

THE TEXAS STAR

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HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

Chapter Website: <http://www.hillcountrymasternaturalist.org>

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

A hummingbird is a hummingbird, right? Not entirely! The Texas Hill Country has recorded 16 species of these amazing aerialists. Some can be found here year round and others are pleasant surprises the rare times they do show up. What hummingbirds do you have in your garden? What do they need in their habitat?

Mark Klym, with Texas Parks and Wildlife, will be the featured speaker at our February meeting. He will speak on ***Hummingbirds of The Texas Hill Country***, focusing on which species may be found in this area, why they're here, and the dynamic relationship between our native plants and these wonderful birds.

A graduate of Lake Superior State University in Michigan, Mr. Klym received degrees in Biological Science and Fisheries and Wildlife Management. He "followed the hummingbirds to Texas" in 1999 to work with Texas Parks and Wildlife where he is currently the coordinator of the Texas Wildscapes and the Texas Hummingbird Roundup programs. He is the coauthor of the recently published book *Hummingbirds of Texas* by Texas A&M Press.

The meeting will be held at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street on Monday, February 26 beginning at 7 pm.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY PHYLLIS MUSKA

Any compulsive learners out there? For many of us, one of the most appealing aspects of being a Master Naturalist is the lifelong learning opportunity it presents. During the initial training period, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the amount of information presented from week to week. It's one of those 'the more you know, the more you realize you don't know' situations. But I know many of us feel challenged and renewed by the thought that, however smart we might be, we'll never know it all. The title 'Master' Naturalist is a bit deceptive, since we may be knowledgeable in a number of areas, but none of us will be experts in all the areas we cover.

The certification requirement of eight hours of advanced training (AT) each year may seem daunting at first. There is so much material covered in the basic class that some folks may wonder, how will I ever find eight more hours of material that hasn't been covered already? But we are fortunate to have numerous opportunities available in our four-county area. In the first few months of this year, we have already seen a dozen or so AT opportunities totaling over 50 hours – and this is in addition to the 3-day Firewise training this month! These sessions offer training on a variety of topics, from rainwater harvesting to GPS to land stewardship – something for everyone.

As a chapter, we can be proud that some of our AT is conducted by our own expert members – Jim Stanley has put together a number of excellent presentations on grass and plant ID and land stewardship. Sandra and Scott Magee have offered their helpful class on forbs several times. Sandy Peña and her husband Raúl have shared their expertise and experience on rainwater harvesting.

We have a fairly liberal policy on AT in that even if you have claimed previous AT credit on a particular topic, we leave it up to you to claim

credit as long as you learn something new. Jim's grass ID class is a good example – I've attended three or four times, but each time I come away a little more confident in my knowledge of our native grasses. This is a perfect time of year to take advantage of our AT offerings, since there are fewer projects and other activities taking place during the winter. Once spring arrives, we'll all be ready to spend our time outside, so sign up for some AT and indulge that compulsion to learn something new! Check out the schedule below for AT opportunities coming up soon.



CALENDAR

February 16 – 19 The Tenth Annual Great Backyard Bird Count. (**CC-06-A**) Help create a mid-winter snapshot of where the birds are by counting birds at any location for at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Send your tallies to the web site (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>) and be entered in a prize drawing for binoculars, bird books, bird feeders, and more.

February 17 (Saturday), 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. **Garden Tenders Workshop** at Riverside Nature Center (**HCMN AT**)

February 21 (Wednesday) 1:30 pm, **HCMN Board Meeting**, Riverside Nature Center

February 24 (Saturday) 9:00 am – Noon **Attracting Birds Workshop (HCMN AT)** At Old Daley Ranch. Carpool from Cibolo Nature Center promptly at 9 AM. Admission:

February 24 (Saturday) 6:30 pm **Astronomy Program** at Old Tunnel. Contact Nyta Hensley at nytahensley@hctc.net

February 26 Deadline to sign up for **Old Tunnel Volunteer Training (HCMN AT)**. There will be two separate one-day training sessions Saturday, March 17, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm at Friedrich Park outside Leon Springs and Saturday, March 31, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm at Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville. Plan to bring a sack lunch, whichever session you attend. Space is limited, so contact Nyta Hensley (nytahensley@hctc.net)

March 1 Deadline to sign up for the one-day workshop on **Environmental Issues in Karst**: planning, managing, and investigating human impacts to karst aquifers, Monday, March 5, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm. at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio (**See details below**)

March 3 (Saturday) 10:00 am **Work on wildscape** at Old Tunnel (**KL-03-A**) Volunteers will be planting trees, flowers, etc., and picking up trash along the roads around Old Tunnel. Contact Nyta Hensley (nytahensley@hctc.net)

March 6 (Tuesday) NPSOT meeting, RNC, 2:00 pm Featured speaker will be Bill Carr, senior botanist with Texas Nature Conservancy. He will discuss **Diamond Y Spring Preserve** which is located 8-12 miles North of Fort Stockton.

March 13 (Tuesday) and the second Tuesday of each month (till at least May), **work day at Los Rincones (KR-05-A)**. Gather at 8:30 am. Contact Nancy Vaughan (nvaughan@kctc.com)

March 23 (Friday) 8:30 am – 2:00 pm **Land Stewardship in the Texas Hill Country** at Cibolo Nature Center. (**HCMN AT**). (See details below)



TWO AT OPPORTUNITIES

Protecting Our Karst Geology (AT)

The Edwards Aquifer Authority's Distinguished Lecturer Series is presenting a program on Monday, March 5, from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm, at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio. The presenter is Dr. John Gunn, Director of the Limestone Research Group, School of Applied Science, University of Huddersfield, England.

Dr. Gunn is a Chartered Geologist and an experienced karst scientist and caver who has traveled widely and explored caves in over 35 countries. He founded the Limestone Research Group, currently based in the University of Huddersfield, which is a center of excellence for both research and consultancy activities. Dr. Gunn has written more than 300 publications and consultancy reports and was editor of the Encyclopedia of Caves and karst Science, published in 2003. This work was awarded a prize in the category "Most Significant Publication on a Cave or Karst Topic" at the 2005 International Congress of Speleology. Dr. Gunn currently serves on the Cave and karst Task Force of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas. Last year, he received an Honorary Life Membership Award from the National Speleological Society.

Cost of the program is \$20 for the day, and includes lunch and supporting materials. Southwest Research Institute is located at 6220 Culebra Road in San Antonio. As noted above, the deadline to register is March 1. For

more details or to register, call Elaine Vasquez at 210-222-2204, or 800-292-1047.

Land Stewardship in the Texas Hill Country

Your land management decisions and practices make a difference to soil and range health, wildlife and ground water recharge! Don't you want to do your part to maintain the health and welfare of the Texas Hill Country? Come and learn from our top local experts presenting the most important information, so you can "do the right thing!"

The Workshop will take place March 23, from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm. The cost of \$20 per person, \$30 per couple, and \$10 per student includes lunch and handouts.

Choose the topic of greatest interest. They will include water resources, rainwater catchment, stocking levels, deer management, oak wilt prevention, landscaping with native plants, riparian corridors and wildlife, landscape care for water conservation, conservation easements, and eco-tourism.

Keynote speaker is Texas Hill Country landowner, gardening expert and radio personality Bob Webster! Afternoon sessions will feature outdoor time observing specific examples. This program is presented through collaboration among Kendall Soil and Water District, Cibolo Nature Center, Kendall RC&C, Native Plant Society of Texas, Natural Resources Conservation Service and other state agencies



TMN CHAPTER AWARDS FOR DECEMBER 2006

The following 19 members earned 22 awards between our November meeting and December 31, 2006.

Debra Boutwell, Rich Olivieri, Peggy Robinson and Jerri Workman of our Class of 2005 have completed all their training classes, 40 hours of Volunteer service in their communities and 8 hours of Advanced Training to achieve Certification as Texas Master Naturalists. They received their Certificates and their green and white Dragonfly pins.

Jim Gardner, Susan Longacre, Barbara Noblin, Rebecca Shupp and Bob Tanner of our Class of 2005 have completed an additional 40 hours of Volunteer service and 8 hours of Advanced Training to achieve the special first-year re-certification award. They received the 2006 pin of the year, the Texas Prickly Pear.

Dan Behringer, Doug Bresler, Julia Campbell, Marilyn Murrmann, Howard Platte, Barbara Quinby, John Quinby and Wilma Teague have re-certified for 2006 by completing 40 Volunteer hours and 8 hours of Advanced Training in 2006. They received the TMN pin of year, the Texas Prickly Pear.

Bob Tanner has also earned his Bronze Milestone award recognizing 250 cumulative hours of Volunteer service since he became a TMN. He received a Bronze Dragonfly. **Phyllis Muska, Bob Richie and John Quinby** earned their Silver Milestone award for 500 hours of cumulative Volunteer service. They received Silver Dragonflies.

Class of 2005 Sets a Chapter Record!

A special congratulations goes to our Class of 2005 for their exceptional accomplishments! From October 1, 2005 to December 31, 2006, **68% of their members achieved certification (23 of 34 members), which is the highest rate since the Class of 2002.** In addition, **29% of their members re-certified in this period, which is an all-time record for our Chapter.** Members of the Class of 2005 provided 2,504 hours of volunteer service and attended 540 hours of Advanced Training in 15 months to set these remarkable records. We can all be very proud of these high-achievers!



F.Y.I. ...

Eagles Nesting Near Llano

If you haven't seen the eagles' nest visible from Highway 29 between Llano and Buchanan Dam, it is well worth a trip! Don and I heard about it recently, and on a partly cloudy

Thursday, we decided to pick up some sandwiches and head up there to see for ourselves. Along with a few other visitors parked along the road side (there is a convenient area for a few cars to pull off, next

to the fence), we watched in awe as the lone adult in evidence posed on a top branch. The eaglet (there is only one this year, we hear) didn't show.

Activity in this nest has been documented since 1993 by Jess and Peggy Thompson of Burnet (www.cottonwoodphotography.com). They report that it is home to three adults, rather than the usual monogamous two. It is speculated that the third bird is an older female who has lost her mate.

The nest is about 125 yards from the road. You can't miss it – someone described it to us as big enough to hold a Volkswagen! If you are going to Llano on Highway 16, it's 8.1 miles onto Highway 29, heading east. If you're coming from Burnet, it's 23 miles west (for you GPS fans, it's N 30° 46' 22" / W 98° 33' 5").

The baby bird will be fully fledged and flying by Mid April. We suggest you go on a weekday—that pull-off area will be busy on weekends. dsr



Can Emergency Response Vehicles Access Your Land?

Good question. Dusty Bruns, who spoke at our January meeting, writes in the February newsletter of the Hill Country Prescribed Burning Association: "While it may be easy for you to drive your pickup, jeep, or ATV through your place, imagine driving a large motor home or a five-ton truck down the same road. ...a bit narrow...? What about low-hanging limbs—they might knock off your mirrors and scratch the paint on the top, right? Then think about our fire department personnel trying to negotiate these same pastures roads to fight a wildfire. While they do have small "quick attack" trucks, these smaller trucks carry limited water, and should be backed up by larger trucks with greater capacities and capabilities. Can these...trucks fit under all those low-hanging limbs without tearing off emergency equipment such as light-bars, radio

aerials, and spotlights? Think also of the crew...who may be on the outside of the truck trying to man a hose. ... Let's give these folks a break! Right now would be a good time to trim low hanging limbs and get some of that brush away from the road. ...shoot for a *minimum* of 12' by 12'"

He points out that winter is a good time to trim oaks and minimize possible risk of oak wilt. "The insects that carry the disease are not as active in the winter...If you are uncomfortable and don't want to be out, neither does that beetle!" (Even in winter, when trimming oak branches, be sure to paint the wound immediately, to be safe. ed.)



Lindheimera texana: Texas Star

FROM THE HERBARIUM

Eve's Necklace (*sophora affinis*)



Eve's Necklace is a small tree that grows to about 35' tall, usually much shorter in our area. Although its shape is nicest when it gets full sun, it is a bit more irregular in dappled shade and even vine-like in shade. It is deciduous and is naturally found along rivers and streams and on limestone ledges and outcroppings. The leaves are pinnately compound. The leaflets are alternate.

The blooms appear from March through May. They are a delicate pale rose or pinkish lavender in color and are in drooping clusters. The blooms are not very showy. If you are so lucky to live near one it is worth a daily visit during the spring just to see them.

Its common name comes from the fruit formation. The fruits are black, elongated and are greatly constricted between the seeds forming a "black chain". This tree needs protection from the deer.

Barbara Lowenthal

Please send newsletter contributions and comments to Donna Robinson at dsrassoc@ktc.com