

# THE TEXAS STAR

**MARCH 2008 VOL. 6 No 3**

T E X A S



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

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

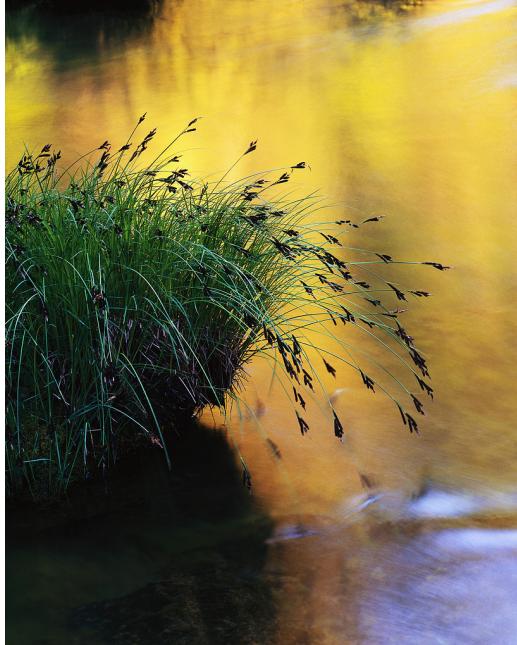
## MARCH PROGRAM

### Hill Country Wetlands and Riparian Area Habitat Enhancement/Restoration

Tim Schuman, private land biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Service Center in Austin , will present “Hill Country Wetlands and Riparian Area Habitat Enhancement/Restoration” at this month’s meeting of the Texas Master Naturalist—Hill Country Chapter.

Schuman’s interest in wildlife and natural areas developed from his early childhood in rural Texas where he lived on his grandparent’s 900 acre cattle ranch and attended high school in Dime Box, with a student body of 75 students. After high school Schuman attended Blinn College in Brenham and then Texas A & M University, where he graduated with a BS in Wildlife Management.

Since graduating from college, in addition to his work with the US Fish and Wildlife Department, Schuman has acquired diverse experience and knowledge while working for two years on his



grandparent’s ranch, five years with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at the Kerr Wildlife Management Area in Hunt, two years with the Colorado River Authority, where he worked in deer management and conducted prescribed burns and endangered species surveys, and three years as a self-employed biologist. During his 10 year stint with the US Fish and Wildlife Service he has worked to restore habitat for federal trust species, which includes migratory waterfowl, shore birds, songbirds, and threatened and endangered species.

The meeting will be at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville, Monday, March 24, at 7 p.m.

This program qualifies for Advanced Training credit (08-034).



## THIS MONTH WE HONOR...

### ***TMN Certification***

Lee Kneupper  
Gracie Waggener



### ***2008 Recertification***

Jane Crone  
John Huecksteadt

### ***Milestones***

Sharon Corley – 500 hours (Brushed Silver)  
Martha Miesch – 250 hours (Bronze)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this it's still a couple of weeks before the official start of spring, but we decided to take a brief walk around the place and see what kind of "new life" we could find. It turned out to be more than you might expect. We found the following new growth in perennial forbs: tall prairie goldenrod, purple coneflower, purple leather flower, zexmenia, Turk's cap, fall aster, and vetch. There were lots of forbs that winter over, mostly as green "rosettes" or similar structures, so I won't mention all of those, but there were a number that were already blooming, such as wind flower, red columbine, golden groundsel, and four-nerve daisy.

For grasses, we found lots of Texas wintergrass, as expected, as well as a few new green shoots of switchgrass and cane bluestem. We didn't find the usual bromes, rescuegrass or Canada wildrye, possibly because of the dry conditions.

For the woodies, we found at least a few green leaves on the following: possumhaw, elbow bush, yellow buckeye, spice bush, box elder, rough-leaf dogwood, wafer ash, cedar elm and creek plum. (The last one was especially noted because it was given to us by Alice Bulechek.) The elbow bush had already

bloomed, and we have blooms on the coral honeysuckle, Mexican redbud and a peach tree (I know, the latter isn't native, but it came up in the edge of our compost pile and we can't bear to get rid of it).

I expect that in wetter years, the amount of greenery would have been even more. This brings up one final point. In the last 12 months, I have recorded about 50" of rain at our place, or about 167% of our "average" annual rainfall. But in the last 6 months, we have received only a little over 2"! Annual rainfall numbers are meaningless in terms of ground moisture available to plants. The large amount of rainfall that we received last year has kept our streams flowing continuously so far when in past years they stopped during dry spells. I know many of you have interesting stories to tell about your encounters with nature. We would like for you to share them with us.

Jim Stanley



## Tony Gallucci speaks to NPSOT April 1

The Kerrville Native Plant Society of Texas will meet Tuesday April 1 at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, at 2:00 PM. Tony Gallucci will show his film "Ode to a River," which is about the uniqueness of the flora and fauna of the greater Texas Hill Country.

The emphasis in the film is on dragonfly research, but the film also deals with subjects across the biological board with lots of footage from rarely seen Hill Country

locations. Tony will also include out-takes of rare plants from Big Spring Ranch.

Tony is the owner and director of Milk River Film Company which produces narrative and documentary films. He has recently been nominated for an Emmy and has provided film to the Discovery Channel. He is also media specialist working with abandoned children at the Hill Country Youth Ranch in Ingram.



## HATS OFF TO THE VOLUNTEERS WHO MADE THE HAT A REALITY!

On Sunday March 9, the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center and the City of Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation Department celebrated the opening of a Handicapped Accessibility Trail (HAT) at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park.

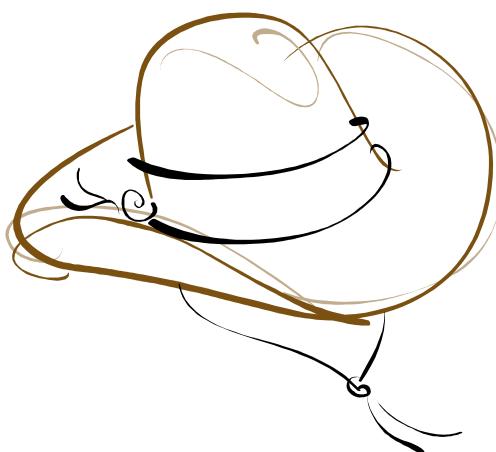
Construction on the HAT was made possible through the efforts of a dedicated group of volunteers from the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center, Hill Country Master Naturalists and others working over ten months from February 2007 through November 2008. The trail, more than 600 feet in length, was built along the original Vista Loop nature trail high above Live Oak Creek and potential flood damage. Volunteers worked one morning a week on the project through a full range of temperatures. Rainy weather interrupted progress many times.

The five-foot wide trail has a compacted mixed granite gravel and clay surface. The west end begins with an overlook of Live Oak Creek. The trail continues eastward by another overlook before reaching the butterfly habitat garden, where more than 60 species of butterflies have been seen. The HAT ends in the bird feeding area where a number of varied feeders types attract more than 30 of the 162 species of birds recorded at the park.



After completing the trail in November, HAT volunteers also built a large bird blind where birders can sit and watch the birds working around the feeders. The blind is especially built to accommodate wheel chair access, possibly a new concept in bird blinds. The structure is over 10 feet high and has a roof for protection from the weather. A new palisade cedar fence screens the birds from trail traffic. The HAT features two of the most interesting additions to the nature area - the special bird blind and the butterfly habitat.

The City of Fredericksburg assisted the project by supplying materials and equipment when needed for the trail, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department helped the Friends with graphics for the kiosk and trail. The original kiosk, which featured maps, photos and information at the trailhead, was destroyed by floods last summer. As part of his Eagle Scout requirement, Padraig O'Hara reconstructed the kiosk. Also working toward Eagle Scout achievement, Josh Koch and helpers from BS Troop 135 built the palisade cedar fence at the bird blind. The many hundreds of volunteer hours of work by the Hill Country Master Naturalists provided the impetus to complete the HAT. A hearty tip of the hat to all these intrepid volunteers!



## SPRING EVENTS COMING...

### Earth Day and Native Plant Sale Saturday, April 19

Save the Date! In just a few weeks, Riverside Nature Center and the local chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas will celebrate **Earth Day 2008 on Saturday April 19 from 8 am – 3pm**. Once again, the always-popular **Native Plant Sale** will have a large variety of plants native to the Texas Hill Country, such as native trees, shrubs, and perennials selected from nurseries across Central Texas. Experts from the Native Plant Society will be available to help you select just the right ones for your particular landscape. Come early for best selection.

In addition, there will be lots of free family fun with speakers (on *the ecology of the hill country since 1850, wildfire preparedness for your home, and*

*learning about hill country mammals*), kids' activities (including story-telling and a puppet show), informative displays, and tours of the RNC grounds. Canoe rides, refreshments, and lunch from Paw Paw's restaurant will be available for purchase.

Since 1970, Earth Day has been celebrated around the world as a time of sharing common values with individuals and organizations who are concerned for the protection of the environment, and honoring the idea that the stewardship of natural resources is a global responsibility.

For information on RNCs Earth Day Celebration 2008, call 830-257-4837, or go to [www.riversidenaturecenter.org](http://www.riversidenaturecenter.org).



### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

#### CNC Spring 2008 Wildlife Field Research (KL-02-B) April 27 – May 3

Volunteer Citizen Scientists will take part in surveying, monitoring, and reporting on all manner of flora and

fauna. For a schedule, or to register, contact Suzanne Young, 830-249-8240 or [suzanny2@aol.com](mailto:suzanny2@aol.com).

#### Volunteers Needed for Scout and other Children's Programs

Riverside Nature Center is recruiting volunteers to help with a variety of children's programs (**KR-02-A**). All children's programs also have volunteers provided by the school or organization requesting the event (who handle discipline.) Master Naturalist volunteers serve as docents for children eager to learn more about the natural world. You can volunteer for an entire event, or work a shift of several hours.

Some of the programs needing MN volunteers are:

- Assist third grade Brownies in earning their Eco-Explorer Try It badge. The girls participate in hands-on educational activities, a hike along the river, and have fun learning about nature.

These events are 4 times a year on Saturdays from 10 to 3.

- Help Girl Scout Juniors earn their Wildlife Badge. Activities include meeting animal “visitors”, taking a night hike along the river, using microscopes, and learning about nature and wildlife. These activities take place four times a year on Friday night with a sleepover, ending at 9:30 am Saturday morning.
- Guide children from area schools and preschools as they look at exhibits and tour the RNC grounds. Read nature stories,



help with nature crafts, and encourage curiosity about the natural world.

- Visit area schools on science days or pioneer days to provide programs to whet the appetite of budding young naturalists and scientists.
- For more information, contact Barbara Noblin at (830) 257-0472 or email at [bnoblin@ktc.com](mailto:bnoblin@ktc.com).



## ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

[**ed. Note:** at its February meeting, the Board of Directors voted to assign code numbers to Advanced Training programs in order to allow more efficient tracking and reporting. Those codes will be noted in each message from Dan Behringer about AT opportunities, and they will be noted here as well (for instance, the upcoming March meeting qualifies under code 08-034). Please be aware that the newsletter's publication schedule does not allow mention of all volunteer and AT opportunities, so keep watching your e-mail]

## Hill Country Land Stewardship Workshop (08-029) --- April 19

When you visit Gentry Springs Ranch you see tall native grasses, a beautiful flowing spring fed creek, and a home, landscaped with native plants, blending in with its natural setting. What you also see is the planning and practices that make for good land stewardship. With the removal of cedar, a schedule of prescribed burns, and the rotation of livestock, native grasses flourish. These management practices allow range land to catch rainwater, which feeds the aquifer below and beyond the property. Fire keeps the cedar and brush down, and allows a diversity of plants that serve as cover and food for wildlife.

Gentry Springs Ranch is one of a growing number of individual properties within the Gentry Creek watershed, which flows into the Llano River. How does the stewardship of each of these land owners (whose numbers are increasing) affect the resources and health of their shared watershed and ultimately the Llano River? To help understand this question and its answer

come to the “**Hill Country Land Stewardship Workshop**” (Plans and Practices for Maximizing the Value and Resources of Your Land) on Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, at Texas Tech University Center at Junction. The workshop, sponsored by the Western Edwards Plateau Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, TTU at Junction, and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, will consist of a morning session of speakers ending with a lunch followed by a tour of Gentry Springs Ranch and a small acreage tract in the same watershed.

A registration form may be obtained by contacting Martha Richardson at [marthar@ctesc.net](mailto:marthar@ctesc.net) or 325-475-2271. The form will also be available at some local real estate offices, county agents’ offices, and through members of the Western Edwards Plateau chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. A registration fee of \$15.00 covers materials and lunch until April 9<sup>th</sup> after which a late registration fee of \$20.00 will be required. The workshop is limited to the first 120 registrants.



## 'TIS THE SEASON FOR ELFINS

No, I'm not talking about those little people with pointed hats that wear green. The Henry's Elfin is a small butterfly that appear early in spring or late winter. They can be hard to find as they dash in and out of trees and shrubs playing hide and seek until suddenly they decide to stop and perch out in the open saying "See Me".

The Henry's Elfin (*Callophrys henrici* (Grote & Robinson, 1867) is a member of the Gossamer-Winged butterfly family and Hairstreak sub-family. They first appear as a butterfly as soon as their annual alarm clock signals the temperature or solar energy is sufficient to survive. As they emerge from the pupa or chrysalis stage, they begin nectaring on the flowers of their host plants, Redbud and Buckeye species. The males sit on exposed branches of their host plant waiting for a female to fly by. After mating, an egg is laid on the bud of the host plant. As the egg hatch, the small caterpillars feed first on the buds or flowers, then the young tender leaves. After passing through their instar stages, the caterpillars move



to the litter on the ground beneath the host tree to form a new chrysalis that must survive the Texas Hill County heat, rain, drought, bull dozers and next winter, before beginning the process all over again.

Henry's Elfin has a wing span of 1-1.5 inches and is best identified by the frosting on the training edge of the lower surface of the hindwing. Like his cousins, the Hairstreaks, the Henry's Elfin has tails, but they are so small and short that you have to get very close to see them,

So now is the time to go out and find a blooming Redbud or Buckeye and you may see a very small butterfly dashing about. I have been seeing them since the last week of February. Remember they have only one brood per year. So be patient, very still and maybe one will land close to you. If so, you will get to enjoy this very beautiful little Hill Country butterfly.

Photo and text – T.H. Collins



*Lindheimera texana: Texas Star*

**Texas Master Naturalist**  
431 Timber Ridge  
Kerrville TX 78028