

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter

© DK Langford



Lindheimeria texana
Texas Star

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist



Hill Country Chapter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

We Honor	2
Advanced Training	3
Jim's Book	3
Walling's Wildflowers	4
PARTY!	6
Barbara's Bird Nest	7
Support The Chapter	8
Tom's Fungi Time	9
Wildscapes	10



November 2009
Volume 7, No. 11

NOVEMBER MEETING FERAL PIGS

Feral pigs are considered an invasive species. They cause erosion, destruction of crops and habitat, provide direct competition with native wildlife, and transmit diseases.

Matthew Reidy will discuss feral pigs in a presentation titled *Feral Pigs in Texas- Where have we been and where are we headed.*

Mr. Reidy is a Regulatory Wildlife



Biologist based in Lytle. He received his master's degree from Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A & M University at Kingsville in 2007. His master's thesis was titled *Electric Fencing and Population Estimation for Feral Pigs in Texas.*

Join us at 7:00 pm,
Monday, November 16 at
Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE John Huecksteadt

Hill Country - Land of Opportunists

I have been watching a female yellow garden spider on her web for the past several weeks.

She decided to spin her web in a most inconvenient place because it requires remembering to duck my head every time I use the patio. On the other hand, she is teaching me a lesson that is echoed throughout the Hill Country this fall. That lesson is about the web of relationships among being prepared, seizing opportunities as they arise, and above all, patience.

Few of us have escaped noticing that the woodsorrel and K-R got it just right this year. They were ready, when the rain came, to take advantage of it. It seems the Yellow Indiangrass was holding its breath and then gasped out a huge profusion of seed heads into the moist October

hills. Many of our grasses decided to give it a second go this fall. What a treat to see Sideoats laden with their rich maroon flowers in early November. Panicum is everywhere.

Something in me keeps trying to ascribe the human virtue of patience to our garden spider. I suppose, in reality, this wonderful animal's cerebral activity is closer to that of a nano-bot. The metaphor of Little Bluestem patiently waiting for rain is obviously contrived. Still, I think we all have a sense for the awe-inspiring ability of our native plants and animals to respond (who cares whether biochemically or otherwise) when conditions are right.

Being human, it seems we cannot help but draw some lesson from what we observe around us.

continued page 2

THIS MONTH WE HONOR

2009 Re-Certification

Salamander

PRISCILLA BAILEY

NORMA BRUNS

MARILYN KNIGHT

KAREN MILLIKAN

MILBY MOORE

Special First Year
Re-Certification

Salamander

FANE DOWNS

First Year Certification

Dragonfly

DON WILLOUGHBY

© kwd

"...we were annoyed by hogs beyond all description. At almost every camp we were surrounded by them; but here they seemed perfectly frantic with hunger. They ran directly through the fire and even carried off a chicken...that was dressed and pitted. While the horses were feeding, it required the constant attendance of two of us to keep them at bay and even then they secured more than half the corn. Fanny (his horse) was so shocked and disturbed as to refuse all the food. For some minutes the fiercest of them would resist even a clubbing, eating and squealing on through the blows. These animals proved, indeed throughout Texas, a disgusting annoyance, though after procuring an excellent dog a day or two after we were rid of the worst of it."

Fredrick Olmstead at his camp near Crockett, January 1, 1854

Do you know?

Feral pigs occur in 233 of the 254 Texas counties. More than two million feral swine roam Texas, about 50% of all the feral swine in the U.S. 43 states report established feral pig populations.

Hill Country – Land of Opportunists, continued.

We cannot help but ask, "What does this mean about how I live my life?" The spider tells me, for starters, to be prepared, and to be patient. When something or someone wanders into our life-web we should be ready to pounce on it. *Carpe diem.*

Rainwater harvesting (*Carpe aquam?*) is the first thing that pops into my mind when I ask the above question of myself. A moment's reflection, though, offers a dozen more suggestions. Suddenly our minds are off and running ... and off into realms our spider could not imagine.



ADVANCED TRAININGYour chance to learn more

▶ **Nature Photography Workshop** AT 09-074

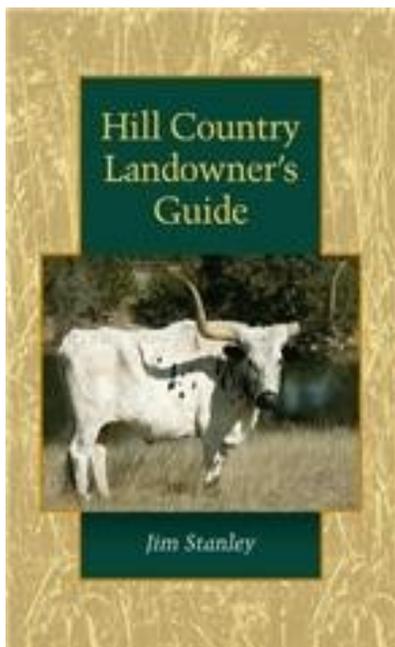
Saturday, November 14, 9a.m.-6:15p.m., Riverside Nature Center and Block Creek Natural Area, RNC members \$135/non-members \$150.

Presenter: David K. Langford, professional photographer

Learn how to transform what you see in the camera lens into a personal artistic vision.

Space is limited. Registration required. www.riversidenaturecenter.org or 830-257-4837.

Hill Country Landowner's Guide by Jim Stanley is now available!



Jim's book covers many of the land stewardship topics included in our Master Naturalist training. It is a great reference book for all – especially those who own acreage and those who visit other landowners' properties as part of our Land Management Assistance Program.

Jim takes us through a variety of problems that both new and established landowners in the Texas Hill Country will confront – from brush control, grazing, and overpopulation of deer to erosion, fire, and management of exotic animals and plants. The topics covered reflect Jim's personal experiences as a Hill Country landowner along with information gleaned from other experts in the area.

Jim's book is available on amazon.com and through TAMU Press.

The only official signing is scheduled on December 5 at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, but Jim will be happy to sign books at any of our meetings or get-togethers.

The chapter has donated a copy of *Hill Country Landowner's Guide* to each of the seven libraries in our four-county area.

Click to purchase ➔

www.amazon.com

www.tamupress.com/product/Hill-Country-Landowners-Guide,5192.aspx

(Enter code 25A to receive a 25% discount.)

Thanks, Rhoda and Don!

Rhoda Reynolds and Don Willoughby have generously donated their tuition refunds to the chapter.

Their donations will help fund chapter projects.

To make *your* donation contact [Martha Miesch](#), Treasurer.



Walling's Wildflower Sanctuary

by Sharon Walling



Sharon and Floyd Walling's wildflower and natives sanctuary gets better every year.

This may not seem like the time to write about wildflowers, but this *is* the time to plant them. Early bloomers, like bluebonnets, ox-eyed daisies, and coreopsis, may be planted until December 1. Those that bloom later, like sunflowers and cosmos, can be planted in the spring after the last frost, usually around the end of April.

Wildflowers need about one foot of soil and someone like Floyd, with big feet, to walk on the seeds and pack them down. I like to divide the seeds into two sizes and plant the larger seeds under a little organic compost. The small seeds can be thrown down on top of the soil and stepped on or watered in. When started from seed, most perennials take about three years to bloom. These plants reseed and the perennials become more established over the years.



Roadrunner eyeing Hummers, but they were too fast!

We planted the wildflowers in 2003 and bought four times as much seed as recommended. We had rain about once a week and beautiful results. If it does not rain, once a week watering is needed. We are on a southern exposure with 10 hours of full sun. I recommend at least six hours of sun for a wildflower and native garden.

We love to feed birds and butterflies. Gardens can be designed to have activity and color year-round. Gregg's mist-flower, purple coneflower, and coreopsis are great choices for attracting butterflies. Bluebonnets love crushed granite and the nutrients found in the clay. The bluebonnets jumped out of the flowers beds and grew everywhere. Bluebonnets can throw their seeds up to 50 feet away. On one night the seeds seemed to release all at once! The seeds falling on

the patio sounded like popcorn. The next morning we had plenty of seeds to harvest.

Our front yard was saved from the bulldozer and left natural. It is on a hill with six inches of dirt. We left the live oaks, gum bumelias, agaritas, persimmons, and soft leaf yuccas. When we did add something to the front yard it became a \$100.00 hole and a \$25.00 plant.

We won the 2009 Kerr County Landscape Contest due to our drip irrigation, mulch, rock, and native plants. The contest is a good way to get the word out about drought tolerant landscapes. We hope the founder, David Lipscomb, will include backyards in the contest as they are more interesting. The spring 2010 Water Saver Contest will be open to all residential properties in Kerr County.

We love our gardens and hope to have many years to enjoy watching the flowers get better and better.

<http://www.hgcd.org/landscape.html>



Queen butterfly on butterfly magnet, Gregg's Blue Mist.

Walling's
Wildflower Sanctuary



Goldfinches enjoying cosmos



Cosmos reseed every year and goldfinches love them



Hummer on Red Yucca



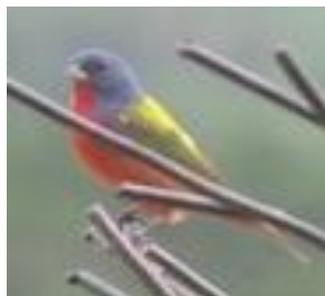
Bluebonnets and ox-eyed daises are the first signs of Spring



Friends for now



Indigo bunting



Painted Bunting



Ruby red throat



Goldfinches come to thistle seed



Hill Country Master Naturalist Holiday Party

Saturday, December 19

Noon to 3:00 p.m.

**River Run Party Room
Skyline Drive, Center Point**

Fun, Food, and Festivities!

A tasty catered lunch, coffee, tea, wine, dessert, and an activity or two are in store for you at our annual party.

This year the desserts will be especially delicious. We are asking our members (or spouses) who enjoy holiday baking to bring home-made goodies.

Reservations are necessary. Please RSVP by December 11.

To make your reservation, contact Martha Miesch, HCMN Treasurer, at 830-792-4750 or e-mail marthamiesch@msn.com.

Cost is \$6 per person. Payment may be made to Martha by mail or in person. Please make your check payable to HCMN.

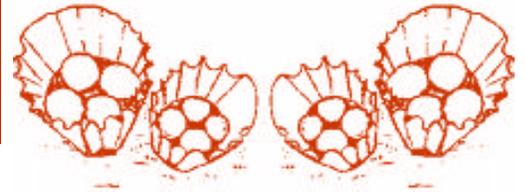
Martha Miesch
345 Twin Springs Road North
Kerrville, Texas 78028

Dress is casual. Driving directions will be provided.

Please plan to come and enjoy this beautiful Guadalupe riverside location and the excellent company of your fellow Master Naturalists.

Bird's Nest Fungus

By Barbara Lowenthal



This interesting fungus appeared in several containers in my nursery. Upon examining the plants sharing the pot with the fungus, I noticed the plants had what looked like tiny dark pebbles attached here and there on their stems and leaves. This really sparked my curiosity. So here's the scoop.

Bird's Nest Fungus (*Cyathus* sp.) is in the Nidulariaceae family. It gets its name because of its shape. The small "nest" (peridium) is filled with "eggs" (peridioles) which contain the spores. Another name is splash cup which refers to the method used to disperse the spores.

Scientists have determined that the angle of the sides of the cup is 70° - 75°, the optimum splash angle. When a raindrop hits the cup, it propels the peridioles out of the cup. In this process, there is a sticky thread (funicular cord) that uncoils and attaches to whatever it touches, usually a part of a plant. The spores disperse either when the peridioles degrade or when a plant is eaten by an animal, and after passing through the digestive system, are re-deposited.

When the fungus is young, it looks like a small rounded mushroom. With age, the top half of the cap breaks away leaving a thin membrane covering the eggs. This soon disappears, exposing the peridioles.

Examining the accompanying photo collage, you should be able to see the various stages.

The habitat for this fungus is decaying leaf material. In my nursery, it was in the organic potting soil.



Peridioles of bird's nest fungi being ejected during a rainstorm.



© Sara Hendricker

For additional information about this very interesting fungus, search either Bird's Nest Fungi or Splash Cup Fungi.

References: [Wikipedia](#), [The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms](#).

Chapter Shirt Sale Fundraiser

We have a great selection of merchandise with the Hill Country Chapter logo.



- T-shirts
- Women's polos
- Long-sleeved Columbia field shirts
- Short-sleeved Columbia field shirts
- Fleece vests
- Messenger bags
- Caps



Email [Gracie Waggener](mailto:Gracie.Waggener@flow-apps.com) to receive an order form.
gwaggener@flow-apps.com

Support the chapter!

Order yours today!

Don't forget.
Report your
hours at the end
of each month.

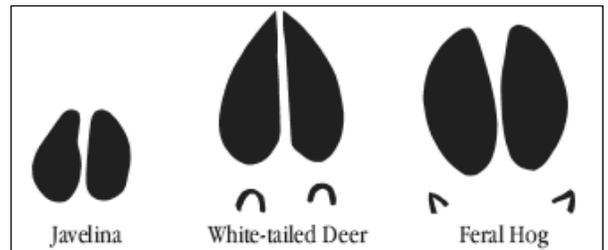


It's easy and quick.

Just record your AT and
volunteer project hours
using our handy reporting
form and email it to Sandy.

sandy325@windstream.net

Reporting form: grovesite.com



*It's your last chance to double down for
Riverside Nature Center!*

A generous benefactor has offered to match cash contributions
received by December 1.

Your Nature Center needs your support.

Contribute today and help the Nature Center earn double!

Riverside Nature Center
150 Francisco Lemos St.
Kerrville, Tx 78028



From Tom Collins

It's that time of year - Fungi fun time!

One of my favorite pastimes is looking for fungi. I am not an amateur mycologist, but I enjoy looking and photographing them. The fall rains and cool temps bring out the fungi.

This little fellow is in the Stinkhorn order (Phallales). The scientific name means roughly "fenced in all around" according to the Meltzer's field guide of Texas Mushrooms. Some common names include stalked lattice stinkhorn or chambered stinkhorn. I like the name Lantern or Goat Head. The black areas on the cap are the spores. Flies are drawn to the foul smell and eat the spores. Some spores remain on their legs and will be spread when the flies move on.



Lysurus periphragmoides
10/13/09 Collins' Ranch



Genus *Boletus*
10/13/09 Collins' Ranch

This much larger fungi is a member of the Boletales Order. They differ from the true mushroom in that they do not have gills on the underside of the cap. Instead they have pores or tubes from which the spores will be released. This specimen I believe to be in the Genus *Boletus*. However, without a lot of study and collection of the spores to study under a microscope, I would not even begin to guess the exact species.



This third specimen is a true mushroom. Note the gills that are showing through on the caps of these mushrooms.

Again I would not begin to classify these as spore prints must first be taken, and then combined with the physical study one might get it down to a genus.



These last two pictures are of fungi called Polypores (Family Polyporaceae), sometimes called Shelf Fungi as they tend to emerge on dead wood in shelf formations. This is a very large family of fungi and unless you have lots of time and experience they are best left to the experts to ID. These are important fungi as some are saprophytes, those that break down dead material while others are parasitic and get their nourishment from the living plant, killing the host.

So in the next couple of weeks before the first frost, go look under your oak motts or other tress for fungi and don't forget your camera.

p.s. - If you decide to eat any wild mushroom, save half of it to take to the emergency room...

New for November 2009

Many of you have commented with consternation that the Texas Wildscapes book has been out of print for over a year. Well, consternate no longer!

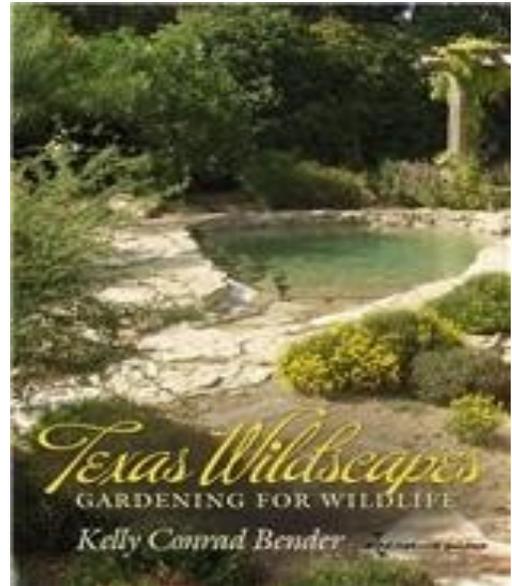
The updated revised book will soon be available through TAMU Press and "fine booksellers everywhere." The long confusing tables in the back of the book have been replaced by a convenient easy-to-use DVD that will help you look for just the right grouping of plants for your Wildscape. A huge debt of gratitude goes to the Capital Area Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists who were instrumental in completing the DVD.

Want to manage larger acreages? There is even a "Virtual Biologist," located in the Planning section, that asks questions about your goals and your property, then produces a habitat management plan. The plan contains all the elements needed to apply for a 1-d-1 tax valuation, wildlife option (for properties already under agricultural valuation).

This is truly a beautiful book, and I think you will love flipping through it to find new pictures, new insight, and updated landscape information. Take a look and let me know what you think. Feel free to write a review in the amazon.com reviews section. Remember that I receive no royalties or any other benefits from the book (just my job) -- so all the profit generated goes directly to fund the Wildlife Diversity fund at Texas Parks and Wildlife, to support wildlife and habitat conservation, and public education about wildlife.

Happy Wildscaping!

Kelly Bender



Public Lands Program Capacity Building Grants

The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) wants to unleash the potential of organizations that partner with public lands in their communities.

Ten grants of \$1,000 each will be awarded to community-based Friends Groups who meet the grant eligibility requirements and make the best case for how the funds will build their capacity to better serve their local public lands.

The Public Lands Program Capacity Building Grants are designed to provide funding to strengthen the organizational effectiveness of community-based 501(c)(3) nonprofits whose mission is focused on serving a public lands site in the United States. Capacity Building can take many forms, including, but not limited to, strategic planning, marketing, volunteer development, leadership capacity, improved fundraising, assessments or staff training.

Communities across America are rediscovering the benefits of service and volunteerism. Friends Groups can be invaluable partners to the public land agencies and the public lands they serve. While dedicated and passionate, they are often underfunded and understaffed. The National Environmental Education Foundation's Public Lands Program (PLP) Capacity Building Grants are intended to help these vital organizations get the support they need to increase their efforts.

The application deadline is Dec. 1. Learn more and apply for the grant at www.publiclandsday.org/grants.

KERRVILLE CHAPTER OF THE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS**Holiday Party at Riverside Nature Center
Tuesday, December 1 6:30p.m. to 8:30**

The December meeting will be a **Deck the Halls with Natives Holiday Party!**
We will have a plant exchange, a presentation about dishes prepared with native plants,
and a roping demonstration by a real cowboy.

Wine and punch will be provided, and your favorite snack to share will be appreciated.
Remember to bring a native plant (labeled) to exchange. Everyone is welcome, please join us!

AGGIES TAKE WILDLIFE NATIONAL QUIZ BOWL

A team from Texas A&M University has won the 2009 Wildlife Society National Quiz Bowl Competition, held Sept. 22 in Monterey, Calif.

"Aggie team members Caleb Carter of Longview, Drew Fowler of Sugar Land, Andrew Maddox of Houston, and team captain Samantha Reinhart of Fort Sill, Oklahoma, upset a team from California's Humboldt State University 165-130 to win the championship round," said Bill Gibbs, a spokesman for Texas A&M's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Gibbs said Texas A&M's last such win was in 2005 with the 2006-2008 wins going to Humboldt State.

The Texas A&M team also beat teams from Penn State University, the State University of New York-Syracuse and Utah State University to advance to the finals, Gibbs said. Teams from 14 universities from across the nation competed in the tournament.

"The National Quiz Bowl tests students' knowledge in a variety wildlife management and conservation topics, including ecology, taxonomy, history and law, disease and pathology, and biodiversity," Gibbs said.

All members of the Aggie team are majoring in wildlife and fisheries sciences and are members of the Texas A&M chapter of the Wildlife Society. Dr. Douglas Slack is the chapter advisor. Slack is a Regent's Professor and associate head in the department of wildlife and fisheries sciences.

The Wildlife Society, founded in 1937, is a professional international scientific and educational association. <http://wildlife.org>

Thank you to all Master Naturalists who participated in the silent auction at the annual conference. We raised over \$2300! This money is used to fund scholarships and speakers for future conferences and is greatly appreciated. Thank you for making it happen.

You now have one year to come up with original creations to offer at the next meeting. It will be held at T-Bar-M in New Braunfels. We received some very generous contributions this year and we hope everyone had fun with the bidding wars. You were a great audience and we hope to see all of you, plus more, next year! Mark your calendars now.

Jeri Porter and Christine Powell
Co-Chairs 2009 TMN Auction, Capital Area Master Naturalists

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



Hill Country Chapter



Lindheimeria texana: Texas Star

Board of Directors 2009

John Huecksteadt - President

Jim Gardner - Vice President

Gracie Waggener - Secretary

Martha Miesch - Treasurer

Steve Dodge - Director of Advanced Training

Bob McKinley - Director of Class Training

Phyllis Muska - Director of Communications

Julie Clay - Director of Membership

Priscilla Stanley - Director of Volunteer Service Projects

William Lummis - 2008 New Class Representative

Jim Stanley - Immediate Past President

Hill Country Texas Master Naturalist
P.O. Box 293972
Kerrville, TX 78029-3972

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!
grovesite.com/tmn/hcmn

We meet the fourth Monday of each month (excluding December) at 7:00pm
Riverside Nature Center
150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville.
Our meetings are open to all.

Texas Master Naturalist mission:

To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

The Texas Star newsletter is a monthly publication of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program. News, comments, information, and ideas are always welcome. Please contact **Kristie Denbow**, editor, denbow@gvvc.com.

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System