorants which have the same silhouette when on the water. The loon is quite large, ranging from 28 inches to 36 inches long and has a heavier bill. It will usually paddle away from people or boats instead of flying.

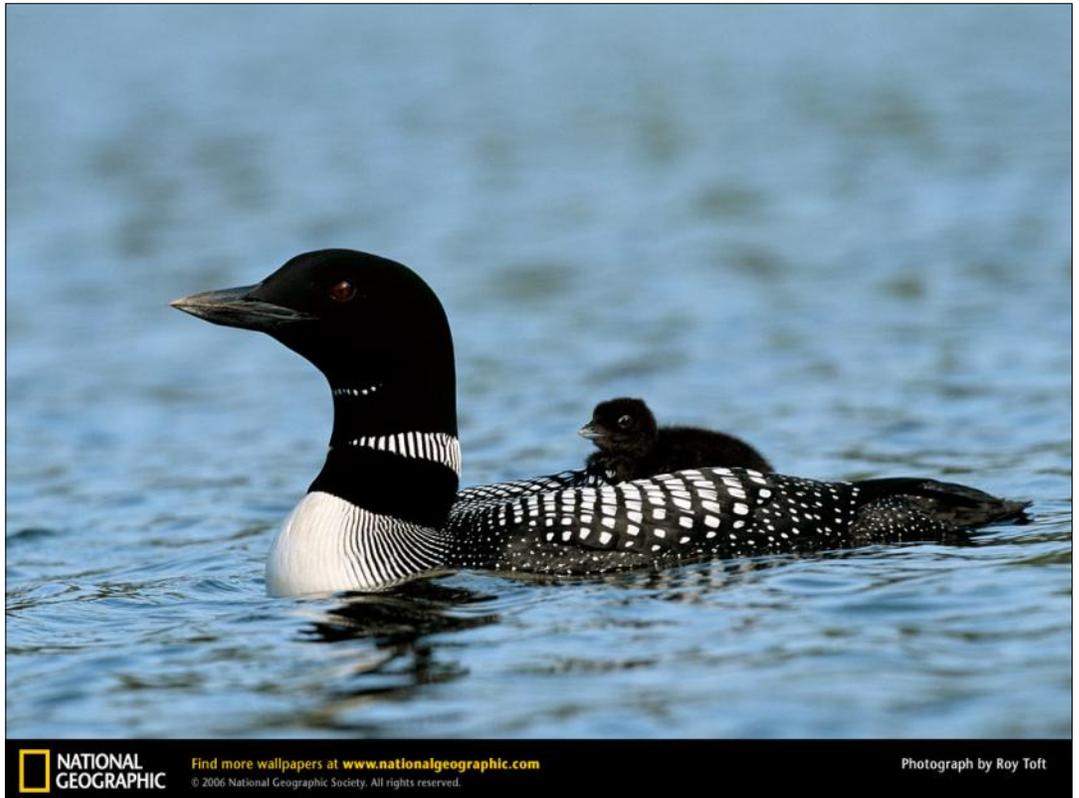
The call of the loon can be heard all year but is infrequent while the bird is on its winter grounds. Calls can be weird and unearthly and have been described as mournful, mirthful, wolflike, sinister, defiant, demonic and uncanny. They are certainly distinctive.

The distribution of loons is circumpolar and Western Hemisphere breeding grounds include almost all of Canada and Alaska as well as the extreme northern United States. Winter grounds extend along the eastern and western seaboard, the Gulf coast and inland in the southeastern states.

Skillful and swift in swimming and diving, the loon can catch even the fastest fish. Its diet consists mostly of fish but includes some crustaceans and it can see underwater to track its prey.

Loons are related to the Auks but while Auks are gregarious, loons are found mostly alone or in pairs, although they sometimes form loose groups on their winter grounds or when their northern lakes are shrunk by ice formation.

Some of the old names for loons are hell-diver, walloon, guinea duck, greenhead, imber diver, great



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Photograph by Roy Toft

northern diver and ember-geese. How fortunate for us that bird names have been organized and changed to make identification easier.

Loons are heavy-bodied and must work hard to take off from water—they are unable to achieve flight if downed on land by a storm and ranchers and farmers have been known to transport them to nearby lakes or ponds if they are found stranded.

Of all the wild creatures which still persist despite settlement and civilization, the loon seems best to typify the untamed savagery of parts of the wilderness. Declines in population over much of North America are thought to be the result of acid rain, oil spills, mercury poisoning and loss of habitat. Boaters often frighten loons so much that they abandon their nests.

The loon is a beautiful bird with a wondrous sound. Loon babies ride on the parent's back for the first week or so after hatching. The loon's incredible speed when submerging or diving is amazing to watch.

One way to protect these birds is artificial nest rafts which have been put in place away from boat traffic, but other ways must be found.

## FROSTWEED ICE

Jerry Stone

The frostweed in the picture at right was shown in an earlier newsletter and was just beginning to bloom. As discussed then, Frostweed during the first hard freeze extrude at the stem base a thin curling shaving of ice. They are very delicate and do not last long. Below are some pictures of the effect that were taken around Thanksgiving this year.



## DENNY RANCH 2 SPOTLIGHT

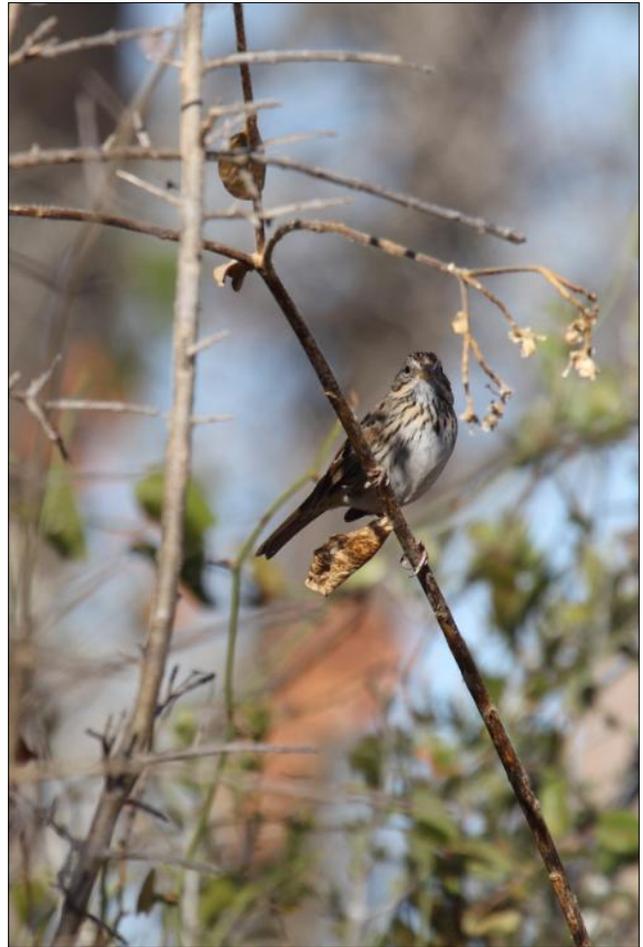
Deborah Douglas, M.D.  
Photos by Thomas Fisher, M.D.



We spotted this Question Mark Butterfly, with its silvery-lilac edging along the wing, in a dry area of the creek bottom. Unusual for butterflies, anglewing species overwinter as adults, either hibernating or migrating south.



While gazing across the creek, looking for birds, Tom discovered that he was all but standing on this Ribbon Snake. The least Tom could do was take its picture.



This Lincoln's Sparrow was hanging out with a bunch of White-crowned Sparrows near the edge of the creek but paused long enough for Tom to snap this photo. Sometimes, when we think we're hearing a Towhee in the underbrush, it turns out to be a Lincoln's.

Additionally, Sue Kersey visited Denny Ranch and contributed the photo to the right and had this to say. " Four MN's from our chapter went birding at Denney Ranch 2 and I got this picture of a Harris's Sparrow, two of us were able to add this bird to our life list. We had a great day there and even had a osprey fly over and look so beautiful. We are so lucky to have such a fantastic birding spot so close. There were so many birds it was hard to know which way to look!! Thanks to Debora Douglas for allowing us to visit. "

## A SMOOTH LANDING AT INKS LAKE STATE PARK

Carol Navarro Adams

With down sizing and outsourcing going on in every field a person is lucky to have a job. And when you do get a job or even transfer, be prepared to hit the ground running. The field of Environmental and Outdoor recreation management is a very fluid scene. In this profession people find themselves changing positions and locations quite often. In addition to that, interpretation is relatively new arena for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. So, as a new professional in this budding field, this is my third place of employment since I graduated with my Masters Degree in Outdoor Education Management 2002. In my first job, I worked my way up to Associate Director of a small Nature Center in central New York. After 5 years of service with the nature center I came to Texas and served as a lead interpreter at Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park for three years. And as of September of 2010, I am the park interpreter at Inks Lake State Park. In each transition, its true, I hit the ground running picking up pieces of projects that got dropped along the way. Yet in this place, I am very grateful for what has been the smoothest job transition I have ever experienced.

I have to ask myself, what are the factors that have made such favorable conditions for this transition?

The answer is: the people. Foremost, it's people like Laurie Connally, who developed relationships with a faithful cadre of Master Naturalists, volunteers and hosts. She designed and built programs and connections during her service here and then generously shared them with me prior to and since my arrival. You ask why she did this. It's because she loves and cares so much about this special place, the people that visit the park and the dynamic group of hosts, volunteers and Master Naturalists that help make this place tick, and tick well. And the success of this transition is also due to other volunteers like Warren Struss, Chris Nelson, Elaine and Roger Barnhill, the Park Hosts, and the Friends Group. Without these special volunteers we would not have such a tremendous impact on our visitors and neighbors. And it certainly wouldn't be half the fun.

That is why Laurie and I would like to honor you, our beloved Master Naturalists and volunteers with a special program and luncheon scheduled for Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at Inks Lake State Park. Many of you will be excited to hear that our guest speaker that day will

be The Eagle Lady, Doris Mager, Founder of Save Our Raptors (SOAR), who will once again inspire and delight us with her wonderful stories. Those of you who have seen her from her past visits will not want to miss this opportunity. Doris will of course be return-



ing with her fine feathered friends ET, the Great Horned Owl, Cara, the Crested Cara Cara, and Tex, the Screech Owl. We will also have an Owl Prowl that same evening for those that enjoy the feathered night life in the park, Friday at 5:30 pm. We will meet at the Amphitheater parking lot by the Park Headquarters.

Laurie will be sending out the invitations soon, detailing times, location, etc. Please reply to me, Carol Navarro Adams, at [carol.navarro@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:carol.navarro@tpwd.state.tx.us) or 512-793-4689, so that we can get an accurate count of our guests. We will provide the meat and beverages! You are welcome to bring your favorite side dish to share with the group.

Laurie worked passionately at connecting and scheduling the volunteers with meaningful projects. The foundation that she laid during her service here has allowed me the freedom to immediately develop and add new programs for the park visitors as well. I would like to share some photos of your friends intensely engaged in their service at Inks Lake State Park, as well as a thank you letter expressing the magic that the Master Naturalists brought to the Walk Off That Turkey Relay. Thank you for your contributions for making this a wonderful transition for me. You make this work feel like play! We appreciate you blurring those lines for all of us while serving this

*(Continued on page 11)*

wonderful place, Inks Lake State Park.

A thank you letter to the Master Naturalists who served at the Walk Off That Turkey Relay Event.

Hello Volunteers and Master Naturalists,  
Thank you for your help with Inks Lake *First Walk*



were caught and that you didn't have a single bite, your humor and wit stole the show. Ray, your resonating deep voice and engaging storytelling drew rave reviews from parents (the big kids in the crowd), Helen, thanks for putting your order in early for the stellar weather we all enjoyed so much and your con-

off *That Turkey Relay!* It was so much fun and everything went really well because of you. Everyone loved it, including you! Wow. I am so glad you enjoyed the program as much as we enjoyed having you. We applaud you for the unique individual magic that you contributed to the event. Phil, it didn't matter that no fish



tagious enthusiasm and energy. Jerry, big kids and little kids loved the adventure they had at Devils Waterhole, they all said that they learned so much about this marvelous place. Thank you Judy for your assistance

and your welcoming smile and Melanie the parents were very appreciative of a new respect for fire building, a lasting life-long skill for parents and kids alike.



And Roger, thanks for the goody delivery but more importantly being there to smooth out all the bumps in the road.

We have received outstanding reviews from many parents all hoping that we will duplicate this program again next year. Helen would you put your order in

early please?

We counted over 150 participants. But most importantly, everyone had a great time and together we provided an experience that will result in life long memories for the families that joined us.



As always, we greatly appreciate your contribution to the event.

Thank you,  
Sincerely Yours,  
Carol

## CHOOSE YOUR SIDE: WHITE MEAT OR DARK?

From eNature.com, link provided by Mike Harris

While we come together as friends and families at Holiday gatherings, once at the table, many of us divide into two separate and oppositional camps: those who prefer the legs and thighs of our traditional bird for their dark meat, versus those who opt for the whiter breast meat. We may know which kind of meat we like best, but few of us know the reason for the difference.

It's a question of fibers. The muscles of all birds possess several types of fibers. In fact, each muscle usually has a mixture of these fibers. Because red ones predominate in the leg and thigh muscles of birds like turkeys and chickens, the tissue there appears dark. The breast tissue, meanwhile, is composed mostly of white muscle fibers. Why? Because the breast muscles of these birds serve a different purpose than their leg and thigh muscle.

Turkeys and chickens, remember, are ground-dwelling birds that spend all of their waking hours walking, running, and scratching for food. The muscles in their legs are adapted for constant use and do not fatigue easily. The individual red fibers are very fine and contain an abundance of compounds that make

them efficient at aerobic respiration. These tissues are also high in both fat and sugar, which act as fuel for aerobic metabolism. Small songbirds, by contrast, can fly efficiently for hours at a time because they have a predominance of red fibers in their flight muscles.

While turkeys can fly, too, they aren't capable of sustained flight. The large muscles that we call "white meat" are adapted for explosive bursts of power -- such as when one of these heavy-bodied birds is surprised by a predator and must escape in a flash of speed (turkeys have been clocked at 55 miles per hour). These muscles are powered by anaerobic metabolism and tend to fatigue quickly. The opposite is true of ducks and geese. These birds are long-distance fliers, and their large breast muscles consist of dark meat that's high in fat content. Yet the birds with the greatest concentration of red muscle fibers in their flight muscles are not the ones that make the longest migratory flights. No, it's the birds that utilize the highest number of wing beats during sustained flight. And which birds are those? Hummingbirds, of course.

Doris Mager,  
"Eagle Lady of Florida",  
Founder of Save Our  
American Raptors, author,  
and a friend to birds of prey  
everywhere, comes to  
Inks Lake State Park



## **VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION LUNCHEON AND A SPECIAL PROGRAM WITH DORIS MAGER!**

Join us for our annual volunteer appreciation luncheon.

**YOU** our wonderful Park Hosts, Park Volunteers and  
Highland Lakes Master Naturalists, will be honored  
with a luncheon and a live birds of prey program.

Barbeque and beverages will be provided.

After the meal enjoy a special program given to you  
by the  
Eagle Lady, Doris Mager.

Please bring a dish to pass with your smile.

RSVP to Inks Lake park Interpreter Carol Navarro  
Adams 512-793-4689.



**Friday, January 7th 11:30 am**  
**Maintenance Building**  
**Dress Warm!!**

*Don't miss the fun!*

Call (512) 793-4689 for more information

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS CALENDAR

Mike Childers

DECEMBER EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES		FUTURE EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES	
General Duties Volunteer Opportunity	17th	Sparrow Fest	Feb 5, 2011
Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery	All Day	Flying X Ranch, Balcones Canyonlands NWR	
Balcones Christmas Bird Count	20th	TAS/FOB Field Trip	Feb 6, 2011
Balcones Canyonlands NWR	6am-6pm	Balcones Canyonlands NWR	7:30am-1pm
JANUARY EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES		Instructor Training - Bridges to Birding & Going Buggy	Feb 24, 2011
		Flying X Ranch, Balcones Canyonlands NWR	9am-4pm
Audobon Christmas Bird Count	4th	2011 HLMN Training Class Start	Mar 3, 2011
Burnet County (Birding and Wildflower Society)	All Day	Kingsland Library	12:30pm
HLMN Meeting - Interpreting Nature - John Good	5th	Boy Scout Camporee	March 5, 2011
Kingsland Library	1-3pm	Near Llano	
Annual Appreciation Luncheon	7th	TAS/FOB Field Trip	Mar 13, 2011
Inks Lake State Park (Maintenance Barn)	11:30am	Balcones Canyonlands NWR	7:30am-1pm
Owl Prowl	7th	Songbird Festival	April 23-26, 2011
Inks Lake State Park	5:30-7:30pm	Balcones Canyonlands NWR	
TAS/FOB Field Trip	9th	Texas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting	May 5-7, 2011
Balcones Canyonlands NWR	7:30am-1pm	Junction, TX	
Texas Ornithological Society Winter Meeting	13th-16th	2011 Intnt'l Urban Wildlife Mgmt/Plan Conf	May 22-25, 2011
Denton, TX		Austin, TX <a href="http://www.urbanwildlife2011.org">www.urbanwildlife2011.org</a>	
NPSOT Program - Landscaping w/Natives & Adaptives	15th		
Marble Falls Librry	1-3pm		

## NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY JANUARY PROGRAM

Sheryl McLaughlin Landscape Designer, Native Plant Specialist and host of KLBJ Austin Gardener 590 am. Sundays at 10 am will be speaking at the, Saturday January 15, 2011 Highland Lakes NPSOT meeting.



Sheryl is one of the early pioneers of working with native plants in the landscape. Her talk will be on using native and adaptive plants in city landscapes.

The program and meeting is Saturday, January 15, at 1pm at the Marble Falls Library.

### Stewardship

An ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources with organizations, communities and others to actively engage in the prevention of loss of habitat and facilitate its recovery in the interest of long-term sustainability

Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, calendar and event entries, etc. to [chili865@gmail.com](mailto:chili865@gmail.com). Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions to each months newsletter is the 10th of the month and publication will be by the 15th.