

THE TEXAS STAR

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HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

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

JANUARY PROGRAM

The program for the January meeting (**Monday, January 22, 2007**) will be *'Tis the Season for Prescribed Burning*, by Dusty Bruns, currently president of the Hill Country Prescribed Burning Association. He will describe how Nature's own brush management system—fire—which man has fought for decades is now being rediscovered and reapplied in today's plant community rehabilitation strategies. This is a timely topic, as January and February are usually ideal months for burns. Mr. Bruns will provide tips on why, where, and how to safely burn. He will also offer some cost comparisons with other methods, and share how he integrates a burn program with a livestock operation, a hunting program, and formerly nervous neighbors.

Dusty Bruns grew up on a livestock ranch in Kendall County. After graduating from Southwest Texas State University with a BS in Agriculture, specializing in Rangeland Management, he began his career with the Soil Conservation Service in 1969. He transferred to the Department of Defense in 1974. In 2003, he retired from the Federal government as the Training Land Manager of the 18,000 acre Camp Bullis Training Site at Fort Sam Houston. There, he was able to merge the needs of wildlife—including endangered species—with the military's need for a viable and realistic training environment. This mixture of military and nature management won Camp Bullis the 2002 Naturalist Award for Conservation from the Alamo Area Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist. In 2001, Bruns received the Texas Historical Commission's Award of Excellence for Archaeological Preservation for his efforts on Camp Bullis. Currently, Bruns is engaged in a cattle ranching operation south of Comfort.

The meeting will begin at **7:00 p.m., Monday, January 22**, at the Riverside nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville.

CONGRATULATIONS, AND WELCOME, CLASS OF 2006

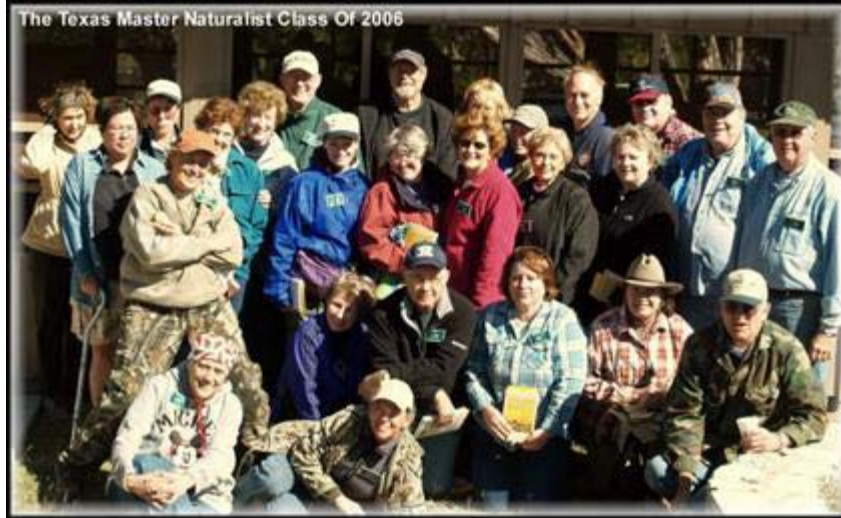


Photo: Bob Tanner

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY PHYLLIS MUSKA

I am honored to be taking on the role of president of our chapter this year. At the same time, I realize what a challenge I face in following our two past presidents, Sandy Peña and Jim Stanley.

As our chapter grows and matures, I believe it is important to recognize those who laid the foundation and helped us grow through our first few years. Sandy and Jim have both played major roles in the development of our Hill Country chapter, and we should all acknowledge their contributions.

Sandy chaired the steering committee responsible for chartering our Hill Country chapter in 2001, and then went on to serve as president from 2002 – 2004. During her term as president, the chapter grew from 30 members to over 80. She has acted as our liaison with the State Advisory Committee and has been a valued resource on various issues as they arose. Her dedication and enthusiasm are an inspiration to all who work with her.

Jim succeeded Sandy as president from 2004 – 2006. The chapter continued to grow under his leadership, and we now have over 120 members. Jim is our resident expert on native grasses and trees, and has patiently shared his knowledge by offering his grass and tree ID classes once or twice a year. He also developed the highly successful Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP), where specially trained volunteers visit landowners upon request and tour their property, helping with tree, shrub, flower and grass identification, and offering observations and recommendations on land, wildlife and livestock management.

Fortunately, our by-laws call for the immediate past president to have a position on the board, which allows for knowledge transfer and makes the transition smoother as the new board comes in. We have benefited by having Sandy in this role for the past two years, and now Jim will continue on the board in this *emeritus* position.

Our board for 2007 is comprised of:

- President: Phyllis Muska raindance@ctesc.net

- Vice President: Betty Gardner bkgardner@stx.rr.com
- Secretary: Priscilla Stanley jpbstan@ktc.com
- Treasurer: Marilyn Murrmann mmurrmann@gmail.com
- Communications Director: Donna Robinson dsrassoc@ktc.com
- Curriculum Director: Cathy Downs mzdowns@omniglobal.net
- Membership Director: John Huecksteadt jhuecksteadt@earthlink.net
- Volunteer Projects Director: Jerri Workman jerriw@ktc.com
- Advanced Training Director: Dan Behringer Behringer@ctesc.net
- New Class Representative: Bill Perkison bill.perkison@ktc.com
- Past President: Jim Stanley jstmn@ktc.com

Please feel free to contact me or any of our board members whenever you have suggestions or concerns in the coming year.

STATEWIDE RECOGNITION!

The following members and projects from our Hill Country Master Naturalist Chapter were recognized at the statewide annual meeting at Mo Ranch, October 21-23:

- Ron Hood, for 1,000 hours of service
- Tom Collins, for 2,500 hours of service
- our Chapter Scrapbook tied for 1st Place with Highland Lakes Chapter

TMN *LISTSERV*

The TMN Listserv provides an excellent means of learning about **volunteer projects, advanced training** and general natural resource and conservation information. The Listserv gives members the opportunity to keep up with state program news and updates, and allows communication with other members across the state. To subscribe, visit <http://taex001.tamu.edu/mailman/listinfo/tmn>.

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Hill Country Ecology and What You Can Do on Your Property

Jim Stanley continues his series on for the RNC Learning for Living program. The second session on Saturday, January 20, from 9:00 a.m. to Noon, will cover Deer Overpopulation, Oak Wilt, Exotics, and What You Can Do on Your Place. If you would like to become involved tin the LMAP program in the future, this would be an excellent AT session to have under your belt. There is an admission fee, but it will be waived if you say you are a Master Naturalist.

Holistic Resource Management of Texas is holding their Annual Meeting in Kerrville on Feb. 9 and 10. On Friday the 9th, there will be a Grazing Planning Class from 9 to 4 which will cover how to set up a grazing plan and how to best manage animal grazing without damaging the pasture. Saturday the 10th, the whole day is full of interesting speakers talking about watershed function, how to achieve healthy soil and how to capture rainwater. Any or all of these sessions will count as advanced training. For more information, or call Peggy Cole at 512-847-3822, or go to www.hrm-texas.org/annual_meeting

Citizen Wildfire Ecology Specialists (CWES) Training. Our chapter is sponsoring this training for the Hill Country at the request of the Texas Forest Service. The training includes two all-day classes, an independent project, and a field trip for hands-on mitigation exercises. CWES graduates will be prepared to give wildfire mitigation presentations to community groups, lead wildfire-preparedness efforts in their neighborhoods, or share their knowledge in other ways.

When: February 13, 14 and 27

Where: Fredericksburg, at the Gillespie Cooperative Extension Office

Cost: \$50, payable to the Texas Forest Service. Class is limited to 30 trainees
For more information contact Priscilla Stanley, jpbstan@kctc.com

Rainwater Harvesting – another program in the Learning for Living series at RNC will be presented by Raul and Sandy Peña, Saturday, February 10, from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Old Tunnel (KL-03-A) March 2007 kicks off the new Bat Season at Old Tunnel. All those who are interested, whether a Texas Master Naturalist or not, are invited to attend one of the volunteer trainings, on March 17 or March 31. Locations for the training have not been set yet, but more information will be forwarded to those who express interest in attending. The training will cover volunteer opportunities, operations, and an in-depth introduction to the bats of Texas.

Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area is home to approximately three million Mexican free-tailed bats from May through October, when educational programs on bats and the history of the area are presented nightly. Volunteers perform a variety of duties from trail work, wildscape maintenance, greeting visitors, giving presentations, discussing interpretive display items, and working at the sales table on Thursday through Sunday evenings.

Along with being able to work in a really beautiful environment, volunteer incentives include field trips to various bat sites in Texas and a cumulative award program based on hours worked.

This **White-tipped Black moth** was photographed in the Butterfly Garden in Kerrville-Schreiner Park on November 5, 2006. It was nectaring on a Thoroughwort (*Eupatorium havanenes*). It is very rare in our area and seems to be the first one documented in Kerr County.

This moth is common in south Texas and along the coast. It is seen most frequently in September through December.

Host plants include Snow-on-the-Mountain (*Euphorbia marginata*) and *Phyllanthus* sp.

Websites about bugs are: <http://BugGuide.Net> and <http://texasento.net>.

Barbara Lowenthal



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