

# The Steward

Winter 2018

Highland Lakes Master Naturalists

Volume 9 Issue 4

## 15th HLMN and TMN 20th

This is the 15th anniversary for our chapter, so we thought we would look back at the founding members. They got us where we are today!

### First Master Naturalists class graduates

**OATMEAL** — The initial class of the Highland Lakes Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists graduated in December at a special ceremony and dinner at Oatmeal Creek Ranch near Bertram.

The class began training in June completing a required course of study, volunteer hours and additional advanced training. While this is the first class for the Highland Lakes Chapter, there are currently 20 chapters in Texas with the first starting in San Antonio in 1997.

The local chapter was organized by Burnet County Extension Agent Wade Hibler for the Texas Cooperative



New Highland Lakes Master Naturalists are (from left, front row) **Linda O’Nan, Haley Hibler, Ray Hufford, Bill Luedecke, Karen McCurley, Shirley Adwers,** (back row) **Steve Dial, Ellis Winkler, Jim Cox, Marvin Bloomquist, Judy Bloomquist, Darlene Oostermeyer,** Burnet County Extension Agent **Wade Hibler, Jacqueline May, David Skinner** and **Robert West.**

Extension Office. The second class of Master Naturalists for this chapter will begin in September with registration/application starting in August.

The Texas Master

Naturalist organization is designed to develop a corps of well-educated “Master Volunteers” to provide education, outreach and service dedicated toward the beneficial management of natural

resources within their communities. It is sponsored by a number of important state “Partners” including the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife and the LCRA.

Thanks to Ellis Winkler and Linda O’Nan for researching this.

This newspaper article is the closest we could get to a photo of the Founding Class. Ellis Winkler sent me a letter documenting the original members. The members were Linda O’Nan, Ray Hufford, Bill Luedecke, Karen McCurley, Shirley Adwers, Steve Dial, Ellis Winkler, Jim Cox, Marvin Bloomquist, Judy Bloomquist, Darlene Oostermey, Jacqueline May, David Skimmer. Also pictured is Haley Hibler, who Ellis describes as their Mascot. Wade Hibler, Hayley’s dad was the Training Class Coordinator (Leader).

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Wade Hibler  
CEA-Emeritus, Burnet County

In 2002 after lots of work with a very progressive Master Gardener program. I felt it time to move towards a different type of Master Volunteer program. Master Gardener had become very proficient in the Horticultural Sciences and the education of that genres of service. With the opportunity to work with partners such as TPWD state parks, LCRA, NRCS and other Natural Resource geared organizations I felt it important to pursue the Master Naturalist program. One of my co workers in Hays County (Billy Kniffen) reminded me that Burnet County was a great match for this type of Volunteer Organization. We had the natural resources and the organizations that would make great partners for volunteers to step up and en-

hance their efforts in improving the promotion of natural resource education.

In 2002 I decided to participate in a Master Naturalist promotional program at Bamberger Ranch in Blanco County. I got some folks to participate with me, notably Bill Luedecke and a few other Master Gardener backgrounded leaders. We took a look at the program and decided it was worth the effort to try and establish a Chapter.

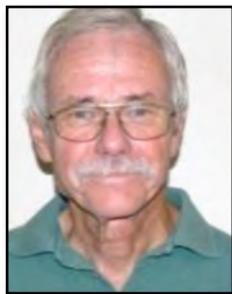
Our program met many obstacles, notably no curriculum. I had to develop my own. Billy Kniffen helped me out by sharing some of the curriculum he developed. What I learned there was, the curriculum needed to be developed to match the resources in the area.

To get started I advertised the program via newspaper articles, radio and targeted contact of people in the community who had this as an interest in natural resource education. I decided on the program name and the Kingfisher chapter logo. I had to run the class in the spring of 03, first class was April 8th 2003 and it ran each Tuesday till June 10th. The curriculum I developed drew the attention of the state office and what we did became a big part of the curriculum we know today.

Starting this program was a tough step because we still had a monster Master Gardener program which had been in place since 1998. I was preparing for a Master Naturalist program on Tuesdays and Master Gardener on Thursdays. This was on top of all my 4-H responsibility and the other office admin duties I had.

We completed the first year and targeted potential partners for volunteer service (LCRA and Canyon of the Eagles, Inks Lake State Park, etc.) . It was at this time my first wife Regina became very ill. She died in September of 03. Needless to say as a single parent now my life completely changed. It was that first Class that stepped up and took the leadership roles that tested them by fire. They performed flawlessly and this set the stage for Master Naturalist to take off in Burnet, Blanco and Llano County. Look where we are today..... Needless to say.....the Master Naturalist program is one of my career highlights. This program will always be very dear to me.

### **We asked the founding members these questions.**



Judy and Marvin Bloomquist

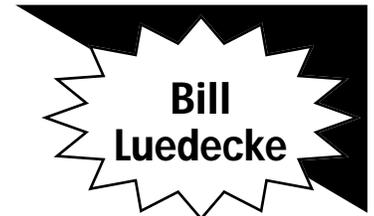
### **How did you find out about the starting of a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter in the Highland Lake?**

Judy and I found out about starting a new chapter from the president of the local Native Plant Society

chapter, Ray Hufford. Ray also became a member of the first class.

### **What made you want to be in the first Master Naturalist Class?**

We purchased our ranch here in December 1999 when I retired from Mobil Oil. We spent most of the next two years selling our house in the Dallas area, moving to a rent house in Horseshoe Bay, getting a road, electricity and a well for our building site, and overseeing construction of the house before we really had time to begin to enjoy things. We had lived in the city all our lives but loved the outdoors. However our knowledge of plants, animals, and land management was minimal.. We took a class at Bamberger's ranch on land stewardship that wet our appetite. The Master Naturalists seemed like a great way to learn a lot more and an opportunity to meet others with similar interests. It turned out to be a life changer!



Bill Luedecke

### **How did you find out about the starting of a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter in the Highland Lake?**

Wade and I started it. I heard about the Master Naturalist Program and then there was an article in the Austin paper. I called Hibler and asked him "what is this". "Why can't we do this." Wade said we had to go to some meetings and get training on how to set up a Master Naturalist Program. We had to find a time where he and I could both go to the Bamberger Ranch and have a two or three day course training. When we came back we were able to start a chapter. He and I set up the chapter and several of the Master Gardeners came over and

joined the new chapter. Many were husband and wife teams. They asked if I wanted to be president and I said no, because I had been president of Master Gardeners for two years.

### **What made you want to be in the first Master Naturalist Class?**

I wanted to pick up where Master Gardeners left off. Master Gardeners do gardening in the yard, that's all, period. Master Naturalist Program was about all nature; water, bees, rocks, animals and all. I wanted the total experience. I didn't want to stop with plants. It is a natural thing to do – if you are interested in growing things then you are interested in what makes them grow and what makes everything else grow—not just something to eat but something to live with and live beyond.



**Linda O'Nan**

Linda O'Nan

### **How did you find out about the starting of a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter in the Highland Lake?**

Wade Hibler was talking about a new program, Texas Master Naturalist, at a Master Gardener meeting and Wade wanted to get one started in our area. We asked what it was all about—he said, “Master Gardener Program is about plants—Master Naturalist Program is everything else! I was a member of the Trekkers hiking group & always enjoyed native plants & wildflowers on the trail. Several of

us (Karen McCurley & Dave Skinner) decided to join ranks & sign up—we were going out to ILSP once a month for trail maintenance with the hiking group, so this was a natural. Best decision ever!



Ellis Winkler



### **How did you find out about the starting of a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter in the Highland Lake?**

I found out about the Texas Master Naturalist Class from Wade Hibler, our Burnet County AG Agent. He made us aware of it in our Master Gardener class. At the time, I was not concerned about forming a chapter, but was eager to learn what I could learn from the A & M speakers or class instructors.

### **What made you want to be in the first Master Naturalist Class?**

I wanted to be in the first Master Naturalist class to be one of sixteen members that could go out and teach others what we learned. I wanted to be the Firewise specialist. My next desire was to work with the Old Tunnel Bat Cave and the Mexican Freetail bats. After that I became a Brown Headed Cowbird trapper, from the Granger education series and where the steel cages were made. Next I wanted to build and demonstrate the effects of watershed, or water runoff from various types of planted soil containers. Then I got involved in tree planting and also tried to work with telling the story of Indian Marker trees. Also got involved with bird houses and duck nesting boxes. I learned how to “milk” #

(cont'd Ellis Winkler)#

wildlife drinking water from the caliche hills on ranches, feral hog trapping and beehive startup. All of this education was the best and will never be repeated as it was done fifteen years ago.

From what I learned about ranch land restoration I joined the Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burn Association in 2005 to help participate in the local burns. It has been rewarding.



Congratulations Volunteers



Drum roll please.....



4000 hours

Phil Wyde

Billy Hutson

**2500 Hours**  
George Brugnoli

**1000 Hours**  
Becky Breazeale  
Karen Lundquist

**500 Hours**  
Judy Haralson  
Martelle Luedecke  
Marilyn McClain  
Paula Richards  
Allan Wolfe

**250 Hours**  
Jan Belz  
Stephen Scheffe  
Cris Northup  
Susan Montgomery  
Linda Brown  
Kathy Griffis-Bailey  
Carole Hess

Right: (L to R) Susan Montgomery, Kathy Griffis-Bailey, Stephen Scheffe, Carole Hess, Cris Northup  
250 hours strong!



Left: Karen Lundquist thumbs up for 1000 hours!!



Right: Judy Haralson and Martelle Luedecke smiling for 500 hours!!



## Meet the Members:



### **Sondra Fox Class of 2008**

#### **Where were you raised?**

I was raised in Dallas but spent many happy hours at relatives who still lived out in the country in Ellis County and I think that's where my love of nature began as well as having a dad who was very "outdoor oriented."

#### **What is your professional background?**

I was an elementary public school teacher in Houston for 25 years, most of those years teaching science lab. Following my 1st retirement, I worked at the Houston Zoo for a while in their education department and so enjoyed the training there that taught me how to handle the animals we used in our teaching and getting to go "behind the scenes;" and then I was a travel agent for several years.

When I was a young adult, my parents moved to a small private lake in East Texas. That's where I first began to really pay closer attention to birds and native plants. They had a Pileated Woodpecker in their wooded area and native orchids, Jack-in-the pulpit, etc. on their property. I was well into middle age before I was able to travel and loved to go to "off-the-beaten-path" destinations, always including nature in my itinerary— camping in Kenya with all the great wildlife, orangutans, birds, monkeys in Borneo, riding and bathing elephants in Nepal, etc., not to mention the fabulous plants in all destinations (except Antarctica!).

#### **Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.**

Due to having a body that will not cooperate in doing what I want it to do, most of my volunteer activity is restricted to public education now, mostly giving talks or exhibits about butterflies or birds. I enjoy learning about almost anything having to do with nature.



### **Sue and Mike Kersey Class of 2004**

#### **Where were you raised?**

Mike was born in Austin and his parents moved to San Antonio when he was 3 yrs. old. He went to Brackenridge High School in SA and then onto The University of Texas in Austin. Sue was born in Los Angeles, California and later in life attended West Valley College in Saratoga, CA.

#### **What is your professional background?**

Mike earned a BSEE from UT in 1962 and then moved to California where he spent 37

(Sue and Mike Kersey cont'd)

years in micro electronics industry. He worked at Hughes, Fairchild Semiconductors, Motorola, a small startup and retired from Xerox. Sue earned an Associate of Science in Interior Design and worked at Fairchild and Motorola. Sue did many years volunteering while the children were young and continues to do so for many organizations here in our area. Mike and Sue will have been married 52 years this March.

**Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.**

We both wanted to volunteer after we retired to Marble Falls. We were in the second class of HLMN in 2004 and Mike served as Secretary and Sue served on the board for years and was the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to be president of HLMN. Both loved to be outdoors and Mike found working with the children at the GOP at ILSP was just so rewarding. Both enjoyed learning more about the natural world here in Texas and loved volunteering with other chapter members. It just seemed to be just a perfect way to spend our time. Bird watching became a true love for both and opened up so many experiences, trips and avenue for learning.



**Marcy Westcott  
Class of 2011**

**Where were you raised?**

I was raised in Kansas City, Missouri and although I have lived in Texas for the last 14 years, I still bleed Red & Gold for the Kansas City Chiefs!

**What is your professional background?**

I spent 18 years in Sales & Service Management with American Honda Corporation. I have owned my own printing and graphic design business for the last 14 years. In December 2018, after 9 months of rigorous training, I am now a Certified Meditation and Mindfulness Instructor through the renowned McLean Meditation Institute of Sedona, Arizona & Santa Barbara, California.



**Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.**

My nature-related passion or volunteer activity is birding, building and working on trails and removing invasive plant species.



# LAND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LMAP): FORWARD TO 5

**By: Marvin Bloomquist, Jerry Stacy, Linda O’Nan, Fredi Franki, Jan Warren, Melissa Duckworth & Melanie Huff (The LMAP Team)**

During this last week of December 2018, we look back at how LMAP was formed and what it has accomplished, and forward to 2019, our fifth year of site visits.

Six of us, all Master Naturalists with the Highland Lakes Chapter (HLMN), came together in the summer of 2014: Marvin Bloomquist, Jerry Stacy, Linda O’Nan, Fredi Franki, Jan Warren & Melanie Huff. Each of us had emigrated to the Texas Hill Country from a different place; each of us owned varying amounts of Hill Country acreage, from less than one acre to 1,000 acres; each of us had practiced a different profession in another life; we represented HLMN classes of 2003 (“the originals”), 2006, 2009, and 2010; and each of us had varying interests and varying areas of expertise within the many subject areas encompassed by the Master Naturalist program.

But we shared a common belief: that private landowners in the Texas Hill Country need to be educated in good stewardship practices if the fragile landscape that is the Hill Country is to be preserved. (“Hill Country” means counties served by HLMN: Blanco, Burnet, Lampasas & Llano.)

And who better to spread the religion than a group of reformed sinners? Yes, we confess, one or more of us has in the past: mowed grass to within an inch of its life! chopped down cedar trees indiscriminately! planted a *Vitex tree*! cleared some acreage of all beebrush, prickly pear, mesquite, ashe juniper – everything but very, very large oaks! allowed livestock unrestricted access to water courses! exceeded recommended stocking rates for range land!

We were and are largely concerned with small acreage landowners (1.00-100 acres), a growing population as the large ranches are subdivided up and fragmented for development. There are county extension agents, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) personnel, personnel with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the USDA, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension personnel. They want to help and educate as many landowners as possible, but there simply are not enough of them to serve the burgeoning “ranchettes” and “farmettes” resulting from large ranch subdivision. We have stepped in to serve this niche. We do not replace AgriLife Extension, TPWD, or NRCS; we assist them to extend their reach. Both TPWD and the county extension agents have referred landowners to us.

Luckily, we found a model we could follow. Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalists, Jim Stanley (author of *Hill Country Landowner’s Guide*) and John Huecksteadt, already had an up-and-running land management assistance program. See <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/land-management-assistance-program/>. Jim and John spent more than four hours with us. They shared with us the training they thought was necessary to conduct an LMAP program; provided their “100 Plants List” as a go-by for identifying plants and grasses; gave us insights for dealing with private landowners; and expanded our knowledge of resources available to educate ourselves and our landowner clients.

We developed a training program for ourselves. The training program occurred largely between August and November 2014 and consisted of 32 hours of mostly field work. At the Bloomquist and Campbell ranches, we learned about range management and plant identification from Wade Hibler. At the Brugnoli and Warren ranches, we enjoyed two plant identification workshops conducted by Jerry Stacey. We traveled to the Johnson City Texas Forest Service office where Robert Edmundson educated us on woody tree identification and oak wilt. We learned advanced plant identification and rainwater harvesting from Joan Mukherjee at her ranch. At the Huff ranch, Mark Klym of TPWD trained us in Fire-wise principles and their application. We spent time with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge where we studied their prescribed burn and native grass restoration program. Training is ongoing, as we try to keep up with new research in the areas of land management and plant identification. We have been to the TPWD workshop on conversion from an agricultural (AG) valuation to a wildlife management (WM) one, and we try never to miss a program led by Bill Carr or Ricky Linex.

We finally bit the bullet and did our first site visit on January 30, 2015. We went to the ranch of Betsy Bouchard. Thanks are owed to Betsy for her faith and trust in us.



LMAP Team Members, Linda Warren, Melanie Huff, Linda O'Nan, Jerry Stacey, Marvin Bloomquist, and Fredi Franki on January 30, 2015 along with Betsy Bouchard, landowner

What is the process before, during, and after a site visit?

First, we need to find clients. We advertise by sending blast emails to, for example, the HLMN listserve, as well as the one for the Native Plant Society. We contact our respective neighbors. We have distributed brochures on our work to the county extension offices, groundwater conservation district offices, and appraisal district offices. When HLMN has a booth at a function, such as the Bluebonnet Festival or the Lawn and Garden Show, we try to have some of our brochures available at the booth. Today, most of our clients come from referrals, largely from earlier clients and HLMN members.

Once we have a potential client, we schedule a site visit with them. This involves coordinating the client's calendar with those of the LMAP Team members. We also ask the client to fill out a questionnaire telling us about their property: its size, the date it was purchased, whether it is subject to an AG or WM valuation, why it was purchased, any historical knowledge of the property that the client has, and any

concerns the client has relative to the property. This information is circulated to all Team members in advance of the site visit. The information allows us to focus in on the concerns and needs of the client when we arrive onsite. We also research whether the property is in a groundwater conservation district or in an emergency services district. There are probably at least two hours of preparation time for each Team member before we even arrive onsite.

Site visits last from three to four hours, excluding travel time. (Travel time can add up to an additional two or three hours.) During a site visit, we walk the property with the landowner(s), equipped with walking sticks, books, water, hats with visors, hiking boots (and sometimes snake protectors), magnifying glasses, cameras, bug repellent, sunscreen, and clipboards with the plant checklist and property information. We can walk the entire property if it is 10 acres or less. If it is more than 10 acres, we have usually asked the landowners to focus our attention on specific areas. We drive between the specific areas, while walking the specific areas themselves. We checkoff on our lists the plants that we identify. We make notes on things we need to comment on (erosion, invasives, riparian issues, etc.). We write down questions the landowners ask to which we don't have immediate answers. Marvin Bloomquist takes pictures of many of the plants and sometimes of features of the property's landscape.

Generally speaking, all six Team members go on all site visits, although there have been times when a site visit has been done by three, four, or five Team members. Initially, we were concerned that six Team members would intimidate the landowners, but intimidation has not been an issue. We cover more territory and see more things with four to six Team members. Also, landowners tend to invite a neighbor or friend or two to come along, so more Team members enable us to accommodate the additional people.

After the site visit, Jerry Stacy does an Excel spreadsheet listing all the plants, forbs, vines, trees, and grasses that we have identified. Jerry then circulates the spreadsheet (via email) to all of us and we compare our lists to his. Meanwhile, Marvin Bloomquist is uploading the pictures and identifying them, with input from Jerry. Ultimately, Marvin sends this information to the client via a link.

Melanie Huff is the main report drafter. Our first reports were in the form of a checklist, with room for extended comments. We found this form unsatisfactory, and we now do our reports as a letter to the client. Our reports can be as short as five pages or as long as 13 pages. They address some or all of the following topics, depending on what was discovered during the site visit: invasive plants and what to do about them; benefits/detriment of ashe junipers, beebrush, poverty weed, and prickly pear cactus; Firewise; information that can be obtained from a groundwater conservation district; importance of knowing your emergency services district and your first responders; water guzzlers for wildlife; rainwater harvesting; conversion from an AG valuation to a WM valuation; oak wilt; damage by feral hogs; encouragement of native grasses. Once the report is drafted, it is circulated to all Team members for review and comment. Once all comments are received and incorporated, the drafter transmits the final report, the plant list, and any supplemental articles via email to the client.

Collectively, we spend 10-15 hours drafting and reviewing the report and plant list. We try to get the report and plant list to the client within 7 days of the site visit.

Here are the relevant numbers for 2015-2018:

Year	No. of Visits	Total Acreage Im- pacted	Cum. Hrs. for Site Visits & Travel (Excludes Pre- and Post-Visit Work)
2015	9	796.12	156.0
2016	12	950.18	230.75
2017	16	2,175.9	288.5
2018	17	810.51	378.0

The LMAP Team does site visits from Mid-March through June 30 and again from September 1 through the first week in December (or earlier if a hard freeze comes before December, as it did in 2018). In the heat of the summer, and again in the dead of winter, there is not much to see or identify. So effectively, the LMAP season is approximately six and one-half months long. While we would prefer to do not more than one site visit in a 7-day period, we have sometimes done two or three if scheduling demanded it.

In the Fall of 2018, we invited three HLMN members to join the LMAP Team to help accommodate our increasing number of site visits. One, Melissa Duckworth, has stayed with the LMAP Team, becoming our seventh member.

We intend to develop a training program in 2019 for HLMN members who have an interest in joining the LMAP Team. It will be similar to the one we ourselves did in 2014. Along with a reasonable knowledge of plant identification and land management principles, an LMAP Team member needs good health, ability to walk distances in heat and cold, and love for the land. We prefer, but do not require, the ability to leap obstacles in a single bound!

The highest compliment we have ever been paid was from a client who stared at us, in hour two of a site visit in 80-degree heat, as we were all crouched down and looking with fascination at a small knotweed leafhopper plant. She said: "You REALLY like doing this, don't you?!"  
Yes, we really do!

## Christmas Banquet and **Awards Ceremony**, December 5th

Some of the baskets Carol curated for the auction HLMN fundraiser, members enjoying!





Our Presidents, Ray Buchanan, Marvin Bloomquist (founding member). Linda O'Nan (founding member), Melissa Duckworth, Cathy Hill, Martelle Luedecke (past president), Susan Montgomery (current President), and Sue Kersey



Martelle announcing the New Officers - Lori Greco, Secretary, Susan Montgomery, President, Stennis Shotts , Vice President, and Kim Shotts, Treasurer



Susan presenting outgoing President Martelle an appreciation of her service .



Martelle and her new quilt



Sue presenting a handmade quilt in appreciation of Martelle serving as President

*Thank you Everyone for such amazing gifts: Yellow roses, gift card to Precision Camera and a quilt handmade with love!! ~ Martelle*

# 2018 Master Naturalist Conference

By Robin England

Wow! What a fantastic experience. Some of you know that I got my start with the Goodwater Chapter and transferred here in January when we moved from Round Rock to Lampasas. I am so proud of the outstanding job Goodwater did. It was great to reconnect with my old friends and I made several new ones. What an inspiration to be surrounded by 650 like-minded people, all working to learn more so that they can share more!

There were so many sessions and field trips to choose from I had a hard time deciding. In the end, I chose the sessions that would most benefit the ranch that my husband and I live on outside of Lampasas.

Did you know that chapters can borrow game cameras from TPW? They have 5, 10, and 20 camera kits! Imagine the game tracking projects our chapter could do! Tania Homayoun ([tania.homayoun@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:tania.homayoun@tpwd.texas.gov)) is the contact. We personally have one game camera and I came right home and started playing with it at one of our water troughs. (pic 1)

I finally learned how to take decent pictures with my Canon camera at a photography class.

After attending the all day "Prescribed Burning,

## Waxwings

By Robert Francis



Four Tao philosophers as cedar waxwings chat on a February berry bush in sun, and I am one.

Such merriment and such sobriety—the small wild fruit on the tall stalk—was this not always my true style?

Above an elegance of snow, beneath a silk-blue sky a brotherhood of four birds. Can you mistake us?

To sun, to feast, and to converse and all together—for this I have abandoned all my other lives.

(Pic 1)



Tools & Techniques” session, I was ready to come home and light up the pastures, much to my husband's dismay. This was a very informative, hands on session that I hope is repeated at future conferences. Burning is such an important tool. (pic 2 & 3)

I did a little spelunking at Avery Ranch Cave. You know, I lived 5 minutes from that cave for 10 years and did not even know it existed. Nico Hauwert from Balcones Canyonlands Preserve was a wealth of information. They are planning to hold community events and school field trips at the cave in the near future. While we were there a member of the HOA was walking by and he is very excited about having the community get involved with the cave. (pic 4, 5 & 6)



Above: Pic 2  
Below: Pic 3



Left: Entrance to Avery Cave (pic 4)

Photos by Robin excepting the one where she is pictured.



Avery Cave



Robin in Avery Cave

A very informative afternoon was spent gathering grass seed with Dr. Barron Rector out at River Ranch County Park. I find grasses so hard to identify and Dr. Rector is an amazing wealth of information. After I got home, I went through some of our pastures collecting seeds and plan to plant them in the spring to bring back areas where we have cleared the cedar.

Did you know that TPW has developed a Google maps based application, Texas Ecosystem Analytical Mapper (TEAM)? <https://tpwd.texas.gov/gis/team/> This is a free, online, interactive application for scientists AND citizens. It "will assist users in understanding Texas habitats and integrate vegetation data with land management and resource planning of all types." It only works in Google Chrome. There are very handy "How To's, FAQ, and HELP" buttons. This is an amazing tool that you should check out.

Screech owls are cute little things! The presenter was a "hoot," too.

Monica Morrison of Texas Native Cats provided another fascinating session. Her focus was the dire situation of the mountain lion in Texas. [texasnativecats.org](http://texasnativecats.org) Maybe we could put together a joint big cat project using the game cameras from TPW, with neighboring chapters at the Balcones Canyonlands Nat'l Wildlife Refuge?

What can I say about Ben Masters, our keynote speaker? I was captivated by his media presentations. Just stunning portrayals of the plight of mountain lions in West Texas, and his video about David Bamberger and Selah was beautiful and inspiring.

Next year's conference will be in Rockwall. I plan to be there, so much more to learn!

## Editor's Note - Here are other photos from the Conference.



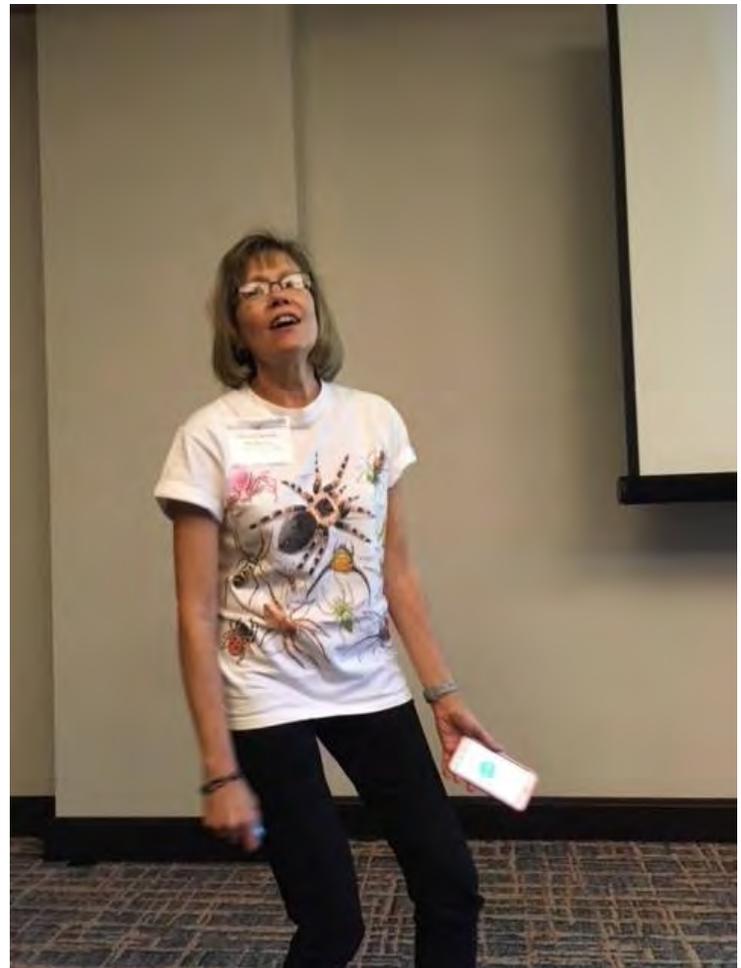
Left top: Jerry Stacy by the San Gabriel River at the presentation on "how to work with small governments on conservation"

Left center: Mark and Terry Stracke

Left bottom: (L to R) Robin England, Wayne Rhoden of the Goodwater Chapter, and Susan Montgomery

Below: Sheryl Smith-Rodgers' presentation on "Spiders of Central Texas"

Photos by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers



Photos by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers



Sheryl with Kip Kiphart



Sheryl with TPW Biologist Sam Kieschnick



Susan Montgomery, Sharon McBride, Linda O’Nan, Jerry Stacy, and Pat Campbell



Photo by Sharon McBride

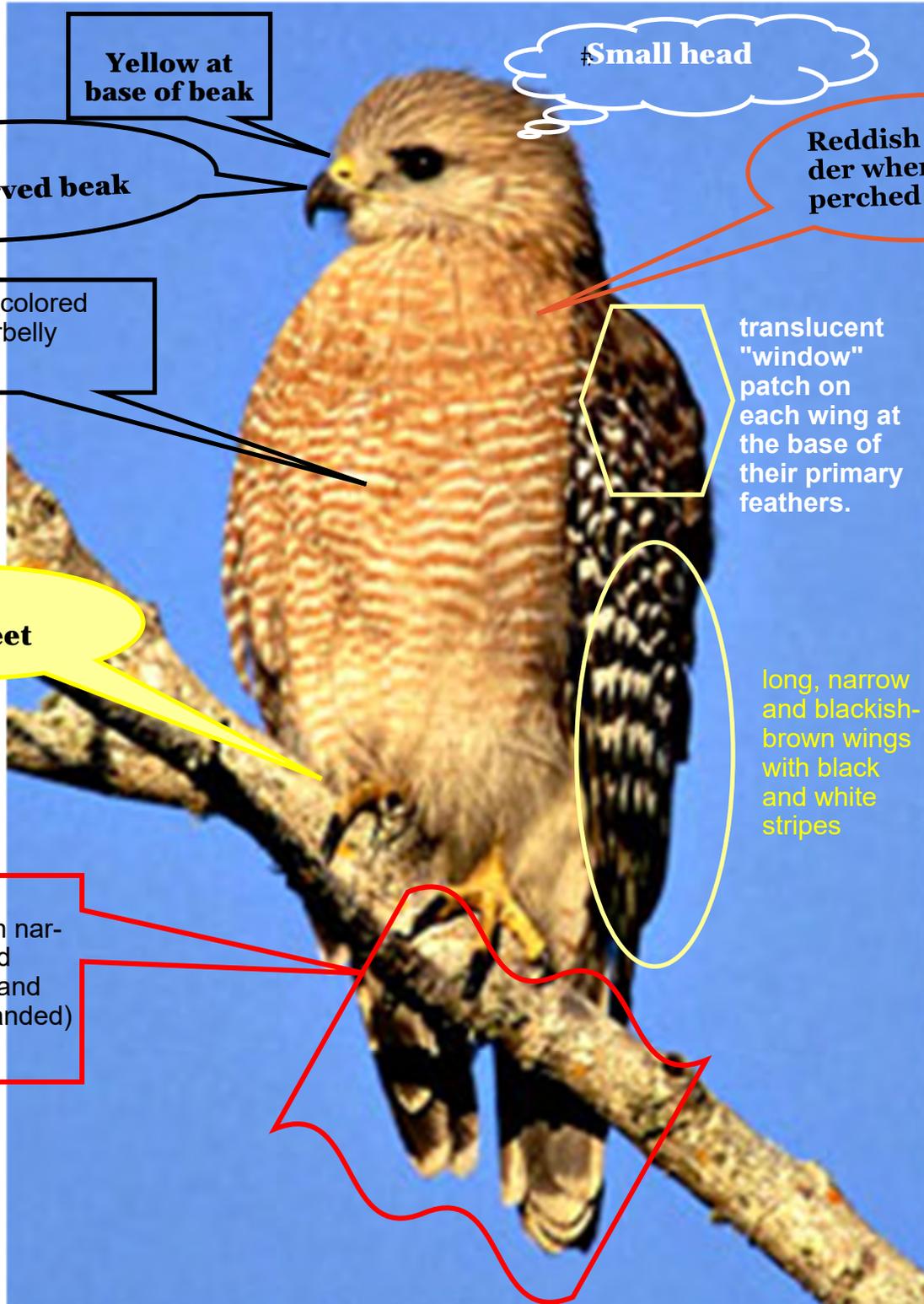


Linda O’Nan and Jerry Stacy



# How to Spot a Red-shouldered Hawk

*Buteo lineatus*



Yellow at base of beak

Small head

Short curved beak

Reddish shoulder when perched

Peachy colored underbelly

translucent "window" patch on each wing at the base of their primary feathers.

Yellow Feet

long, narrow and blackish-brown wings with black and white stripes

long tails with narrow black and white bands and white tips (banded)

long tails with narrow black and white bands and white tips (banded)

# Lori Greco's trip to Chile

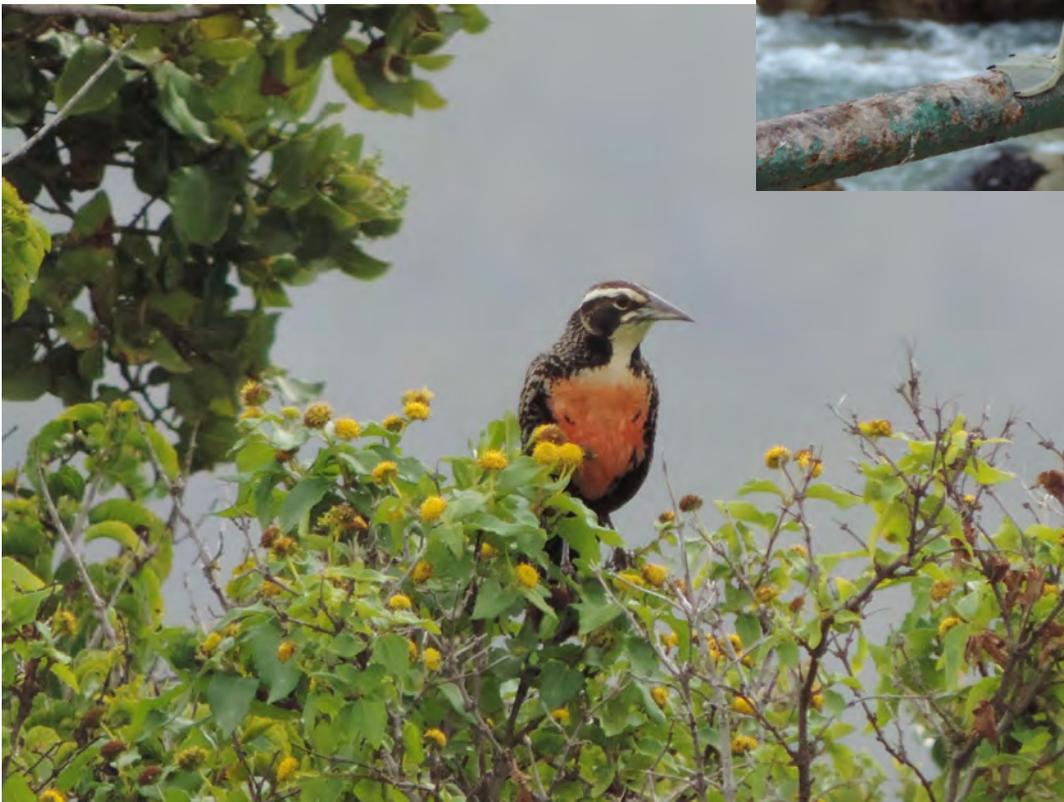
A family friend lives in an area called Casa Blanca on the Pacific Ocean and this first photo is their back yard.



Casa Blanca on the Pacific Ocean

Rufous Shouldered Sparrow  
Photo by Lori Greco

Kelp Gull  
Photo by Lori Greco



Long-tailed Meadowlark  
Photo by Lori Greco



Rufous Shouldered Sparrow  
Photo by Lori Greco



Bobcat Gallery  
brought to you by  
Susan Downey.  
A surprise visit to  
round out the year!

## Images Resulting From An Itchy Shutter Button Finger by P.R. Wyde

It's winter and there are few flowers, very few butterflies and the trees are bare. Worse, it is cold and there have been a number of dreary days. However, my "shutter button finger" is itching and I have to take pictures. Just have to. So almost every day I take my cameras, "leap" into my red truck and take every back road around Kingsland, Marble Falls, Burnet and Llano that I can. Some days I just shoot around the house, around our property or amble to the end of our property and walk along the Llano River. Below are a few of the many shots that I got these last number of weeks.



**Figure 1. Cormorants At One Of The Light House Golf Course Ponds In Kingsland**

I think that the cormorants in Figure 1 are double crested cormorants, but to tell you the truth I am not sure. I am sure that the birders in our group will tell me if I am wrong. (Please do.) I cannot tell you what  
Jeff Conway,

the Project Leader of the Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery (IDNFH), and his workers call this bird, but I can assure you that the names are not very flattering! This enmity is a result of the extreme efficiency of cormorants to catch fish – especially young catfish that cannot escape. These birds are the bane of the hatchery!!! I shot the image in Figure 1 from the road that runs along one of the ponds on the Light House Golf Course located in Kingsland.

The bird shown in Figure 2 is of course an osprey. He (or she) is one of 2 (maybe 3) that are always "hanging" around the IDNFH. I have taken many shots of these birds. I keep taking them because I think that osprey are as regal as bald eagles. You should know that although osprey often eat catfish at the hatchery, they are not despised and reviled by the hatchery workers as the cormorants are. The reason is that osprey only eat one fish at a time, and they catch them with great grace and style.

Also seen at the hatchery was the great egret seen in Figure 3. (Once again, I hope that I have identified this bird correctly since there are several species of egrets. I call this one a great egret based on his size, yellow bill and black feet.)

This brings up some thoughts that I have about the way birders name birds. Now I can see that this bird is relatively large, very elegant and pretty. However, "GREAT!" Isn't calling this bird "great" a little too much! What has he really done to earn this sobriquet?



**Figure 2 Osprey Seen Along The IDNFH Colorado River Trail**

In the same vein, why do birders label some birds as “lesser.” What does that do for a bird’s self-esteem? I personally like lesser gold finches much more than the slightly larger sized –and less formally dressed-- American gold finch.



**Figure 3 Great Egret Seen At A Pond At The IDNFH**



The titmouse shown in Figure 4 is one of my favorite birds even though he is not large, regal, fierce, great or -- lesser. Note, that although the image is not the best, I am still proud of it. Titmice do not hang around the bird feeder. They usually land, grab what they want and leave. I had to shoot the shot quickly using a relatively high shutter speed.

**Figure 4 Tufted Titmouse Seen In My Kingsland Neighborhood**

The bird in Figure 5 is really interesting. (Doesn’t he look sinister?) It is a sharp-shinned hawk. Several weeks ago I was looking at my feeder when suddenly every bird disappeared and everything became very quiet. (It turned out that many of the birds went into the very dense foliage of a Carolina Jasmine that I have planted very near the feeders.) I looked around and just across from the bird feeders in one of my peach trees was this ominous fellow. I tried to get his picture but he flew off when he saw me, before I could press the shutter button. (So much for all the practice that I have pressing that button.)

The next morning the darn hawk was back in the same spot and again it was very quiet and no other birds were visible.



However, this time I got my shot of him! As I watched he flew up and dove right into the Carolina Jasmine after the birds hiding in there. I could not tell if he caught anything, but I can tell you that watching him in action – and getting his image -- “Made My Day!” (My pride is tempered by the fact that I am sure that Stennis would have gotten a shot of the hawk flying into the Carolina Jasmine.)

**Figure 5 Sharp Shin Hawk Seen Across From My Bird Feeder**

The song sparrow shown in Figure 6 brings us back to the other end of the bird spectrum. It is really a sweet little thing and not feared by any bird or rodent. I am kind of proud of this shot. The reason for this pride is that I get a lot of sparrows on and around my bird feeders. Most are house sparrows. However, if I have patience and watch closely I often see in amongst them I can see white crown, Lincoln and other more exotic little brown jobs – err, sparrows. However, even with patience I am probably missing identifying other species of sparrows since sometimes it only takes the presence of an eye bar, a spot of color or buff colored chest to demarcate a different sparrow species. Luckily I enjoy watching all of the sparrows including the house sparrows. They are such busy, gregarious and expressive birds. They carry on so.

**Figure 6 Song Sparrow Seen At My Bird Feeders**

The house finch shown in Figure 7 showed up one day a few weeks days ago in my yard and has stayed. Although he is not as brilliantly colored as some birds, I still think that he is a “dandy.”

Speaking of dandies, I would classify the golden fronted woodpecker shown in Figure 8 as one. He visits the feeders almost daily to get his share of the suet. What I like about her is that she always makes a racket announcing that she is coming. (That gives me time to get ready.)





**Figure 7 House Finch Seen At 5366 River Oaks Drive, Kingsland**



**Figure 8 Yellow Fronted Woodpecker Seen At My Suet Station.**

I believe that the bird in Figure 9 is a golden crowned warbler. (I don't find bird field manuals very helpful in identifying warblers.) Not only is he cute and colorful, but he is also "cheeky."



Just look at the attitude on the little fellow.

**Figure 9 Golden Crowned Warbler Seen At My Bird Feeders**



Once again I am not sure if I have mis-identified a bird. I think that the bird in Figure 10 is an eastern phoebe. I base my guess on both his looks and what I think that the bird is calling, “phoebe, phoebe.” Of course with accents being what they are down here, I could be wrong.

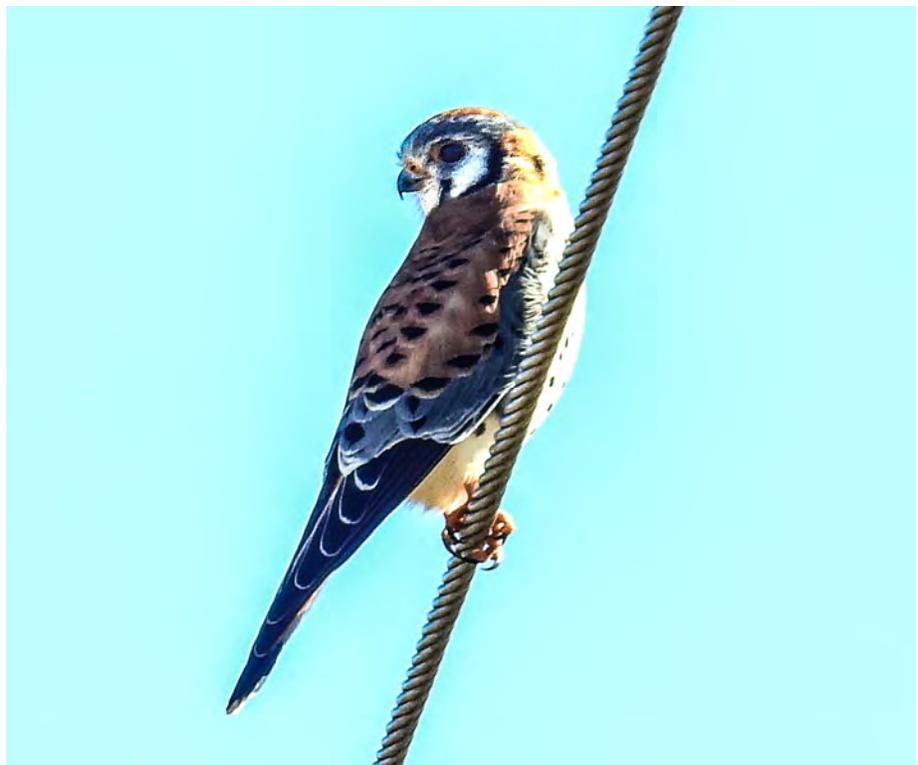
#### Figure 10 Eastern Phoebe

In Figure 11, you see another one of my favorite birds, the American kestrel. I hope that you notice that I do not hesitate in making this identification. I don't think that there is another bird that could be mistaken for this bird. I think that he is one of the prettiest birds around.

But don't let looks fool you. As small and pretty as this bird is, he is a killer! Like the sharp-shinned hawk, he eats other birds! (Indeed, a common name for this hawk is “sparrowhawk.”) A few years ago I had the great pleasure of seeing a pair of these hawks court. It was a show of aerial acrobatics.

#### Figure 11 American Kestrel Seen Along A Burnet County Road

My last image in this article is not of a bird. It is included to show that I can take pictures of other things besides birds. Two weeks ago I was walking in the early morning along the back of our property, along the Llano River. It was only a few days after the “Great Flood of 2018.” It was then that I saw and shot the image that you see. The “sand dunes” are just inches to 2 feet high, but by taking a close up at a low angle, they look, to me, like the dunes of the great Sahara Desert. Of course, I love the light and reflections that are in the image. I would like to point out one more thing about this image. I loved that unlike a bird, I did not have to worry about



anything in the image moving or flying off.

I hope that you like these images. I certainly had fun taking them. (Photography is one of my five major hobbies; the others being fishing, gardening, reading and traveling.) The main reason that I submitted them to The Steward and to you is because what else can I do with them? They do little good sitting on my computer or on of my flash drives.

I also hope that the images will stimulate you to go outdoors, meander back roads, or take paths less traveled.



**Figure 12 “Sand Dunes”  
Along the Llano River in  
Kingsland**

Granite Shoals Wildlife Viewing Station recovering from the flood.

Granite Shoals Wildlife Viewing Sta-  
tion GSWVS Parking Lot -  
December, 2018

Photo by Fredi Franki





GSWVS Pond near the front December 2018 Photo by Fredi Franki



## Luedeckes'

By Bill (Dad) and Martelle (Daughter)

Happy New Year!! Did you know that there is evidence, that the tradition of eating black-eyed peas for luck goes as far back as 500 A.D? We just know they are yummy, and who can turn down a tradition that tastes great.

### Outdoor burning/Fire

Now that winter is here, many take this opportunity to burn brush piles (outside of the city limits.) We wanted to take this moment to cover steps that should be taken and go over favorable conditions for burns. Note that prescribed burns are a different routine; beginning with a prescription and plan. If you are considering a prescribed burn, according to Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TREQ) "Notify the Texas A&M Forest Service before carrying out any prescribed or controlled burns that are intended for forest management." And contact your local agent.

Before you start your personal burn contact your local sheriff's department. They will ask for your name, contact

number, and address. Blanco (830) 868-7104, Burnet (512) 756-8080, Llano (325) 247-5767, Mason (325) 396-4705, Williamson (512) 943-1300. Although rain is an indicator, it is not the only variable to consider when judging whether to burn.

- 1) How's the wind blowing? According to TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) the winds shouldn't be less than 6 mph and NOT more than 23 mph.
- 2) If the winds are 8 to 15 mph the relative humidity needs to be 30-50%. Check with AgriLife Extension for your specific weather condition requirement questions. Burnet County Texas AgriLife extension office (512) 756-5463; College Station (979) 845-7800.
- 3) Outdoor burning should start after sunrise and be finished before sunset.
- 4) Never leave the fire unattended.
- 5) Make sure you have water, shovel, soil, a means to control the fire.
- 6) Clear, by mowing or grading, at least a 6' (feet) circle around your burn pile.
- 7) Burn pile should only consist of brush, trimmings, untreated wood, or paper products. Black smoke means there is something in the pile that shouldn't be.

**NO** burning on **RED FLAG** days!! Red Flag days are defined by the National Weather Service: "A Red Flag Warning means warm temperatures, very low humidities, and stronger winds are expected to combine to produce an increased risk of fire danger. "Our counties are under the Austin/San Antonio region. For further questions regarding Red Flag Days call (830) 629-0130 or <https://www.weather.gov/ewx/fire> for Red Flag warning status.

### Meadowlarks and Robins

Have you seen the Meadowlarks and the Robins? With the cooler weather we have a changing of our avian guard. Did you know in the Blackfoot tribe, robins are a symbol of peace? When they saw a robin, they believed their camp was safe from attack. Ever watch a robin catch a worm. They'll stand motionless with their head cocked a little to the side. And then when the worm thinks it's safe and pops its head above the soil, the robin is there for breakfast.



We are fortunate in Burnet county to have both Eastern and Western Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna* and *Sturnella neglecta*). You can differentiate between the two with binoculars or a camera. The Eastern Meadowlark will have yellow between their eye and the beginning of their bill. Meriwether Lewis (of Lewis and Clark) was the first to notice the slight difference between the two species. These birds have extremely strong muscles connecting to their bill. One way they eat is they thrust their bill into the soil and pry it open with their beak, thus leaving a gaping (gaping to birds) hole full of unsuspecting bugs. Keep your souls and soles in your garden!

Remember the True Master Gardener: Jesus said, "I am the vine; my Father is the Gardener." John 15:1

# Volunteer Opportunities

Adopt a Highway	January 9th 10:30	@Fish Hatchery
Sparrow Fest	February 2nd	Balcones Canyonlands
Military Family Day	February 16th	Candlelight Ranch
Military Family Day	March 17th	Candlelight Ranch
Lawn and Garden Show	March 23rd	Burnet
Archeology Fair	March 23rd	Nightingale Center

## Martelle's Message:

I thought about making a video to tell y'all how much it has meant to me, the honor to be HLMN President. However, I started getting teary eyed (to say the least) even in the video. Even as I type, (sniffle sniffle) I am filled with joy for the adventures we have had this year. Sure, there were some moments when we discovered how strong a TEAM can be; yet, in my mind's eye all I remember is the smiles we brought. Children "Wow" smiling at the new discoveries of nature. Many, many children and adults would not/will not have the opportunity to explore, understand or enjoy nature (as only a Master Naturalists does) unless we make the opportunities for them. Y'all truly are the best. (I'm crying tears of joy again.) To watch and be a part of the magic y'all create with the many diverse passions we incorporate, makes my heart swell with delight.

Susan and Stennis have some awesome sauce ideas for this year!!

Remember no project is too small (including sending articles to Becky for the Steward) no plot of land to minimal for us to help improve upon.

Thank y'all again for having faith in me to be your leader for 2018!!

~ Martelle, past president of 2018

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

[becky\\_breazeale@yahoo.com](mailto:becky_breazeale@yahoo.com)

Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions for each quarter's issue are located on the HLMN event calendar. Or contact Becky and Martelle.

**Thank y'all for all your hard work and contributions!!**



### 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.



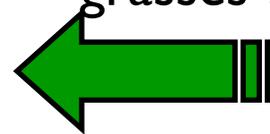
The mission of the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas

#### Officers:

<b>President:</b>	Susan Montgomery	29sanmont@gmail.com	(281) 782-4782 cell
<b>V.P.</b>	Stennis Shotts	stennisshotts@gmail.com	(678) 637-8367 cell
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Can you name these grasses ?



**Hint:** LMAP team members do.

Photos by Marvin Bloomquist

Do you know the name of this flower?

