

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



HIGHLAND LAKES CHAPTER



Highland Lakes Steward

November 2014

Volume 5, Issue 11

MISSION

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas A&M 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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CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Pat Campbell

Hey! Cannot believe it is November already.

October was another busy month with the bird blind opening and the state conference at the end of the month. Plus the native plant garden tour!

I want to give a SHOUT OUT TO KAY HERRING for the wonderful articles about the bird blind opening in the Beacon and Georgetown paper. It was nice to see such great publicity for the ones who worked so hard on this project.

I would like to reiterate what Mike Childers asked last month. We have a wonderful newsletter, but I think it would be nice if all of the groups and committees would post what they are working on and maybe some pictures. As Joanne said, we are so scattered out that we have a hard time seeing what all is going on. There are a lot of wonderful projects going on and it would be nice to share them with everyone.

So lets get rolling on that!

Also, at the State Conference this year, there were very little entries in the competition as in pictures, crafts, and newsletters and scrapbooks. So be thinking this year what you could enter. If you cannot go, someone else can take it for you. The conference is a great place for meeting other chapters and seeing what others are doing. I encourage everyone to attend next year. Oh, and you get lots of AT. I am not sure what the rules are for the video entries, but think about this as well. We have so much talent in our group – lets share it with other chapters!

I am pleased with the slate of officers for next year. I know that Cris will be fantastic. He is in the process of nominating board members, so please be agreeable if asked. Our group is getting larger and it takes a chapter to make it run so to speak. Be thinking of new projects and new directions we can go. I know the bird blind will be a hard act to follow, but we need a new project!.

I hope to see everyone at the Christmas party and awards night. Lyn is promising us a great time and I can't wait to see what is going to be in the auction. Don't forget your checkbooks!!

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



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Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, announcements, etc. to

chili865@gmail.com.

Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions to each month's newsletter is the 10th of the month and publication will be by the 15th.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

by Cris Faught

In **November**, Colleen Gardner, Executive Director of *Selah*, (the Bamberger Ranch) gave a very entertaining and informative program on bat issues in Texas and what the staff at the Bamberger Ranch has learned in their long term studies of these mammals.



NEED PICTURES OF ANYTHING HAVING TO DO WITH NATURE

Sharon Drake is teaching in an after-school program at Highland Lakes Elementary in Granite Shoals. She also leads a Nature Club for grades 2-5. If anyone has calendars, stickers, address labels (please remove your name and address) or anything else that has **pictures of anything having to do with nature**, she would love to have them. The kids especially like stickers. She will be doing this all the school year, and can pick up things at the HLMN meetings. So go through that stack of address labels, and all the calendars we seem to be getting and save for Sharon.

Texas Master Naturalist Highland Lakes Chapter



December Meeting and Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 3
Quail Point in Horseshoe Bay
107 Twilight
5:00 pm

Bring your own Adult Beverage for the evening
Appetizers, Entree, Coffee and Water **PROVIDED**

Please **bring** one of the following to feed 8:
Vegetable – Side – Salad – Dessert
with a small folded card describing your dish and a few ingredients

PLEASE RESPOND by Sunday, Nov 23
if you and your guest **ARE COMING OR NOT**
what you would like to bring if you are coming from the list above
to Lyn Davis at ldavis511@gmail.com or Call 830-385-1115

5:00 – 6:00 pm	Cocktail Hour
6:00 – 6:45	Sit-down Dinner
6:45 – 8:00	December HLMN Meeting Awards & Pins 2015 New Officers Installation
8:00	Meeting Adjourns

Silent Auction will close at approximately 8:30

After 8:00 pm, please stay and continue to enjoy the evening with friends, fun and laughter, and bid bid bid away on our auction items - the proceeds of which help fund our many wonderful projects !!!

CONGRATULATIONS TO JOAN MUKHERJEE!

by Fred Zagst



Joan pictured with Bill Hopkins, President of the Texas Native Plant Society

The Benny Simpson Fellows Awards are given by the Texas Native Plant Society for service and work by a member for the enrichment of the Society at the state or chapter level. The awards are chosen by popular vote of the membership of all the chapters. This year two members were honored – Joan Mukherjee of the Highland Lakes Chapter and Sue Wiseman of the Williamson County Chapter.



EMERGENCY FIRST AID POCKET GUIDES AVAILABLE

by Cris Faught

The below guide will be available for \$7.00 each from Cris Faught at the December meeting.

FIRST AID FUNDAMENTALS

First Things First

Your primary strategy is to remain safe and to stabilize the victim until medical help arrives or to the point suitable for transport to a medical treatment facility. Are you and the victim in any danger? Make sure the area is safe before providing assistance or move to safety as possible. NEVER move an injured person unless absolutely necessary. The first thing you should always do is call for medical assistance if available. **If a person requires treatment you must first ask for their permission before administering first aid.** Be aware that victims may have AIDS, tuberculosis or other deadly communicable diseases.

Don't Panic

AVOIDING PANIC & STAYING CALM are the most important steps toward effective treatment. Excitement and alarm are natural emotions but you must keep these in check to provide first aid as efficiently as possible. Compose yourself and others and take charge of the situation. Keep crowds away from victim(s). If the person is conscious ask them if they are OK.

Assess the Situation

The American Red Cross® suggests these three steps to respond to such an emergency: CHECK (for consciousness); CALL (911 or local medical help); and CARE (take action while you wait for medical help to arrive).

- 1. Check** for consciousness. Shake the person and ask loudly if they are OK. If there is no response, they may have suffered from cardiac or respiratory arrest and you need to get help.
- 2. Call** for help. Dial 911 or send someone in your group for medical help. Even if the person is breathing, if you cannot wake them, get medical help.
- 3. Care** while you wait for medical assistance. To begin, LOOK, LISTEN and FEEL. Look for chest rise and fall to determine if they are breathing. Listen for air movement (place your ear close to their mouth and nose to hear them breathe). Feel for breaths of air by placing your cheek close to their nose and mouth to feel movement of air.

BE PREPARED – TAKE A FIRST AID COURSE

This guide is intended to provide graduates of first aid courses with simplified reference on how to recognize and respond to medical emergencies when no medical help is readily available and lives are at stake. The information in this guide is intended for reference only and is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice and training. **Note that if you administer first aid to someone improperly you can be subject to legal action.** Prevent potential problems by taking a certified first aid course. The strategies recommended here do not imply endorsement of this information by the American Red Cross, nor do they hold any responsibility for any error or omission herein. **N.B.** – The publisher makes no representation or warranties with respect to the accuracy, completeness, correctness or usefulness of this information and specifically disclaims any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. The advice, strategies and/or techniques contained herein may not be suitable for all individuals. The publisher shall not be responsible for any physical harm (up to and including death), loss of profit or other commercial damage. The publisher assumes no liability brought or instituted by individuals or organizations arising out of or relating in any way to the application and/or use of the information, advice and strategies contained herein.

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138405

Created & printed in the USA

978-1-58355-645-0 \$6.95 U.S.



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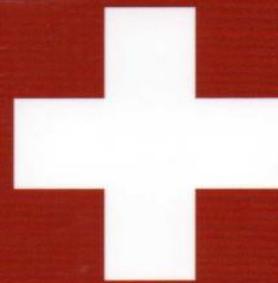


A POCKET NATURALIST® GUIDE

EMERGENCY FIRST AID – Recognition and Response to Medical Emergencies

Kavanagh/Leung

EMERGENCY FIRST AID



A Folding Pocket Guide to the Recognition
of & Response to Medical Emergencies



THE NEW WORLD BEFORE EUROPEANS CAME

A book review by Joan Mukherjee

“Native” landscapes may not be native at all. They probably were already shaped by the hand of man long before Europeans arrived. If it hadn't been for Indians, settlers may have found a cedar forest instead of a prairie when they arrived in Texas.

In elementary school we were taught that before Europeans came our land was populated by primitive tribal people living off a wild land. Recent findings in both North and South America are revealing that to be incorrect. There were large populations in the Americas most of whom were never seen by Europeans. However, very early explorers did report many villages lining the New England coast, but their reports were discounted as exaggerations by those who followed. We cannot deny that there must have been a large Mayan population and extensive farming because of the huge ruins they left. But other than the Maya most of us have accepted that Indians were widely scattered, primitive hunter gatherers.

Not true. There were large settlements throughout the Americas. Large settlements required farming. A main staple for Indians was corn, which was developed in Mexico from teosinte grass. That required brains, time and lots of careful breeding. They also domesticated squash, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, beans and tobacco. Our extensive prairie grasslands were developed by the Indians to enhance grazing for an important food source, the buffalo. Think about it, what does nature do to a prairie? A prairie soon becomes woodland if it is not grazed, mown or burned. The Indians routinely burned grasslands. Evidence in North America is scarce since most structures made of mud and wood. However,



there are mounds throughout the country, but most were never carefully studied and have been destroyed. The largest are near St. Louis. These and others are now being more extensively studied.

In South America we are aware of the Inca Empire and some of us have been impressed by Machu Picchu constructed of stone and of the Incan highways. But even before the Incas the land had been terraced and canals built by other empires, well developed farming and fishing cultures. Even the Amazon rainforest is now believed by some to have had large populations. Most of us have heard that the soil is too poor to support many people. Recent findings show that it, too, was shaped by the hand of man and had large populations before the Europeans. In formerly populated areas, instead of thin, nutrient-starved soil there is dark, rich soil with lush growth. Furthermore in these regions there is an abundance of fruit bearing trees. Scientists have now proposed that people added charcoal to the soil to enrich it. We all know how charcoal filters are good at removing metals and miscellaneous compounds from water. The nutrients retained in the soil by charcoal become available to growing plants. The year round fruit-bearing trees are thought to have been planted deliberately to provide food.

What happened to all these people? Probably diseases which, once introduced, swept both continents following the trade routes killing as much as 90% of the population. The end of the Incans by disease is fairly well documented in writings by a Spanish friar. But for most of the New World the damage had been done before settlers arrived. If you want to know more, read “1491” by Charles C. Mann.

THE AMERICAN KESTREL

by Joanne Fischer

The American Kestrel belongs to the family Falconidae which contains two widely disparate groups of birds, the falcons and the caracaras. The American Kestrel is both the most common and the smallest falcon in North America. It can be found throughout most of the Continent and is a year round resident in most areas. It typically migrates south from the northern reaches of its range in search of food in the wintertime. The American Kestrel breeds in the northern and western parts of Texas, but in the Hill Country we typically just see them in winter months.

Falcons are considered to be one of the fastest of all birds and have been reported to reach speeds of more than 100 miles per hour in a dive for prey. The Kestrel is described as “jay size” with long, narrow wings and a long, square-tipped tail. It has a rust-brown back and tail, slate-blue head and wings, black-spotted underparts and two distinct black facial stripes sometimes referred to as a moustache and a side burn. The female is larger than the male and her wings are reddish brown versus the slate-blue of the male.

Kestrels eat mainly insects and other invertebrates in summer months. Common components of their diet include grasshoppers, cicadas, beetles and dragonflies. However in the winter they often eat small rodents and birds, snakes, lizards and frogs. They usually hunt by day and snatch their victims from the ground versus catching quarry in the air. They are equipped with long toes with sharp talons for grasping their prey and with hooked, notched beaks for killing and eating them.



(Continued on page 8)

AMERICAN KESTREL (Continued from page 7)

American Kestrels occupy a rather wide range of habitats, from deserts and grasslands, to mountain meadows to mixed woods/forests to farm fields to suburbia! They do need open ground for hunting however and you will often see them perched on power lines seeking out prey. They nest in cavities, but since they are incapable of excavating their own, they rely on old woodpecker holes, natural tree hollows, rock crevices and nooks in buildings or other structures for breeding sites. The Kestrel does readily accept nesting boxes so people are encouraged to provide them in areas where they are known to breed. They use very little if any “nesting materials” inside of the nest cavity site.

It is rumored that the female Kestrel is promiscuous, mating with two or three males prior to settling with a single mate. She eventually produces three to seven white or pale pink eggs. Incubation of the eggs is quite long, 28–30 days and is carried out primarily by the female.

Although listed as the most common and widespread falcon, populations have been declining in recent years everywhere except in the central part of the United States. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, between 1966 and 2010 they declined by an estimated 1.5% per year for a cumulative decline of almost 48%. Population declines are attributed to continued clearing of land and felling of standing dead trees as well as exposure to pesticides and other pollutants which contributes to reduced clutch sizes and hatching success as well as destroying

insects, spiders and other prey that the Kestrel depends upon for food.

The disadvantage of being a “small” bird of prey means that the Kestrel can end up as prey for larger birds such as Red-tailed Hawks, Barn and Great-horned Owls, Cooper's Hawks and even American Crows. They also have been known to be preyed upon by various large snakes.

In conducting research for my monthly articles I always look for “Interesting Facts” about the different species of birds. One so called “cool fact” for the Kestrel describes that when nature calls, nestling kestrels back up, raise their tails, and squirt feces onto the walls of the nest cavity. The feces dry on the walls and stay off the nestlings, however it is reported that the kestrel nest gets to be a pretty smelly place what with feces on the walls and uneaten parts of small animals on the floor. Not exactly what I would call a “cool fact” - yuck.

A less gross and interesting fact is that the Kestrel is technically not a hawk, although you will see it referred to as a “small hawk” by many authors. In fact some of you may remember that in years past, the American Kestrel has been called a “sparrow hawk”. This nickname however has for the most part been abandoned for two reasons. First, although the Kestrel may eat smaller birds occasionally, it's diet is comprised mostly of insects and rodents. And secondly, the American Kestrel is not technically a hawk, it is a falcon. So remember that next time someone spots a Kestrel and says “what kind of hawk is that?” - respond “it's not a hawk, it's a falcon” - and a very striking one at that!

BALCONES HIGHLIGHTS. NOVEMBER 2014

by Joan Mukherjee

On November 1st we had the annual Friends meeting. It was a very cold morning but a group of hardy souls were birding at the crack of dawn and looking for birds and interesting plants. All were glad to come out of the cold and join the rest of us for a meeting and barbeque feast. After eating volunteer awards were handed out.

The Christmas Bird Count will be held on December 15th. Anyone interested in participating should go to the Balcones Canyonlands Wildlife Refuge website to sign up. There they will find maps and other information.

THE GUADALUPE SPINY SOFT SHELL TURTLE

by Suzanne Adkinson

While in the Blanco State Park last August, celebrating summer coming to a close, my eight year old came running up with this cute little guy clutched between her fingers. A baby soft shell, sometimes called leather backs, and often confused within subspecies, are common throughout South Texas. There are several subspecies of soft shells, including Eastern, Western, Gulf, Guadalupe, Pallid, and Texas; named appropriately for the region of the US/Country where they reside. Based on what species resides in Central Texas, I believe my daughter captured a Guadalupe Spiny Soft Shell.

Spiny Soft Shells are interesting turtles. They have pancake shaped, soft carapaces (shell) without scutes (scales). The nose is long, pointy at the end, with distinct nose holes. Each subspecies has distinctive markings with either a black or yellow stripes on the side of the head, a different colored underbelly (plastron) of either whitish or yellowish, or distinctive colorings on their carapaces of either mottling, spots, and/or rings. The females are bigger than the males, have softer carapaces and have shorter, thinner tails; in fact, at maturity, the female tail hardly extends below her carapace. Size of these turtles at maturity is measured by the length of the carapace. The size range is from 5 inches to just less than 19 inches. Lifespan in the wild can be 50 years for a large female.

Soft shells become sexually mature at about 8-10 years of age. They mate mid to late spring in deep water. The females will lay her eggs (clutch) in a sandy or gravel bar as close as possible to the water. She will dig a flask shaped cavity for her 9-38 eggs. The eggs hatch in August and September. Once the eggs are laid there is no further involvement by the female or male.

These turtles spend the majority of their day basking in the sun. They eat insects, crayfish (crustaceans), and small fish. They find their pray under/in vegetation, objects, or along the river bottom. Soft Shells will also hide under the bottom in gravel/sand/mud, leaving only their necks sticking out, and grab unsuspecting pray as it passes by. During the cooler months, from about October to April Spiny Softshells will bury themselves beneath the substrate and become dormant. They are able to breathe underwater for long periods of time using their pharyngeal lining (throat tissues; they bring water in through their nasal



passages into their mouths and throat and oxygen is extracted by the pharynx thru the pharyngeal lining which, in this case, acts as a gill), cloacal lining (turtles have one opening for everything - egg laying, excretion and fornication, this opening - the cloaca - is lined with blood rich tissues, oxygen is absorbed by these tissues allowing the turtle to stay under water for long periods of time) and skin.

Soft Shell young are subject to predators such as raccoons, herons, and fish. Adults have limited natural predators; the main one is us, the human. When aggravated, the Soft Shell will extend its long neck and snap loudly in the air. It is noted bites from adult Soft Shells can cause a wound deep enough to require stitches. Soft Shells tend to be shy and will hide themselves quickly when startled.

Soft Shells are good for the ecosystem. They are important predators in the aquatic system, impacting crustaceans and aquatic insects. They do not damage game fish populations or impact humans. They are not considered endangered or threatened according to the US Endangered Species Act. Just the same, my daughter, after showing off her cute, Spiny Soft Shell baby, released it where she found it.

GALLERY



Kingfisher at MO Ranch

Lori Greco

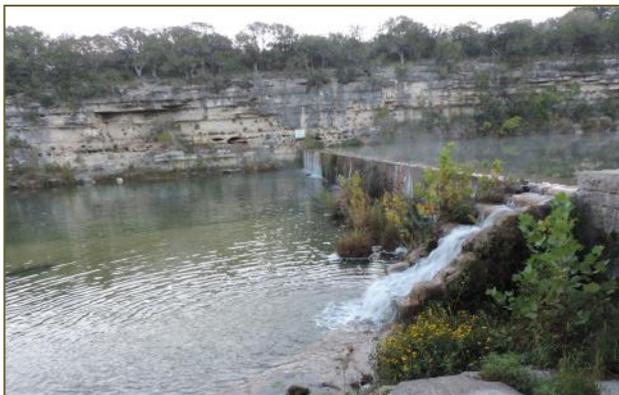


Indian paintbrush blooming Oct. 21
at my house. Terri Whaley

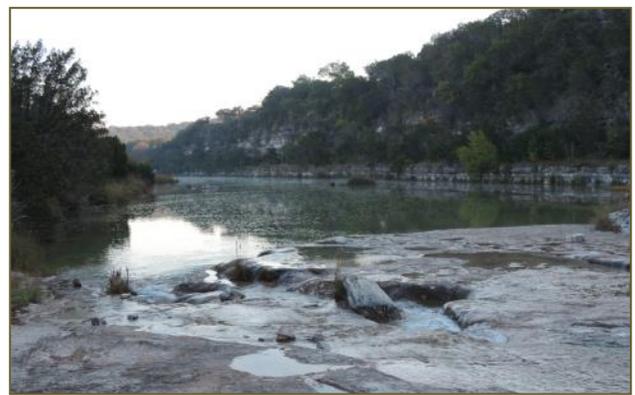


House Finch at MO Ranch

Lori Greco



Weir Dam on Guadalupe River at MO Ranch
Lori Greco



Gradalupe River at MO Ranch

Lori Greco