



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

# THE TEXAS STAR

FEBRUARY 2003    vol. 1 No 2

## FEBRUARY PROGRAM: "THE BAT TUNNEL"

Kirby Carroll, a Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will give a presentation on the "Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area" (affectionately known to locals as "the Bat Tunnel"). This unique treasure arose in 1942 when the local railroad line near Fredericksburg was shut down, and Mexican free-tailed bats claimed the Tunnel as their summer home. The Tunnel is over 900 feet in length, and is occupied by over 3 million Mexican free-tailed bats (including "pups") each July and August. Each bat can eat its weight in insects nightly, and the whole colony may devour over 25 tons of moths per night. The bats return to the Tunnel between midnight and daybreak, having traveled an average 25 to 30 miles to forage. The bats roost in the tunnel from May through October. In late October, the bats fly to Mexico for the winter. During this migration, they can fly at altitudes of 10,000 feet and speeds of 60 mph.

Mr. Carroll, the Area Manager of the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area, will tell us about the bats who live in the Tunnel, the options for observing the bats leaving the tunnel at dusk, and current volunteer opportunities at the facility. He will also discuss future volunteer opportunities at the Tunnel which might be of interest to our Chapter. Don't miss this unique presentation focused on our Hill Country fauna!

If you want to know more about the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area, visit it's website at

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hillcountry/wma/otwma/public\\_access.htm](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hillcountry/wma/otwma/public_access.htm) .

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*BY SANDY PENA*

This is only our second month as an official chapter, but already we have some statistics to crow about! Our first Annual Report to the state, which covered just October through December of 2002, showed that we earned **296 volunteer service hours and 325.75 advanced training hours!** **Congratulations to everybody for such an impressive beginning!**

Our volunteer projects are expanding and several new ones are in development under the guidance of our chairman, John Quinby. Jim Stanley, our advanced training chairman, is keeping us up to date on the dozens of opportunities available to us, as well as developing some at the chapter level. With all the activities we have to choose from, I bet virtually the entire chapter will become certified this year! As wonderful as such an achievement is, it means so much more because it represents your individual effort to make a difference, and that is, of course, the essence of the Texas Master Naturalist program. Keep up the great work!

## CALENDAR

**“APPROVED AT” INDICATES THAT AN EVENT HAS BEEN APPROVED AS ADVANCED TRAINING FOR OUR CHAPTER.**

**February 24 Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter meeting “The Bat Tunnel”** and more...at **6:30 PM** at Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville (*see article above*)

**February 28 – March 1, 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring South Texas Farm & Ranch Forum**, sponsored by Bexar Audubon, USDA NRCS; TPWD *et al* at Seguin; [susan@wordwright.com](mailto:susan@wordwright.com) or Susan Hughes at 210-532-2332. **APPROVED AT**

**March 1 “Historic Flora of Texas”**, the 2003 Spring Symposium sponsored by the Native Plant Society of Texas and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Research Center. **APPROVED AT**

**March 4 “Identification of Hill Country Plants”** by Lee Knox, a Range Management Specialist from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service – Kerrville presented at **Native Plant Society of Texas - Kerrville Chapter meeting** held at **2 PM** at Riverside Nature Center. Do you have native plants you can't identify? Put a specimen in a plastic bag and bring it to the meeting!

**March 28--29 2nd Texas Native Fish Weekend**, presented by Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center and East Texas Master Naturalists, Athens, TX.; Magie Ranc, 903-676-2277 **APPROVED AT**

**April 8 & 9 evenings “Hummingbirds and the Hummingbird Roundup”** (a data gathering/survey project) by Mark Klym from TPWD; The Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center, \$10 fee, **APPROVED AT**

**April 24--26 Texas Ornithological Society Meeting**, Port Lavaca, TX  
[http://www.texasbirds.org/meetings/port\\_lavaca\\_2003.html](http://www.texasbirds.org/meetings/port_lavaca_2003.html)

**APPROVED AT**

**April 26 Earth Day Celebration & Native Plant Sale**, by Riverside Nature Center & Native Plant Society of Texas – Kerrville Chapter; 2 presentations are **APPROVED AT**: **“Butterfly Gardening”** by Deborah Payne of the Fredericksburg Butterfly Ranch and Habitat and **“Rainwater Collection”** by Raul and Sandy Pena

## VOLUNTEER PROJECT OF THE MONTH:

### RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER

While our Chapter meets at Riverside Nature Center, all of our members may not be familiar with the goals, assets and volunteer opportunities available at Riverside. The Riverside Nature Center is a five-acre arboretum and public garden featuring native plants of the Hill Country and Kerr County. The Riverside Nature Center Association is a non-profit, membership-supported organization, founded in 1989, with the mission to foster greater public awareness and appreciation of Texas Hill Country natural resources through education, information and by example. You can see that Riverside Nature Center's goals align well with those of our Chapter.

#### **Grounds & Garden Design & Maintenance** (Our Hill Country Chapter Volunteer Project ID: **KR-02-D**)

Each Thursday morning folks gather to work on the grounds and garden areas to ensure that this display garden and arboretum is well-maintained to make a positive impression on our visitors. Folks can work either with the Grounds group on the paths, grassy areas, irrigation, protective enclosures around some trees and shrubs browsed by deer, or with the Gardening group that plants and weeds the beds and the Wildflower Meadow. You do not need to have special expertise in wildflowers or plants to help. Experienced volunteers can easily show you what you need to know. you can learn as much or as little as you wish, and still make substantial contributions. There are several easy-to-recognize weeds needing control to avoid crowding out some of the wildflowers. Typical work time is **Thursdays**

**from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM**, but the times are flexible (earlier in summer, shorter if it's hot, and maybe longer if we are having fun). Once you learn what needs doing, you can work any days or hours that are convenient for you, if you prefer.

**Gleaners**, a group which collects seeds from native plants and conducts plant rescues, is also included in this volunteer code. Gleaners meets the **second Friday of each month at 9 AM**. The Gleaners plant their seeds at Riverside and also sell native seeds to the public at a nominal cost.

**For more information, contact Julia Campbell.**

### **Docents for School Programs:** (Our Hill Country Chapter Volunteer Project ID: KR-02-A)

Riverside Nature Center has a formal curriculum of nature interpretation for elementary and middle school classes. Volunteer docents, known as "Nature Guides", are trained to give one or more of these age-tailored programs. Nature Guides volunteer for a specific class visit when it is convenient for them. We all understand how important it is to share our love of nature with children, both for their sake and because the environment can never have too many advocates.

Training on Wildflower Interpretation will be held on March 12. Training on Wildlife Interpretation for grades 6 – 8 is being held in February. For more information, please contact **Maryallen Meriwether in Kerrville at 830-792-4841**.

Over a third of our Chapter members, including Julia Campbell, Gwynn Jackson, Alice Bulechek, John and Barbara Quinby, Barbara Lowenthal, Kay White, Maggie Tatum, and Jim and Priscilla Stanley, are already participating in these Volunteer Opportunities at Riverside Nature Center. We hope that you will consider joining us. Wildflower season is almost upon us. It is so rewarding to observe the week to week changes in the plants as we work around the gardens.

### **OUR CHAPTER WEBSITE IS GROWING!**

Kim Whitaker continues to improve our website at [Hill Country Master Naturalist](#). We would be interested in any comments or suggestions that you might have on our website. Please understand that the website is still under construction, so not all links have been completed, and additional content will be added. If you would like to help write some of the content, or have suggestions for additional links, please contact your Webmaster, Kim Whitaker at [kim@meds-inc.com](mailto:kim@meds-inc.com) and your Internal Communications Chair, Priscilla Stanley at [jpbstan@ktc.com](mailto:jpbstan@ktc.com).

**Do you want to contact BOARD MEMBER or COMMITTEE CHAIR?** You have the e-mail addresses and phone numbers on our Membership List.



Top

### **MARCH PROGRAM : A SPECIAL DOUBLE-HEADER**

This month we will enjoy two programs; our February program which was canceled due to inclement weather, and our March program. As usual, our meeting will be open to the public. **The Special schedule for this month is as follows:**

6:15 PM Refreshments at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St., Kerrville

**6:30 PM** **First program begins: "Migrating Warblers" by Bill Lindemann** of Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center

Brief break

Second program begins: **“Bats at the Old Tunnel”** by Kirby Carroll of Texas Parks and Wildlife

Refreshments continue

## **“MIGRATING WARBLERS ”**

Bill Lindemann, who presented “Introduction to Birding” during our training class, will speak on the many warblers that are currently migrating through our area. Bill has had a lifelong interest in birds, and writes the Birding column that appears in the Kerrville Daily Times each Friday.

After a career as a petroleum geologist with extensive international travel (lots of birds!), he retired to Fredericksburg. He purchased the Firewheel Ranch and worked hard to restore it to a natural state. He continues to successfully manage his ranch for wildlife under the Wildlife Valuation. The required Wildlife Management Plan requires a minimum of three wildlife management activities, however Bill practices all seven wildlife management activities. His fauna and flora have flourished, which is not surprising, since Bill is also a past State President of the Native Plant Society of Texas.

## **“THE BAT TUNNEL”**

Kirby Carroll, a Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will give a presentation on the “Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area” (affectionately known to locals as “the Bat Tunnel”). This unique treasure arose in 1942 when the local railroad line near Fredericksburg was shut down, and Mexican free-tailed bats claimed the Tunnel as their summer home. The Tunnel is over 900 feet in length, and is occupied by over 3 million Mexican free-tailed bats (including “pups”) each July and August. Each bat can eat its weight in insects nightly, and the whole colony may devour over 25 tons of moths per night. The bats return to the Tunnel between midnight and daybreak, having traveled an average 25 to 30 miles to forage. The bats roost in the tunnel from May through October. In late October, the bats fly to Mexico for the winter. During this migration, they can fly at altitudes of 10,000 feet and speeds of 60 mph.

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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*BY SANDY PEÑA*

Springtime seems to have arrived at last, along with the black-chinned hummers and redbud blooms! The greening of the countryside always lifts our spirits, as well as our garden shovels. For some of our chapter members, spring has also meant devoting two lovely Saturdays in March to Master Naturalist issues at the regional and state level. On March 8, Myrna Langford, Jim and Priscilla Stanley, and I attended a regional retreat in San Marcos involving six central Texas chapters. On March 15, Jane Crone represented our chapter at the state-wide Volunteer Representatives Council meeting at Bamberger Ranch. Here are a few highlights of these two important meetings:

\* There are currently 23 Texas Master Naturalist chapters, and five more in development.

\* Michelle Haggerty will lead a national training in August for at least eight other states who want to start a Master Naturalist program.

\* A steering committee is now set up to begin planning for the Junior Master Naturalist Program, which is being sponsored by TPWD, TCE, and Texas Wildlife Association.

\* The state advisory committee has announced several goals for this year:

- a. to have the statewide curriculum printed and available for this fall.
- b. to formulate a liability policy for volunteer work being done by Master Naturalists.
- c. to complete the statewide "umbrella" 501c3 designation this year.
- d. to finish a chapter by-laws "template" which local chapters can add to, as appropriate.

It seems springtime is just as busy for the state program's folks as it is for our local volunteers. I hope you are out there jumping into spring with both hands and feet to spread the Master Naturalist message in your own way, while having a great time outdoors!

## FIRST THREE MEMBERS CERTIFIED IN OUR CHAPTER

**Alice Bulechek, Julia Campbell and Sandy Peña will receive their Certified Master Naturalist certificates and dragonfly pins at our March meeting. Be sure to attend the gala celebration for the first certifications in our Chapter.**

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**March 22 "Wildlife Exemption Update"** Cibolo Nature Center **9 AM – noon** All landowners with a Wildlife Exemption must file a new management plan on the new form provided by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. The goal is to comply with House Bill 3123 passed during the last legislative session. If you have a Wildlife Exemption on your property, don't miss this special seminar which will help you meet this new requirement. Members: \$10/person, \$15/couple. Non Members: \$15/person, \$20/couple **APPROVED AT**

**March 24 Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter meeting "Migrating Warblers" and "The Bat Tunnel" and more...** **PROGRAM BEGINS at 6:30 PM** at Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville (*see article above*)

**March 28--29 2nd Texas Native Fish Weekend**, presented by Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center and East Texas Master Naturalists, Athens, TX.; Maggie Ranc, 903-676-2277 **APPROVED AT**

**March 29 Monarch Larval Monitoring Training Day** at Cibolo Nature Center, Boerne, Mary Kennedy, 210-698-7175 x267 **APPROVED AT**

**April 1 "The Top Ten Questions Related to Forest Health"** by Mark Duff of the Texas Forest Service – Kerrville presented at **Native Plant Society of Texas** - Kerrville Chapter meeting held at **2 PM** at Riverside Nature Center.

**April 8 & 9 evenings "Hummingbirds and the Hummingbird Roundup"** (a data gathering/survey project) by Mark Klym from TPWD; The Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center, \$10 fee, **APPROVED AT**

**April 22-27 Texas Hill Country River Regions 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Nature Quest** in Uvalde County, <http://www.thcrr.com>, 800-210-0380 Sage Kawecki, [sage@thcrr.com](mailto:sage@thcrr.com), **APPROVED AT** for all naturalist-related events

**April 24--26 Texas Ornithological Society Meeting**, Port Lavaca, TX [http://www.texasbirds.org/meetings/port\\_lavaca\\_2003.html](http://www.texasbirds.org/meetings/port_lavaca_2003.html) **APPROVED AT**

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## **VOLUNTEER PROJECT OF THE MONTH:**

### **Enchanted Rock Summit Trail Project**

Are you looking for a Volunteer Project with a great view? Come to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, 1643 acres on Big Sandy Creek north of Fredericksburg. The Rock is a huge, pink granite exfoliation dome, that rises 425 feet above the ground, 1825 feet above sea level and covers 640 acres. The Rock is one of the largest batholiths (underground rock formation uncovered by erosion) in the United States.

The Friends of Enchanted Rock Trail Builders sponsor the **Summit Trail Project** which is a volunteer effort to reconstruct and improve the main trail from the gazebo (trailhead) to the top of the main dome. One the **third Saturday of each month**, groups or individual volunteers carry stones and gravel up the trail to build steps, retaining walls and erosion-control features. Folks not able to carry rocks can help by carrying tools and supplies. This project teaches trail building and maintenance skills that would be useful to us for projects at other nature centers and parks.

To participate, meet in the Enchanted Rock gazebo parking lot at **9 AM** on the third Saturday of the month with your work gloves, hat, water, sunscreen and a sack lunch. Volunteers get a free group campsite on Friday and Saturday (tent camping only, no RVs), and free entrance to the park on Saturday and Sunday. For more information, contact the Trail Builders leader, Mike Lewis, at 210-695-3046 or [bugaboo@satx.rr.com](mailto:bugaboo@satx.rr.com). Alternatively, you can ask our Chapter member, **Myrna Langford**, who has participated in the rock carrying and described it as a glorious day. More information about Enchanted Rock State Natural Area can be found on the TPWD website at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/enchantd/enchantd.htm#body>.

**Our Hill Country Chapter Volunteer Project number for Enchanted Rock Trail Maintenance is GL-03-A.**

## **EARTH DAY CELEBRATION AND NATIVE PLANT SALE**

### **Saturday, APRIL 26<sup>th</sup>- 8 AM to 3 PM at Riverside Nature Center**

The Earth Day Celebration is co-sponsored by the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas and the Riverside Nature Center.

This year’s featured speaker is Deborah Payne, the owner of the Fredericksburg Butterfly Ranch and Habitat. She will speak in the Visitor Center at 10:00 on **Butterfly Gardening: Secrets of Attracting the Fluttering Beauties\***. Ms. Payne has had years of experience raising butterflies, the plants that they need for nectar, and the special plants each butterfly species needs to raise its young.

At 9:00 Larry Fagarason will present a program on **Xeriscape for Hill Country**. Fagarason is the founder and former President of the Kerr County Cactus & Succulent Society. At 11:15 Bruce Deuley will present **Recipes that Betty Crocker Never Gave You** on organic gardening. Deuley will explain how you can improve your plants by first improving your soil. At 1:30 Sandy and Raul Pena will present their program on **The ABC’s of Rainwater Harvesting\***. The Penas practice what they preach; they live in the country without a water well, since all their water needs are met by their rain water harvesting. At 2:00 Marilyn Butcher will present **Lasagna Gardening**, a technique of building a garden with layers of different materials, as practiced by the Hunt school children.

The day will also feature children’s activities, the awarding of prizes in the middle school student Earth Day poster

contest, and the display of a hybrid electric Toyota that runs on it's own non-polluting batteries that are re-charged by its gasoline engine.

A highlight of the Earth Day Celebration will be an enormous "**Mostly Native Plant Sale**", which will sell many different types of plants native to the Hill Country, including some less common species, that will thrive in our heat with less water than most other plants require. There will also be some "adaptive plants", including herbs, from areas other than Hill Country that will grow readily here.

Composting grass and yard waste can save valuable space in landfills. A compost-maker, donated by the City of Kerrville, will be raffled. You do not have to be present to win. The Earth Day Celebration has activities to interest every member of your family. Please come to Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, Kerrville, for a day filled with fun and learning! **Admission is free.**

**\* These two presentations are APPROVED AT for our Hill Country Chapter.**