

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter

January 2013

Volume 11

Number 1

Photo credit: The Mountain Lion Foundation //www.flickr.com/photos/digitalart/ /

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



JANUARY 28 MEETING: THE MOUNTAIN LION IN TEXAS-- WHAT MAKES AN APEX PREDATOR

Dr. Michael Tewes, of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, is an expert on the wild cats of Texas. He will share his findings based on studies of this seldom seen, large, stealthy predator who calls the predominately southwestern region of Texas home.

Everyone is welcome to join us Monday, January 28, at 7 p.m. in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority's lecture hall, 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Arrive at 6:30 to chat with members and guests.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Vern Crawford

Happy New Year!

In thinking about what to include in this, my first message to our membership, I went back and reviewed our past presidents' January messages for guidance. Let me start out by saying how proud I am to be a part of the leadership team of our chapter. What a privilege it is to serve in such an exemplary and well organized organization. How fortunate we are to have consistently had such fine newsletter editors and web masters who have compiled and preserved our rich history through an easily accessed online archive of each and every issue.

In meeting our 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," one of the most fundamental things we do is conducting our annual training class.

The Class of 2012 brings the total of individuals trained by our chapter to over three hundred Hill Country residents. Special thanks go to Daneshu Clarke and her team for all their hard work in shepherding this new crop of Texas Master Naturalists through to Commencement.

I am pleased to report that preparations for the Class of 2013 are off to a great start. Already this month, New Class Director Becky Etzler has assembled and convened her team, which has jumped right in to work with the many decisions, details, and arrangements necessary for conducting another successful training class. Thanks, Becky; I look forward to working with you and your committee.

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Heartfelt thanks and recognition go out to departing board members Anne Cassidy, Steve Clyburn, Eileen Gotke, Reidun Hilleman, Sally Garrett, and Phyllis Muska. Returning members continuing on the 2013 Board are Priscilla Stanley, Immediate Past President; Tom Hynes, Vice President; Floyd Trefny, Treasurer; Daneshu Clark, Advanced Training Director; and Paula Smith, Communications Director. Joining the Board this year are Carolyn Bean, Secretary; Valeska Danielak, Membership Director; J.D. Clarke, 2012 Class Representative; and Becky Etzler, 2013 Class Director. Our appreciation goes to all of these dedicated and industrious members who keep our chapter running so efficiently.

Hope to see you at this month's meeting,
Vern

THIS MONTH WE HONOR



Initial Certification

Phillip Brush

Special Recertification

Dan Carabin

Donna Oliver-Leep

2012 Recertification

Leanne Beauxbeannes

Jim Gardner

Vern Crawford

Reidun Hilleman

Valeska Danielak

Nina Wagner

Floyd Walling

Milestones

Harriet Warren - 250+ hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Nina Wagner - 500+ hours, Brushed Silver Dragonfly



Congratulations to members who received awards at the November meeting.

From left, front row: Sarah Hilburn, Sally Garrett, Ernest Smith, Fane Downs, Mary Frances Watson. Second row: Sharron Jay, Kathy Ward, Charles Smith, Jim Clarke, Tim Lewis, Bernadette DeShields, Donna Oliver-Leep. Third row: Steven Bishop, Paul Pederson, Rebecca Shupp, Steve Clyburn.

Hill Country Master Naturalists Go To Camp for Holiday Party



More than 70 chapter members, spouses and friends gathered in Center Point on December first at the Children's Association for Maximum Potential (CAMP) camp, for our annual Holiday Party. The main dining hall was decorated for the season and chapter volunteers had created special festive table decorations of native elements. Some tables were soon burdened by tasty appetizers and "sweet toothed" desserts.



The event began with an opportunity to explore the grounds and hear the camp's Facilities Manager, Bob Tanner (a Master Naturalist) explain the vision and mission of the organization as the special water features danced in the background. For Bob, this was the culmination of years of offering the camp free of charge to the chapter for the holiday event and to have the opportunity to share his experiences there with fellow Naturalists.



As members returned to the hall, the din that arose could have easily been heard in Kerrville, as greetings were exchanged, friendships renewed, and treats of all descriptions were shared. Bringing this time to a close, special guests including "Friends of the Chapter," were recognized. Then Bob and Ben Elble, Camp Director, told us of the origin of Camp CAMP. This was followed by our outgoing President, Priscilla Stanley, recognizing outgoing board members. Then it was time to feast on the buffet Bob and Ben had personally prepared for the occasion in the camp's elaborate kitchen.



Just as the entertainment was getting underway, "Father Christmas" (Vern Crawford) made a "not quite ready for primetime" entrance with a minor wardrobe malfunction. He left to correct the problem after asking Graham Warwick, our musical balladeer, to cover for him. Upon his return, Father Christmas' pants had shrunk considerably, but he continued unperturbed: he and his elf, Mary Frances Watson, handed out door prizes between songs. An unforgettable pantomime by Courtney Klemstein of the Comfort Theatre group brought our entertainment to a close. I think a grand time was had by all!



I would like to thank, once again, all of the willing volunteers who worked to make the Holiday Party such an enjoyable occasion. All contributions were very much appreciated: these events only happen when members step forward to give their time and effort. As we make our way into the new year, I hope you will enjoy the subjects and speakers for our monthly meetings and look forward to our socials--such as the picnic, which will be held in May this year, and the Holiday Party in December. Thanks to everyone for your support of all of our programs throughout 2012; with that, best wishes for a happy and peace filled 2013.

From Cathy Downs

I'm very excited to announce a new grant program opportunity developed through the co-funding of Native Plant Society of Texas and Monarch Watch. Funds are to be used to develop Monarch Waystations and Monarch demonstration gardens.

The purpose of the program is to educate members and the public about Monarch conservation, to produce and distribute milkweeds that support reproduction by Monarch butterflies, and to restore Monarch habitats throughout the Texas migration flyway.

Applications will accepted through March 15, 2013. There may be a second grant program in the fall. Please feel free to distribute the grant criteria to any of your local organizations, schools, nature centers and any group you feel might be interested in our mission to "Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas."

Cathy Downs

Chair, Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas Committee

For Monarch Waystation certification requirements: www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/waystation_requirements.pdf



The Magic of Monarchs by Cathy Downs

(reprinted from MLMP Updates - An e-Newsletter of the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project)

I had been working as a volunteer for the Texas Wildlife Association for about 6 years with the Conservation Legacy Program, teaching 7th-9th grades about conservation and local ecology through classroom and field lessons. During one of the programs the subject of my love for and obsession with the monarch butterfly came up. TWA was enthusiastic about creating a Monarch Distance Learning Trunk for schools, so my colleague, Gracie Waggener, and I put together a curriculum, equipment, and handouts that conformed to TWA format. The trunk should be ready for use in spring 2013.

This work led to a request to participate in the TWA Distance Learning Program, which sends a live simulcast to schools not just in Texas, but nationwide. I put together my presentation with live larvae, chrysalides and adults, and gave four programs that day on monarch biology and migration. I led students through the life cycle, showed video clips of egg hatching, pupation and eclosion. We were fortunate enough to have live monarchs eclosing during two of the programs (just like I planned it that way)! I also tagged several adults, talked about milkweed and milkweed habitat, monarch migration numbers, and overwintering. First through sixth graders from 179 schools in 12 states watched the simulcast, for a total of just over 6,300 kiddos. Six hours of my life to touch so many with our message. Isn't technology wonderful?



Cathy Downs, left, was also an instructor for monarch monitoring trainings at Cibolo Nature Center.

Photo by Kip Kiphart

Texas Stream Team

Texas Stream Team is a network of trained volunteers and supportive partners working together to gather information about the water resources of Texas and to ensure the information is available to all Texans. Established in 1991, Texas Stream Team is administered through a cooperative partnership between Texas State University, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Currently, over 1,400 Texas Stream Team volunteers collect water quality data on lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, bays, bayous, and estuaries in Texas.

The Hill Country Master Naturalist Chapter sponsors a project to perform water quality testing in Kerr, Gillespie, Kendall and Bandera counties. Currently 13 sites on nearby rivers and creeks are being tested once a month by volunteers from our chapter. The current active group of volunteers is--Stephen Bishop, Rheda Boardman, Norma Bruns, Ann Carabin, Dan Carabin, Tom Collins, Vern Crawford, Rebecca Flack, Barb Herbst, Jim Jones, Lenore Langsdorf, Ric McCormick, Bob McKinley, Bob McKinley, Floyd Trefny, Karla Trefny, Mary Frances Watson, and Bob Wiedenfeld--received "core" training from the Texas State Stream Team to test for pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen, and how to make field observations and report data.



Karla Trefny and Bob McKinley Testing in the Field



Ann Carabin and Bob Wiedenfeld Enjoy the Advanced Class

Some volunteers who took the Advanced Training class now are qualified in testing that includes tests for E. coli bacteria, nitrates, phosphates, and turbidity.

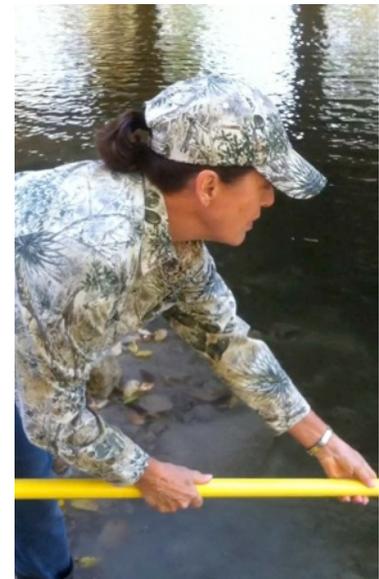
A new "core" training class is scheduled for February 15, 2013 for potential volunteers interested testing local water quality and contributing to this very worthwhile project. If you are interested in attending the class, you must pre-register by contacting Floyd Trefny at ftrefny@dishmail.net or at 830-796-3182. The number of students in this class is limited.



Dan Carabin, Steven Bishop, and Donna Taylor in the Advanced Class



Mary Frances Watson Testing in the Field



Donna Oliver-Leap Testing in the Field



Vern Crawford, Mary Frances Watson, Ric McCormick, Donna Oliver-Leap, and Floyd Trefny in the Advanced Class

Cochineal Bugs: Tiny Cactus Bugs with an Interesting History

A reader recently asked me what the small cotton-like balls on her prickly pear pads were. The answer is cochineal (*Dactylopius coccus*), a scale-like insect that lives on cactus pads. The insects attach themselves to the cactus and live off the juices they suck from the pads. They secrete sticky web-like filamentous wax which is what we normally see as white cotton-like balls or coatings on the cactus, possibly as a defense mechanism to ward off predators or to protect themselves from dehydrating in the sun.

While it is easy to notice the white coating, one might never see one of the actual insects unless you are carefully looking for one. They are flat, oval-shaped, and less than a quarter of an inch long, and once attached to the cactus, they don't move about. While these insects are in fact parasites, and in very large numbers can damage the cactus, in the numbers seen around here they seldom cause significant damage to the cactus.



What makes these insects so interesting, however, is none of what I just described, but what is inside the bugs. Over 20 percent of the weight of the insect is an acid that deters predators called carminic acid. This acid is easily converted to a bright red dye called carmine, and it has been known and used since the Aztecs and Mayans in the 15th century!

When Cortes invaded Mexico in 1519 he found Montezuma wearing clothes dyed a bright, vivid red, unlike anything they had in Europe at that time. He also found bags of the dried cochineal in present day Mexico City which he sent back to Spain. This soon resulted in a huge demand for the dye in Europe, resulting in it being extremely expensive. It was used for the robes of Roman Catholic Cardinals as well as kings and queens. Eventually it was also used to make the British military "Redcoat" jackets, and in addition to taxes on tea, the British also imposed high taxes on cochineal imports on the colonies.

There were numerous early attempts, with only some successes, to grow both prickly pear and cochineal in various parts of North Africa and Europe--mainly in Spain, Portugal, and the Canary Islands. One attempt by the British to create a source of the dye in the British Empire occurred in 1788 when a ship's captain collected cochineal-infected cacti in Brazil and introduced them to Australia, where they were trying to establish the first European settlement. The bad news was that the cochineal bugs died off in Australia, but the prickly pear did not; it eventually covered 100,000 square miles of eastern Australia!

In more modern times synthetic dyes have been produced that are much cheaper than the natural one, although cochineal is still better as a dye for wool than most synthetics. It is mainly used today as colorants in food and beverages and for medical applications. In ingredient lists it is likely listed as "cochineal extract," "carmine," "natural red 4," or "natural coloring." One reason it is preferred for some applications over many synthetic dyes is that some of the latter are carcinogenic. Cochineal color is also more light- and heat-stable with time than many synthetic dyes.

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Cochineal is still produced and exported from Peru (200 tons/year), the Canary Islands (20 tons/year) and in small amounts from Chile and Mexico. In order to appreciate those numbers, it takes 70,000 insects to make one pound of cochineal dye. In 2005 when synthetic food dyes were selling for \$10-20 per kilogram, cochineal was selling for \$50-80 per kilogram.

Today cochineal dye can be found in many types of foods, especially desserts, beverages, sauces and sweets. It is safe for use in eye cosmetics, hair- and skin-care products, including lipstick and face powder. It is also used as a medical tracer and for microscopy stains. It is the only natural food coloring approved by the FDA.

So the next time you walk by a prickly pear, look for little white patches of what looks like little pieces of cotton. Then carefully, trying to avoid the spines and glochids, mash one of the fuzzy balls and then look at the color of your finger. Or if you are less adventurous, use a small stick. Isn't Nature fun?

Until next time...

Jim Stanley is a Texas Master Naturalist and the author of *Hill Country Landowner's Guide*. He can be reached at jstmn@kctc.com. Previous columns can be seen at www.hillcountrynaturalist.org.

From Sarah Hilburn

Kroc Center Water Cycle Program

On November 14, 2012 at 3:45, 21 bright fourth and fifth graders were dancing and singing the "Water Cycle Boogie" at the Kroc Center. I was honored to take Koy Coffey's place as the lead in instructing these young people. What an amazing arrangement that the Texas Master Naturalist have with the Kroc Center: only the children who want to participate in the activity are included, which is a win-win arrangement for all involved; a teacher's dream! I had help from six great Texas Master Naturalists: Martha Miesch, Nina Wagner, Diane McMahon, Betty Clyburn, Pat Nelson, and Rheda Boardman. We also had support from two of the Kroc Center staff.



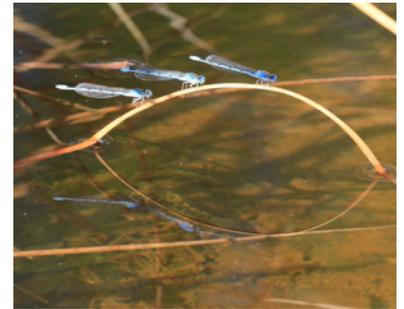
The students learned about the water cycle by illustrating the cycle, singing the "Water Cycle Boogie Song," and making water cycle bracelets out of leather and beads. This activity is from the Learning Across New Dimensions of Science (L.A.N.D.S.) curriculum. Each different colored bead represents a stage of the water cycle.

This is a fun volunteering project for those who enjoy working with children. If you are interested in assisting with this after school program, contact Martha Miesch (marthamiesch@msn.com).

The number of field guides in print is usually an indicator of nature enthusiasts' interests. In recent years we have seen a very nice increase of books specific to the family Odonata, or dragon and damselflies. As these interests increase, so too does the photographer's enthusiasm. Combining this with the wonderful digital cameras available allows another path for nature photographers to follow their passion: birds, butterflies, and now the "odes," as these species are called.

Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge has an exceptionally high diversity of dragonfly species. Its location in Roswell, New Mexico (in the eastern part of the state) puts it within the range of many eastern, western, and southern dragonfly species. The refuge has a wide variety of habitats ranging from the Pecos River and saline sinkholes to ponds, which makes it an ideal place to find dragonflies.

A two day Dragonfly Photography Workshop, conducted by a volunteer organization, "The Friends of Bitter Lake," is held at Bitter Lake Wildlife Refuge each Fall. This is only one of that organization's many activities. Cliff Morris is the instructor and his assistant is Yvonne Zumwalt. They have been doing this for a number of years, have perfected their teaching technique, and are very accomplished photographers. Cliff specializes in macro photography of dragonflies and a variety of insects--in particular, bee flies and robber flies. Yvonne is a photographic generalist with interest in flowers and other "beautiful" things. Not that dragonflies are not beautiful; but she is not the macro photographer that Cliff is. They are both extremely helpful and a delight to be with.



Our classes were held in an outlying building away from the Visitor Center, where other festival activities were being held. It was only used by us and gave the twelve students in the class privacy so that we could dedicate ourselves to photographic interests. Cliff explained the various camera and lens settings to produce the best macro images. Macro photography is close-up photography and can produce images at full size. Some students had DSLR cameras with dedicated macro lenses, while others used "point and shoot" cameras. Cliff advised everyone to bring their camera instruction manuals and helped those unfamiliar with the setting of their cameras. This is the only photography event I've attended where you get such individual attention.



The first morning was dedicated to classroom instruction. Then we traveled to restricted areas of the Refuge for field work in a variety of locations. Cliff and Yvonne led us in small groups, identified the species of ode, and showed us how to position ourselves for the best photographs. We spent four hours taking photos. Then we returned to our workshop and all of the students displayed their images. Cliff critiqued them with special emphasis on how to improve technique. Each of us gained a wealth of knowledge in a very short period of time. Our second day was more field work with classroom critique.



If this workshop appeals to you, plan to reserve some time in early September for this excellent nature photographic event. They have not posted the 2013 dates yet, but I will include them in this publication when they do. You will not be without Texas and Hill Country friends while there: Bill Lindemann, James Laswell, and Jane Crone are regular attendees who lend their expertise as tour leaders. I plan to be there as well--camera in hand.

Dusty Remembrances

Recently, I watched a two part film by Ken Burns, *The Dust Bowl*, on PBS. I highly recommend it; it is educational, enlightening, and very relevant to what we have learned in our Master Naturalist classes. I must warn you, however, that it is more depressing than just about anything I have seen on TV in quite some time.

Having grown up on the sandy soils of the Llano Estacado in the Texas Panhandle, I have some personal experience with something resembling the Dust Bowl. In 1957, when I was nine years old, my Dad and our family were transferred from San Angelo to Brownfield (just south of Lubbock) by General Telephone Co. (now Verizon). We bought a brand new house in a new development on the outskirts of town. Right across the street from our house was a huge cotton field. My friends and I loved it, because we could easily dig in the sandy soil, and spent countless hours playing in foxholes. We treated it like a huge sand box. Dirt was good!

The kitchen window of our house faced due north. Our house, which was modern for the times, had a swamp cooler on the roof, ducted into the hallway so it could distribute cool air throughout the house. More on that later. None of the new houses in our neighborhood had yards established; no trees, nothing to cover the bare ground. The land our subdivision was on had been a cotton field.

I'll never forget the first time a Blue Norther came through. It was exactly like some of those photos in the documentary that showed big dark clouds of boiling dust rolling towards us like a steam roller. These dust storms came many times during the 11 years my family and I lived there. Every time I saw one coming, I'd say, "Here comes Amarillo!"

One of my chores that first year in our new house was to go outside after each of those choking storms to shovel the red sand drifts from around the wheels on my dad's car, and from in front of the fence gates leading to our back yard. There were even drifts on our porches.

Tumbleweeds (*Salsola tragus*) or Russian thistle were another problem created by the winds. They would accumulate in the fenced area in our back yard, occupying over half of the space defined by our fence. They resembled a corralled herd of cattle all pressed up into a corner. The Russian thistle has been classified as a noxious species that is believed to have been imported from Russia to South Dakota in the 1870's in shipments of flax seed. It has since populated most of North America. It contributes to the loss of soil moisture through transpiration, thus adding to dry soil conditions that allow soils to become airborne.

Tumbleweeds in urban settings have yet another sinister aspect to them. They are highly flammable. Catch a pile of them on fire, and you have something akin to a Roman candle, burning hot and fast, sending embers far downwind to catch something else on fire. More than once a resident of our little town would lose a wooden picket fence to a fire made worse by tumbleweeds piled up against it.

There wasn't much I could do to get rid of the tumbleweeds in our back yard, except to throw them over the fence, sending them on their way to becoming someone else's problem. One last nasty feature of tumbleweeds is that they have sharp tips on their tiny leaves, much like ash juniper. It was impossible to pick one up to toss it over the fence without getting stuck. I hated tumbleweeds.

My mother complained often about the futility of trying to keep her house dust-free. I remember helping Mom hang wet sheets over the AC duct to try to catch the dust that was being pumped into the house in visible clouds. We finally gave up on that strategy and just turned off the cooler and suffered in the heat if the storm occurred in the summertime. The relentless, infernal blowing wind was nerve racking by itself. You could hear the dusty wind howling around corners of the house, rattling windowpanes and anything else that was the least bit loose. Silence was noticeable and welcome after a storm had passed. The dust would soon settle, breathing would be possible again, and you could again hear yourself think.

Each time parts of Amarillo came passing overhead, the sky would become so dark that, even in the middle of the day, the street lights would come on. The Blue Norther, as the name implied, brought cold, extremely dry air with it. Static electricity would build up on just about anything, and when you touched something to discharge the electricity, a blue flame would arc painfully from your fingertip to whatever it discharged to, invariably causing you to utter a few words that turned the air blue. Could blue flames jumping from fingertips, causing the release of a blue tirade, be the source of the name, Blue Norther?

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I worked summers on a cotton farm. If we had a dust storm in the spring after the tender cotton seedlings had sprouted, we knew that the farmer would soon be replanting, because the heavier grains of sand would roll and sizzle along the furrows, sandblasting the stalks completely in two. I moved quarter mile long strings of four and six inch aluminum irrigation pipe on the farm, to irrigate the crop. On more than one occasion, the farmer, his son, and I would have to retrieve scattered 30 foot long sections of pipe from as far away as the neighbor's property. The pipes must have each weighed 35-45 pounds, but that didn't keep them from becoming airborne and flung like toothpicks for hundreds of yards.

Once, when the farmer's son and I were moving irrigation pipe, a dust storm caught us in the field, not far from the old farmhouse. We tried to finish moving our strings of pipe before the storm hit. We were able to make it back to the old pickup we used around the farm just as the dust hit. This particular storm was preceded by a brief shower that made everything wet. Before the rain had a chance to dry, the dust hit. The combination of wet surfaces and airborne dust resulted in a weird scene. After winds subsided, everything within sight looked as if it had been flocked in red sand.

Visibility was so poor by the time we made it back to the pickup, that we had to just sit there for about an hour until it was possible to navigate back to the house. The devil wind rocked us back and forth as if it was trying shake us out of the truck. It was hot, sticky, and dusty sitting there, but we were glad to be there instead of being sandblasted by the grit. I had left the windows on my 1962 Ford Galaxy down that morning. The entire car, inside and out, was literally spray painted with rusty red dust. Even the velvet textured headliner and the blue fabric seats inside the car were red.

My dad once left in the middle of a dust storm in his brand new 1964 Chevy Impala to go to a Masons' convention in El Paso. Upon his return, we discovered that driving through all of that blowing sand had sandblasted the leading edges of the car down to the primer and the chrome was dulled. The windshield was frosted and pitted. My dad had the windshield replaced out of necessity, but the rest of the car remained that way until my sister wrecked and totaled it in about 1973 or 1974.

By the time I graduated from high school in 1967, the USDA Soil Conservation Service was trying to convince farmers to go to no-tillage farming. The practice up to that point was for farmers to strip the cotton in the fall, and then go right back into the fields to turn under the cotton stalks. They liked to look at nice, clean, plowed fields until planting time, and the theory was that the stubble would rot over the winter, providing some much needed organic matter to the otherwise poor soil. This left the fields barren and susceptible to wind and water erosion until Spring, and required another pass through, burning more diesel fuel, and packing the hard pan even more.

The Soil Conservation Service came up with the idea of leaving the stubble in the field until Spring. Then, farmers either plowed it under in the same pass they used to plant their seed, or just left the stubble there to provide a little shade and protection from the winds that always came. The stubble helped reduce wind velocity at ground level, kicking up less dust into the air. It also cut down on the farmer's consumption of diesel, and wear and tear on his machinery. No-till farming was helped along by the development of modern herbicides. I'm not sure how many farmers actually changed their farming practices, but it must have been enough to make a difference.

The Dust Bowl has been called the worst man-made natural disaster in history. It is claimed that, because the short grass prairie was plowed up and turned into farm land, an area the size of Ohio was left without protection from the ravages of wind. The wind has always been there. The soil has always been there. The vegetation of the prairie had been there until humans and our government conspired to turn it under for a profit. It is not a stretch to call the story of *The Dust Bowl* a cautionary tale.

In an interview with Ken Burns ([youtube.com/watch?v=g9GkNQa5of8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9GkNQa5of8)) in which he discusses the making of the documentary, he tries to put the magnitude of the disaster into perspective. Mr. Burns states that just one dust storm moved more tons of soil than all of the material moved during the ten year long excavation of the Panama canal.

I went back to graduate school at Texas Tech in 1988 and stayed there for three years. I witnessed those red clouds rolling across the High Plains occasionally, but they are nowhere near as severe as they used to be. Once in a while, I run across someone roughly my age who grew up on the High Plains. Occasionally ask if they still have red sand in their noses. They always know exactly what I'm talking about, and answer with a chuckle and a "Yes!"

Today, I am thankful that I no longer inhale bits of Amarillo, Texas.



WILDLIFE FOR LUNCH

2013 Webinar Series

The Texas Wildlife Association and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service sponsor lunchtime webinars one Thursday of each month. If you are not able to attend the live webinar, each presentation is archived on the TWA website.

IT'S EASY!

On the day of the webinar, simply go to texas-wildlife.webex.com, and click on the title of the webinar you wish to attend. The webinar series provides sound, science-based wildlife management options delivered by experts to you in the comfort of your own home or office.

NO NEED TO TRAVEL!

Each web-based seminar is fully interactive and allows you to engage the experts, make comments and ask questions during the course of the presentation.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Courtney Brittain at (210) 826-2904 or cbrittain@texas-wildlife.org

LIVE WEBINARS
NOON - 1 P.M.

2013 SCHEDULE

JANUARY 17

Wildlife Tax Valuations
Linda Campbell

FEBRUARY 21

Wildlife Plants
Ricky Linex

MARCH 21

Quail Management
Dale Rollins

APRIL 18

Waterfowl Habitat and Management
Kevin Kraai

MAY 16

Predator Control
Michael Bodenchuk

JUNE 20

Small Acreage Wildlife Management
Rufus Stephens

JULY 18

Water for Wildlife
Steve Nelle

AUGUST 15

Brush Sculpting with Wildlife in Mind
Ken Cearley

SEPTEMBER 19

Deer Antlers as a Management Tool: The Role of Culling
David Hewitt

OCTOBER 17

Wild Turkey Management
Jim Cathey

NOVEMBER 14

Wild Pig Management
Billy Higginbotham

DECEMBER 12

Songbird Management
Cliff Shackelford



TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Advanced Training

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26 8:45AM - 2:45PM GILLESPIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY (GCHS)

AT 12-035 SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF YOUR LAND HERITAGE: A SYMPOSIUM

The morning sessions, at 312 W. San Antonio Street, Fredericksburg, are on German land grants and land stewardship, and are followed by an afternoon field trip to the Hershey ranch. Speakers: Bill Lindemann, Past President, Hill Country Land Trust; Kevin Klaus, Information Specialist in the Texas General Land Office Archives and Records Program in Austin, Texas; Mary Lynn Rusche, County Clerk; Charles Ottmers, Retired Surveyor. Registration Fee: \$25, general public; \$20, students or members of GCHS. To pre-register, call 830-997-2835 or register on location the day of the event. For more information, visit www.pioneermuseum.net or call 830-997-2835.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 12:30PM-4:00PM STAA, INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES, SAN ANTONIO

AT 13-036 SOUTHERN TEXAS ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY MEETING

The Institute is at 801 East Caesar Chavez, San Antonio. Registration, 12:30; Business Meeting, Officer Elections and Awards Ceremony, 1:30, Presentations, 2:15-4. For more information, see topics and abstracts on the Hill Country Master Naturalist Calendar.

MONDAY, JANUARY 28 7:00PM HCMN, UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY (UGRA)

AT 13-028 THE MOUNTAIN LION IN TEXAS--WHAT MAKES AN APEX PREDATOR

Dr. Michael Tewes, of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, will share findings based on studies of this seldom seen, large, and stealthy predator who calls the southwestern region of Texas home. Dr. Tewes has devoted over thirty years to studies of the wild cats of Texas. Free; call Tom Hynes at 830-990-5750 for further information.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29 6:30-8:30PM NPSOT, MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FREDRICKSBURG

AT 13-037 ALDO LEOPOLD: THE MAN, HIS PHILOSOPHY, HIS WORDS

Jim Stanley, noted local conservationist and author of *Hill Country Landowner's Guide* will be the featured speaker at the January meeting of the Native Plant Society of Texas at 601 North Milam Street, Fredricksburg. The meeting begins at 6:30 with a social gathering. For more information, call John Huecksteadt, 830-456-5061.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9 9:00AM-2:30 PM TBS, INN OF THE HILLS, KERRVILLE

AT 13-006 TEXAS BLUEBIRD SOCIETY 2013 SEASON KICKOFF

Speakers are Mark Klym (TPWD Wildlife Biologist and author), on Wildscaping Options for Bluebird Enthusiasts and Seasonal Movement of Bluebirds and John English, on Photographing Cavity-Nesting Birds. Presentations are on Bluebird Basics, House Sparrow Control, NestWatching, and more. Advance registration deadline: January 26. (Registration at the door does not include lunch or door prize.) Free Nestbox to members who pledge to watch at least two Nestboxes. For complete information go to <http://www.texasbluebirdsociety.org/Events.php>. On-line registration: <http://www.rsvpbook.com/event.php?429794>. Volunteer help is needed to help host this event. For more information: Jeri Porter jeripster@gmail.com or call (512) 773-1076.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12 11:30AM-12:45PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER (RNC)

AT 13-004 HISTORIC AND LATE-PREHISTORIC NATIVE TRIBES

Second Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch & Learn. Local historian Joe Luther presents on historic and late-prehistoric native tribes. Cost: \$3, RNC members; \$6; nonmembers; free to those joining at the meeting. No RSVP needed.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15 9:15AM-4PM HCMN STREAM TEAM, RNC

AT 13-032 TEXAS STREAM TEAM TRAINING: "CARING FOR OUR WATERS"

Our chapter sponsors a Texas Stream Team project to perform water quality testing in Kerr, Gillespie, Kendall, and Bandera counties. 13 sites on rivers and creeks are tested monthly. 15 chapter members currently volunteer for this project. In this basic training class, volunteers learn to test for pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen, and learn how to make field observations and report data. Instructors are Ric McCormick, Donna Taylor, Floyd Trefny, and Bob Wiedenfeld. Pre-registration is required; contact Floyd Trefny at ftrefny@dishmail.net or call 830-796-3182.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21 12PM – 1PM WEBINAR

AT 13-008 WILDLIFE PLANTS – TEXAS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION

Go to <https://texas-wildlife.webex.com> on the day of the webinar and click to join the Wildlife for Lunch webinar. Each web based seminar is fully interactive and allows you to engage the experts, make comments, and ask questions during the course of the presentation. For more information or help with access, contact Courtney Brittain at cbrittain@texas-wildlife.org.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1-3 TAS, VICTORIA COLLEGE STUDENT CENTER

AT 13-001 ARCHEOLOGY 101 - AN INTRODUCTION

This Texas Archaeological Society Academy will introduce basic archeological procedures. Dr. Harry Shafer, with assistance from Dr. Jon Lohse, will lead classroom lectures and activities. Eric Ray (Curator at the Museum of the Coastal Bend), along with members of the CoBALT team, will supervise field work at the McNeil-Gonzales site. Fees: \$95, members; \$155, non-members (includes Texas Archaeological Society membership dues). Lunches, snacks, and drinks will be provided during each session. Registration deadline: February 15. To register, go to <http://www.txarch.org/Activities/academy/index.php>.

The newsletter's publication schedule does not allow listing all AT events in each issue. Check email announcements and the chapter calendar on our website for additional AT notices.

From Kristie Denbow

Reporting Invasive Plants with a Smartphone

It's official: TX Invaders mobile application is ready for download! The TX Invaders app streamlines invasive species reporting and monitoring. It requires only one device (no more gps or cameras!) and allows for instantaneous data entry. This should improve reporting by increasing "fly-by" observations (e.g., a chance-sighting) and reduce the number of lost or forgotten un-entered observations. A special thanks to Chuck Barger and partners at the University of Georgia's Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health for creating TX Invaders.

Here are the links for downloading to your device:

Link to all invasive species apps: <http://apps.bugwood.org/apps.html>

Texas Invasives app:

iphone: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/texas-invaders/id572419215?ls=1&mt=8>

android: <http://tinyurl.com/9wlqrhf>



The Invaders of Texas Citizen Science program collects species observations from volunteer "citizen scientists" trained to use a specially developed Invasive Species Early Detection and Reporting Kit. With this kit, volunteers detect invaders' arrival and dispersal in their own local areas.

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



We meet on the fourth Monday of most months at 7:00 PM. in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehman Drive in Kerrville.

Join us at 6:30 for our social half-hour.

Everyone is welcome.

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.

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The Texas Star is a monthly publication of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. News stories, comments, and ideas are welcome.

Please email them to:

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LenoreLangsdorf@gmail.com

The Hill Country Chapter does not recommend or endorse organizations or commercial sources mentioned in our newsletter. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and editor.



Questions about our chapter?

Email Valeska Danielak,
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