



Highland Lakes Steward

January 2011

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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

We just ended year 2010 with over 10,000 hours of volunteer work to our community for our MN cause. And we're starting a new year with a bang.

We had a good first meeting with a program "Interpreting Nature" presented by John Goode. We also had an excellent visit from Doris Mager (The Eagle Lady). This was partly sponsored by our chapter and got us some noted publicity with the community of which I speak because of Sue Kersey's continuing diligence in publicity work for us.

This next year we will have a new class of students to increase our goals and we not only have more volunteer hours to look forward to but potentially 20 new friends to add to our list.

Our board is faced with many new challenges which I hope we can decide in the beneficial interest of most members and we will do our best. But please keep in mind that even though all members opinions are appreciated, we can't please everyone all of the time.

I look forward to Fredi's choice of speakers next month as Mark Klym is a dynamic speaker on his favorite subject the Hummingbird. Once you have met him you will know that you can use him as a resource in Hummingbird identification at his email address if needed.

I hope all of your holidays went as planned and that the next year goes as planned for our chapter. Thanks so much to all that have found a spot in our organization to give back.



Photo by Jerry Stone



Speakers Gift for John Goode
 Photo by Jerry Stone



Check for \$200 donation made to SOAR by HLMN
 Pictured L to R, Doris Mager, Billy Hutson, Cassandra Hutson

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JANUARY MEETING PROGRAM

Fredri Frankie

Mark Klym will speak on hummingbirds at our February 2 general meeting. We will meet at Kingsland Library at 1:00pm.

Mr. Klym is coordinator of the Texas Wildscapes and Texas Hummingbird Roundup programs at Texas Parks and Wildlife. He received baccalaureate degrees in Biological Science and in Fisheries & Wildlife Management from Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste Marie (pronounced Sue Sainte Marie) MI. Mark followed the hummingbirds to Texas in 1999 to work with Texas Parks and Wildlife. He



has presented programs on hummingbirds across the state and at such major events as the annual Rockport Fulton Hummer-Bird Celebration. He is coauthor of the recently published book "Hummingbirds of Texas" by Texas A&M Press.

2010 RECERTIFICATION



Photo by Jerry Stone

Congratulations to Jennifer Daniels, Ed Myatt and Sam Mowrey for completing recertification requirements for 2011. They were presented their wood duck pins by Sue Kersey at the last general meeting on Jan 5.

A NATURALIST WRITING OPPORTUNITY!

Michelle Haggerty TXMN

Calling all Texas Master Naturalists with an interest in writing.

National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff are interested in expanding their resources such as the "Reverchon Naturalist" on-line publication to include more information from a variety of areas across the state.

If you are a Texas Master Naturalist having an interest in writing--or if you already have some articles written in the past that could be re-purposed and re-published for such a resource please contact Rickey Linex for more information on publishing your work in this format.

An example of the Reverchon Naturalist news is: <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/bio/reverchon.html>.

Contact Rickey Linex for more information: Ricky.Linex@tx.usda.gov

THE EAGLE LADY

Mike Childers

This month we were pleased to have a visit from Doris Mager (the Eagle Lady) just after the January Master Naturalist meeting and again at the Inks Lake State Park Volunteer Luncheon which several of our members attended.



Doris and her Kestrel Photo by Sue Kersey

Doris is very special person. She travels all over the country delivering her message to educate folks about the critical importance of raptors. Now in her 80's, she travels with her birds in a her van, preferring to sleep in the van with her birds even when home at her house. She once stayed in an inactive bald eagle's nest for 6 days and 5 nights, not in protest, but to raise funds for an Audubon Center in Florida. Amazingly when she was 60, she bicycled across the U.S.

In 1983 she founded Save our American Raptors (SOAR), established to foster the education of people regarding birds of prey.

The birds she travels with are E.T. the Great Horned Owl.; Doolittle, the American Kestrel; Cara, the Crested Caracara; and Tiny Tim, the Screech Owl. Her presentation enables the audience to get up close and personal with each of them as she tells their story.

The Great Horned Owl has been with her for over 27 years since shortly after his birth. Many of



Carol Navarro Adams bonds with the Great Horned Owl
Photo by Mike Childers

her birds have been injured and many can't be returned to the wild.

One of the most remarkable birds that was under her care was a Golden Eagle she named RJ. They were constant companions for 15 years and together educated countless children and adults across the nation. Doris even wrote a book about it titled "RJ: Tribute to a Golden Eagle"



Freda Franki presenting the Caracara Photo by Sue Kersey

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

RIPARIAN RESTORATION

Sammye Childers

Do you ever wish that your favorite stream looked like it did in your childhood memories? Do you wish you could restore it to that state? Are you interested in ways to reduce erosion, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife, and enhance aesthetics? If so, look no further than the hardy and attractive trees, shrubs, forbs and grasses that are native to our region and well-suited to life at the water's edge. Native shrubs, trees, forbs and grasses provide protection for our waters, provide the structure needed for effective water storage and provide habitat for our native wildlife. Additionally, native varieties help provide regional context — they just “look right” in this part of the country — and they help to preserve the botanical heritage of the Hill Country and Highland Lakes and the ecosystem that we all love. Once native plants are established, they have the added benefit of requiring little care and minimal watering.

However, it is important to realize that not all riparian areas have the same potential nor will they react to management in the same manner. Riparian areas should be managed according to their own unique characteristics and to land usage. Any restoration work must be preceded by a thorough understanding and evaluation of each environment. On the Edwards Plateau and surrounding areas, most healthy riparian areas are composed of a mixture of trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges and forbs. The mixture of all this vegetation, in various stages of growth, is necessary and the natural order of things. Small, low energy creeks may be held together with only grasses and sedges but this is the exception. No matter what type of vegetative cover is present, the critical step for any riparian restoration is to first establish a riparian reserve or buffer strip.

Restoration is defined as the return of an ecosystem to a close approximation of the conditions present prior to disturbance. In restoration, it is hoped to repair ecological damage and to restore both the structure and function of the ecosystem. The goal is to emulate a natural, functioning, self-regulating system that is integrated with the ecological landscape in which it occurs (USEPA, 1995). A successful restoration will return the ecosystem to a condition that resembles the natural predisturbance state as closely as possible.

Management means taking care of what's already there: encouraging and improving the continued growth and enhancement of natural communities

which are already in place at a particular site. Management can also be considered a form of restoration—trying to improve a site ecologically. This is sometimes referred to as passive restoration. When feasible, passive restoration is generally the most effective course of action. Given time, Mother Nature is the greatest “healer” of all.

Bank stabilization efforts and replanting efforts, sometimes referred to as bio-engineering, are active restoration techniques which may, in some cases, effectively accelerate the natural recovery process. Active restoration is sometimes necessary due to invasive exotic plants, erosive processes, issues caused by misuse of land, natural disasters or other factors. Many restoration efforts employing active techniques fail because adequate study of the cause of decline in the ecosystem was not conducted. Replanting efforts should be applied judiciously and only in situations where specific management goals can be achieved. Taking heavy equipment into the area or creating manmade structures should never be the first effort. A general rule of thumb: the faster the fix, the greater the chance for failure and the greater the cost.

Areas in need of restoration usually offer the “basic ingredients” necessary to represent a natural community, but the quality of the overall community is less than what it should be. Successful restoration efforts focus on enhancing what's already there and strive to improve the overall quality and long-term viability of the natural community. Restoration can be thought of as nursing biodiversity back to health.

A number of difficulties may be encountered when attempting to restore riparian zones to their original condition: (1) the historical condition of river or stream might not be well known; (2) ecological means of returning to a known prior condition may not be feasible; and (3) presence of man-caused phenomena over a long period of time may have altered the landscape to the extent that restoration may have an adverse affect. However, even in cases where riparian vegetation has been removed for decades and livestock grazing has compacted near-stream soil and caused dramatic down-cutting or widening of the stream channel, riparian restoration efforts have succeeded where knowledge and proper restorations have been applied.

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Disaster on the Blanco River

As land becomes increasingly developed and population growth demands more water usage, the impetus to create or restore riparian zones to improve the hydrologic flow, flood control ability, erosion control, and water quality will undoubtedly achieve a more dominant role in our planning and management strategies. Vegetative recovery and sound management practices require time. In this age of instant gratification, we must take a step back, change our views of

Photos by Mike Childers

streamside management, and allow the time needed for the ecosystems to heal. We also need to re-access and to re-evaluate our obsession with mowing, clear cutting and the role of structural modifications in the landscape.

“A dollar in stewardship is worth \$10,000 in structures.” (Bill Platt)

Reviewed by Steve Nelle, NRCS biologist

THE KINGLETS

Sherry Bixler

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)

Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*)

Kinglets are tiny birds, among the smallest of North American birds. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet is slightly larger but both are around four inches long.

Since they are usually in constant motion, their small size and busy movements help identify them even when it is impossible to get a prolonged look. The Ruby-crowned is more common in our area in the winter than the Golden-crowned but both can be found and are quite un-shy. They often forage and tend to their nests within arm's reach of watchers.

When the kinglets do pause and flash their crowns, watchers are in for a treat. The bright red or golden yellow crown, circled by black feathers, is something to remember.

The Ruby-crowned Kinglet has a prominent white eye ring that distinguishes it from the Golden-crowned Kinglet with its white eye stripe.

Both kinglets build a small but deep nest and lay an amazing seven to nine eggs in two layers – a highly unusual number of eggs for a songbird. Eggs hatch in two weeks or less and fledge in another two weeks. A second brood is common, often with just as many eggs. Kinglets are rare cowbird hosts.



Golden - crowned Kinglet
Courtesy fishandgame.idaho.gov

Photo Copyright Keith Carlson



Ruby - crowned Kinglet

Photo by Sue Kersey

These birds are sometimes found in mixed flocks that include titmice, creepers, chickadees, warblers, nuthatches and small woodpeckers.

The kinglets belong to a genus of Old World Warblers, along with the gnat-catchers. Oddly, the Old World Warbler family has ten functional primary feathers as opposed to American Wood Warblers with nine.

Kinglets will eat seed and fruit but prefer insects, especially spiders and mosquitoes. Young kinglets will not eat spiders, so parent birds must work very hard to provide acceptable insects for their large broods.

Note: Latin names are sometimes puzzling but the calendula is a bright orange or yellow flower; satrap means subordinate and regulus has to do with smelting. For once the latin names make perfect sense.

DENNEY RANCH 2 SPOTLIGHT

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

Ruby-crowned Kinglet. On New Year's Day, we birded Denney Ranch 2 with our friends, John Goode and Kathryn Avery. When we spotted this Kinglet, one of several that we heard and saw that day. John shared a story about the time he was trapping Kinglets for banding in New Mexico. Once a Loggerhead Shrike got into the trap and managed to kill all the Kinglets. Instead of strangling the Shrike, which was, John admitted, his first instinct, he chose, instead, to relocate the bird to Carlsbad, about 25 miles away.



Possumhaw. This photo is a detail of a 15-foot Possumhaw in the creek bottom at Denney Ranch 2. Most of the leaves have already fallen off, which is one way to differentiate a Possumhaw from another wintertime red-berried tree—the evergreen Yaupon.



Loggerhead Shrike. At a casual glance, Loggerhead Shrikes—known as the “Butcher Bird” because of its gruesome habit of caching the bodies of its prey on plant spines—can be confused with Mockingbirds; however, the latter have smaller heads and more white on their wings and outer tail feathers.

STATE OF THE BIRDS, PART II—ENDANGERED BIRDS OF TEXAS

Sherry Bixler and Ray Buchanan

Endangered birds of Texas have been tracked by Texas Parks and Wildlife and the list is somewhat different from the United States list. Raptors, waders and shorebirds are the predominant birds on the Texas list, while arid-land birds and grassland birds are of more concern nationally. There are ten birds on the Endangered list and another twenty on the Threatened list. The Mountain Plover has also been proposed as an addition to the list of Threatened birds.



Black-capped Vireo

Photo by Greg Lasley

ENDANGERED SPECIES:

(Eastern) Brown Pelican
 Whooping Crane
 (Northern) Aplomado Falcon
 (Attwater's) Greater Prairie Chicken
 Eskimo Curlew
 (Interior) Least Tern
 Red-cockaded Woodpecker
 (Southwestern) Willow Flycatcher
 Black-capped Vireo
 Golden-cheeked Warbler

THREATENED SPECIES:

Reddish Egret
 White-faced Ibis
 Wood Stork
 Swallow-tailed Kite
 Bald Eagle
 Common Black-hawk
 Gray Hawk
 White-tailed Hawk
 Zone-tailed Hawk

(American) Peregrine Falcon
 (Cactus) Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl
 Mexican Spotted Owl
 Piping Plover
 Sooty Tern
 Northern Beardless Tyrannulet
 Rose-throated Becard
 Tropical Parula
 Bachman's Sparrow
 (Texas) Botteri's Sparrow
 (Arizona) Botteri's Sparrow

Although not on the list at present, there is great concern about quail species, especially in southwestern Texas where drought conditions often affect available food and fragmentation of habitat disrupts their natural movement. Songbirds and sparrows are also, by some accounts, in decline throughout Texas. Their decreasing numbers have not put them on the Threatened List at this point, but scientists fear that continuing downward trends in many bird species will result in a growing list of species in danger.

Climate change is one of the factors that disrupt bird populations as it affects the availability of food and the temperatures tolerated by some bird species.



Golden cheeked Warbler

Courtesy of Fish & Wildlife Service

Warmer temperatures due to climate change can also cause a die-off of plants in the southernmost part of

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their range. While climate change may not be within our control, there are many steps we can take to help:

1. Habitat corridors can provide the mobility needed by many animals and birds.
2. Careful planning and limitations of new construction can lessen habitat destruction.
3. Removing invasive plants gives native plants room to grow; native plants are more likely to provide food for wildlife.
4. Controlling and removing non-native wildlife can protect both native plants and na-

tive animals.

5. Controlling pollution is critical for all life-forms including humans.
6. Fishing nets must have escape mechanisms to allow birds caught in the nets to escape and laws mandating the use of such nets must be enforced.

Protection of breeding sites can also accomplish a remarkable increase in the success rate of many species. Since bird populations are such a good indicator of good or bad environmental conditions, what is good for the birds is of course good for all of mankind.



Sparrow Fest February 5, 2011 7:00am – 7:00pm

Join us for a class on Sparrow identification! This ever-popular Sparrow Workshop returns to Balcones Canyonlands NWR! Led by Sparrow Experts Byron Stone, Bill Reiner and Randy Pinkston. Located about 30 miles NW of Austin, TX. Space is limited.

Workshop Price per person:

\$60 Friends members

\$80 nonmembers

Price includes Breakfast and Lunch.

Saturday Night 6:30 p.m. Optional SparrowHawk Dinner

Stay for dinner and socialize the days experience! This is an optional event and will require an additional fee of **\$15.00 per person to cover costs.**

Online registration begins December 6, 2010

call: 512 965-2473

email: friends@friendsofbalcones.org

web: <http://friendsofbalcones.org/sf>

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS CALENDAR

Mike Childers

JANUARY EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES		FUTURE EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES	
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	Mar 5, 2011
Kingsland Library	1-3pm	Near Llano	
Annual Appreciation Luncheon	7th	TAS/FOB Field Trip	Mar 19, 2011
Inks Lake State Park (Maintenance Barn)	11:30am	Balcones Canyonlands NWR	7:30am-1pm
Owl Prowl	7th	Lawn and Garden Show	Mar 26, 2010
Inks Lake State Park	5:30-7:30pm	Burnet, TX	
TAS/FOB Field Trip	9th	Songbird Festival	Apr29-May 2, 2011
Balcones Canyonlands NWR	7:30am-1pm	Balcones Canyonlands NWR	
Texas Ornithological Society Winter Meeting	13th-16th	Texas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting	May 5-7, 2011
Denton, TX		Junction, TX	
NPSOT Program - Landscaping w/Natives & Adaptives	15th	Texas Outdoor Family	May 21-22, 2011
Marble Falls Librry	1-3pm	Inks Lakes State Park	
FEBRUARY EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES		2011 Intnt'l Urban Wildlife Mgmt/Plan Conf	May 22-25, 2011
Sparrow Fest	5th	Austin, TX	www.urbanwildlife2011.org
Flying X Ranch, Balcones Canyonlands NWR			
TAS/FOB Field Trip	6th		
Balcones Canyonlands NWR	7:30am-1pm		
Trails Maintenance Day	23rd		
Inks Lake State Park			
Instructor Training - Bridges to Birding & Going Buggy	24th		
Flying X Ranch, Balcones Canyonlands NWR	9am-4pm		

INKS LAKE STATE PARK VOLUNTEER LUNCHEON

Sue Kersey

On January 5, The Inks Lake State Park Staff honored it's volunteers with a great luncheon. The food was wonderful with barbeque boar and wild turkey cooked by Park Hosts. We were all welcomed by Carol Navarro Adams and the staff. The chapter was thanked for taking such an active part in so many of the parks programs. It was stated that the park could not complete all of the program without us and all the other volunteers.

There were several of us that won door prizes. Judy Bloomquist won a water color of an Owl and Sue Kersey won one titled Backstroke Hummer. Both of these beautiful water colors were done by Carol's husband Daniel Adams. The luncheon was topped off with Doris Mager - The Eagle Lady - charming us all with her bird companions and their stories.



Photo by Jerry Stacey

Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, calendar and event entries, etc. to 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.