

THE TEXAS STAR

MAY 2007 VOL. 5 No 5



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

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

MAY PROGRAM*

***Notice: Because our regular meeting date would fall on Memorial Day, our May meeting will take place one week earlier, on Monday, May 21 at the UGRA Auditorium, 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville at 7 PM.**

Texas springs, one of our state's most valuable resources, will be the subject of this month's Texas Master Naturalist program. Chad Norris, with the Water Resources Branch of Texas Parks and Wildlife, will be the featured speaker. His program "Our Vanishing Texas Springs" will provide a general overview of Texas springs, including the types of springs, their distribution and abundance, and why these vanishing resources are important to Texas.

Additionally, Chad will discuss his research on springs of the Edwards Plateau, including the identification of characteristic biota, the applicability

of biotic metrics to assessing spring health, and other key findings.

Mr. Norris has a BS in Environmental Geology from University of Houston and a MS in Aquatic Biology from Southwest Texas State University. He joined TP&W nine years ago where his duties include gathering baseline biological and hydrological data on springs of the Edwards Plateau, reviewing water rights permits and water development projects for environmental impact as well as assisting private landowners and other entities with springs conservation and restoration efforts. He is currently working on "Springs of Texas Vol. II" with Helen Besse.

AND MORE...

On June 2, Chad Norris, our guest speaker at the May meeting, will lead a MEMBERS ONLY field trip to Spring Creek Springs. This is a magnificent mesic canyon with permanent water located on private property near Boerne. We will observe and discuss the biological and hydrological elements of

the spring. Dr. Bill Ward will also accompany the group to give information relating to the geology of the area. Members will have an opportunity to sign up for this special field trip at the May 21st meeting. *The group will be limited to 20.*

SIGN-UP TIME

We are now accepting applications for our next class which will start in late August. If you know anyone interested in becoming a Master Naturalist,

please have them contact our membership director, John Huecksteadt, at johnh@beecreek.net.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY PHYLLIS MUSKA

Being able to identify and document the plants and animals in our part of the world is one of the most important skills we can develop as Master Naturalists. Before we can learn what role an organism plays in the grand scheme of our surroundings, we must first know what it is. Just about every county and cross-county project on our list involves some ability to recognize native and/or exotic species.

Although we are fortunate to have numerous advanced training opportunities which can help us become more knowledgeable about our fauna and flora, nothing can replace actual experience out in the field. 'Practice makes perfect' is a real understatement when it comes to using field guides and our senses of sight, sound, touch, smell – even taste – to recognize and ID plants and animals. The more often we visit a park or natural area – or even our own land – with the purpose of familiarizing ourselves with our field guides and learning more about our forbs, trees, grasses, birds, butterflies and other critters, the easier it gets, and the better we get at it. The good news is, the more time we spend using a field guide, the less we'll need it in the long run.

But for those of us who don't always have the discipline to pack up a field guide and set out to

explore, identify and document on our own, we have a unique opportunity with one of our new projects at Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville: Tom Collins is coordinating the collection of data for a fauna census, and getting us jump-started with Friday morning walks, each preceded by a helpful session focusing on the identification of a different group of critters. Some of the groups covered so far include birds, butterflies, and moths, and through the last few weeks of May, Tom will cover dragonflies and damselflies, frogs and toads – including typical calls – and spiders and other arthropods.

In the first few weeks of our Friday morning walks and census-taking, we have documented almost 70 different species*, including at least three birds and one butterfly that had never been logged at Riverside Nature Center before! I would encourage each of you to join Tom at 9:00am on Fridays through the end of May at Riverside to participate in this fun and educational project (KR-02-F). Any of you can contribute to the census on your own, but you can learn a lot as well as enjoy the company of Tom and other 'critter counters' before you do.

* see the RNC fauna census report on page 6

AWARDS

New Certifications:

Gloria Costello, William Lange

2007 Recertification:

Betty Gardner, Adele Junkin, Scott Magee, Sandra Magee, Susan Longacre, Lars Nielsen

**Cathy Downs actually completed her 500 hours in March. This information was mistakenly omitted in last month's newsletter. We apologize, and congratulate Cathy, and all these MNs on their significant achievements.*

Old Tunnel WMA volunteers recently attended water quality monitoring training conducted by Texas Watch's certified trainer, Nyta Hensley. Completing the training and receiving certification were *Otis Fox, Maggie Tatum, Kathleen McBride and daughter Chloe, and Chuck Smith*. They will join with previously certified monitors from our chapter, *Diane McMahon, Myrna Langford, Bob Richie, and Nyta Hensley*, in an ongoing project to

Special 1st Year Recertification:

Virginia Sawin

Milestones:

Cathy Downs – 500-hours, Sandra Magee – 500-hours, Susan Longacre – 250-hours, Lars Nielsen – 250-hours*

conduct sampling of the water at Old Tunnel and submit this data to Texas Watch. Also assisting with the project are members from other MN chapters. The research will provide further information about bat habitat and the natural resources.

COMING UP...

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Wednesday, May 16, 1:30 p.m.—Monthly meeting of the board of directors of the Hill Country Master Naturalist chapter, Riverside Nature Center,

Monday, May 21, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly meeting of the Hill Country Master Naturalist chapter (See page 1 for details).

Monday, May 21, 7:00 p.m. — Annual meeting of the Hill Country Prescribed Burning Association, Union Church, adjacent to Schreiner University campus.

Thursday, May 24, beginning at 8:30 a.m., *Hill Country Living 101*, Kerr County Extension Office. Sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension, this program is “a learning opportunity for new and existing landowners.” Cost is \$25; deadline for registration is May 22. For current MNs, this could be a worthwhile “refresher” course; pass the word to friends and neighbors who might be new to the Hill Country. Call the Kerr County Extension office (257-6568) for details.

Tuesday, May 29, 7:00 p.m.— Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT), Fredericksburg Chapter, Gillespie County Historical Society Bldg., 312 W. San Antonio Street, Fredericksburg.

Tuesday, June 5, 2:00 p.m. — NPSOT, Kerrville Chapter, Riverside Nature Center.

Tuesday, June 5, 7:00 p.m. — NPSOT, Boerne Chapter, Cibolo Nature Center.

Saturday, June 9, 2:00 p.m. — NPSOT, Bandera Chapter, Medina Community Library.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Tuesday, May 22 — Kerrville-Schreiner Park (KR-01-A) 8:30 a.m. to Noon. Jerri Workman reports, “To date, we have completed two workdays at the Kerrville-Schreiner Park. The weather has not been that accommodating either day. That has not stopped the Volunteers from putting in some great efforts.

“The main area of concentration so far has been the removal of second growth cedar. We could concentrate on this for quite some time and still not make that big of a dent. But the abundance of cedar has not weighed on the Volunteer’s spirits as some serious “lopping” has already occurred.

“Our next “4th Tuesday” will be May 22nd. Please feel free to join in on the fun at Kerrville-Schreiner Park. If you don’t have your own special pair of loppers, the Park has a pair waiting for you. For additional information please contact Jim Gardner at 830.896.1122.”



THIS JUST IN... from the state TMN office

The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) is pleased to announce the launch of ***Earth Portal*** (www.EarthPortal.org).

Earth Portal is a comprehensive, free, and dynamic resource for timely, objective, science-based information about the environment built by a global community of environmental experts: educators, physical-, life-, and social- scientists, scholars, and professionals who have joined together to communicate to the world.

In contrast to information from anonymous sources with no quality control, the Earth Portal is created and governed by individuals and organizations who put their names behind their words and where attribution and expert-review for accuracy are fundamental.

The Earth Portal includes:

- **Encyclopedia of Earth** (www.eoearth.org) with an initial 2,300 articles from over 700 experts from 46 countries. It is a means for the global scientific community to come together to produce the first free, comprehensive expert-driven information resource on the environment. The Encyclopedia includes articles, e-books and reports, interactive maps, and biographies, and will eventually be published in other major languages.
- **Earth News** (www.earthportal.org/news) includes breaking news

And from **Sierra Club Lone Star Action Network**:

Please let the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission know that you want **native Texas turtles protected**.

The problem: Massive commercial collection of native Texas turtles for food markets in Asia is threatening the stability of turtle populations in the state.

The solution: The TPW Commission should adopt the ban on the commercial collection of native Texas turtle species proposed by the Commission in April.

Action needed: Submit comments to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in support of the proposed agency rules banning commercial collection of native Texas turtles.

Deadline for responding: Please take action by Monday, May 21, 2007.

updates from many sources, with links from key words to Encyclopedia articles, enabling readers to learn about the science behind the headlines.

- **Earth Forum** (www.earthportal.org/forum) allows the public to engage in discussions with experts, ask questions and get answers, and to participate in community debates about issues that matter to them.

- **Environment in Focus** (www.earthportal.org/?page_id=70) provides an exploration of a major issue each week – energy, climate change, environmental economics and other topics – led by a prominent expert in the subject, with articles, news, places, discussions, Q&A, interesting facts, and more.

The National Council for Science and the Environment (www.NCSEonline.org) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the scientific basis for environmental decision-making. The NCSE specializes in programs that foster collaboration among diverse institutions, communities and individuals. The NCSE serves as secretariat for a growing Environmental Information Coalition of environmental experts and organizations, which is building the Earth Portal. ManyOne Networks, an innovative IT firm based near San Jose, California, has provided engineering and vision for the Earth Portal.



FROM THE HERBARIUM*

Huisache Daisy
(*Amblyolepus setigera*)

Family: Asteraceae (as-ter-AY-see ay)

Genus: *Amblyolepus*

Species: *setigera*

Category

Annual

Bloom Time

Spring to early summer

Height

6-18 inches

Foliage

Herbaceous

Sun Exposure

Full sun to part shade

Propagation Methods

From seed; direct sow outdoors in fall

Bloom Color

Yellow

Seed Collecting

Allow seed heads to dry on plants;
remove and collect seeds

Blooming from spring to early summer, Huisache Daisy is easily grown from seed. While it is an annual, it readily reseeds for the next season. Flower heads average 1 ½ inches; the alternate, bluish-green leaves may reach 2 ½ inches in length.

Huisache Daisy is found across most of the Hill Country. The plant grows in well-drained sandy loam or limestone soils and makes a good nectar plant for butterflies. Plants may be browsed by deer and livestock.

Sandra Magee

*I have received many helpful and positive comments about the “From the Herbarium” feature in our newsletter. I want to express special thanks to the members who have contributed so far: Barbara Lowenthal, for February’s feature, Eve’s Necklace; Betty Gardner for March’s Fringed Bluestar; Cathy Downs for April’s Perfume Ball, and Sandra Magee for this month’s Huisache Daisy. Watch for future reports from them, and from the Susans – Longacre and Sander! Also special thanks to Linda Smith for the photo, and Barb Lowenthal for the text in January’s issue about the rare white-tipped black moth found in the Kerrville-Schreiner Park on 11/5/06— maybe the first sighting documented in Kerr County! Ed.

STEP, CRAWL, OR FLY UP AND BE COUNTED!

Hill Country TMN volunteers conducted the third fauna census at Riverside Nature Center on 3/27/07. They report 21 species of birds, 16 species of lepidoptera (butterflies and moths), 3 species of odonata (damselflies and dragonflies), 4 species of arthropod (spiders, ants), 2 species of amphibians, and 1 mollusca—gastropod: “one empty snail shell.”

Several of the fauna were noted as new species sighted at RNC: a Downy Woodpecker, a Nashville warbler, and several Summer Azure butterflies.

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



Lindheimeria texana: Texas Star

Hill Country Master Naturalist
Newsletter Editor
431 Timber Ridge
Kerrville, TX 78028