



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

THE TEXAS STAR

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JULY PROGRAM

The program for our July meeting will be *Reading a Radar – South Central Texas Storms* by **Larry Eblen**, a forecaster with the National Weather Service (NWS).

Mr. Eblen will describe the kinds of storms that we experience in the spring and fall. He will explain how these types of storms differ and what threats each type brings. Using the NWS's new high-resolution radar images, he will show examples of different types of storms and interpret these images. He will complete his presentation by reviewing our last hurricane season and then looking ahead to this hurricane season.

Since 1977, Mr. Eblen has served as a NWS forecaster and administrator in the areas of agricultural, aviation, air pollution, marine, fire weather, and warning and outreach programs at Lubbock, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and New Braunfels.

He received the American Meteorological Society's Outstanding Forecast Award in 1988. In 1998 he was awarded a Bronze Medal from the US Department of Commerce.

This meeting will be held on **Monday, July 24** (remember, it's the *fourth* Monday, not the *last* Monday!) at 7:00pm at **Riverside Nature Center**, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville. We hope that you can join us.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JIM STANLEY

If you missed the pot luck dinner last month you missed a lot of good food and conversation with many nice folks. Last week we had about thirty people at the grass ID class, including three members of the Western Edwards Plateau Chapter and three high school FFA range plant team members from San Saba. There will be repeat forb, tree and grass ID classes this October and November for any TMN interested.

If you are looking for something to do this summer, why not reread all of the e-mail notices you have received lately about volunteer projects. Or better yet, go to our chapter web site and check out the list of about forty approved projects to find one that interests you. If anyone is interested in mentoring one of our new class members, please e-mail Priscilla at jpbstan@ktc.com. Also, for anyone who missed one of the training sessions last year, contact Cathy Downs at mzdowns@omniglobal.net for a copy of this year's training schedule so you can see when you can make up the missed class.

In the last three months, volunteers in all four counties have made fifteen Land Management Assistance Program visits to aid landowners with learning about and managing their property. If any of you know of someone who might be interested in such a visit, please let them know about the program.

As we are now entering the hot, dry days of summer, it is important to remember that all vegetation transpires a lot more water now than it did back in April, and thus dries out much quicker. This is especially true of anything you planted this year, as it has not had time to establish a really extensive root system. So be extra vigilant about checking your prized plants and give them a little drink. And if you normally provide water for our feathered friends, don't forget them; they need your help now more than ever. Speaking of hot dry weather, the program for our July 24 meeting will be on weather. Stay cool.

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR INVADERS

PART II: WHAT WE CAN DO

Do you want to help slow down the spread of harmful invasive species and reduce their ecological and economic damage? The first step is to locate where invaders have arrived and get that information to those who can do something about it.

On July 29, the Kerrville office of the Texas Forest Service is hosting a workshop on invasive species. Experts from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin will provide training on their new 'Invaders of Texas' program. This new Citizen Science program is designed to document and track potentially invasive plant species around the state.

The training will cover an overview of the invasives problem in Texas, description and identification of the most problematic species in the Hill Country region, use of digital camera and GPS in documenting your observations, and data entry into the Invaders online database. If you have a digital camera and/or a GPS unit, please bring them to class. And we will have wireless access, so you may wish to bring a laptop if you have one.

The workshop will be held at the Kerr County Cooperative Extension office, 3655 Highway 27 East in Kerrville, from 9am to 4:30pm. The fee of \$10 covers the cost of the training materials, including a CD on plant species of regional concern. Bring your own lunch, as we will have only a short break for lunch.

Advanced training credit is available to Hill Country Master Naturalist chapter members. This training will prepare chapter members for volunteer work on **Project #CC-10-A**.

Contact **Phyllis Muska** for more information or to register.

In addition, there are preventive measures we can take around our own homes:

- When adding plants to your landscape or recommending plants to others, avoid those species that have been identified as potentially invasive. Here are some alternative choices:

Instead of:	Try:
ligustrum	Texas mountain laurel, evergreen sumac, yaupon holly, cenizo
nandina	possumhaw holly, barbados cherry, flame-leaf sumac
vitex	Mexican bush sage, Texas mountain laurel, Mexican buckeye
elephant ear	yellow water lily, pickerel weed
bamboo	Texas pistache, dwarf wax myrtle
Chinese tallow	flameleaf sumac, Texas pistache, Texas red oak
Japanese honeysuckle	coral honeysuckle, Carolina jessamine, crossvine

- If you can't live without nandina, try the dwarf, non-berrying variety. In general, don't plant anything that makes

lots of seeds or berries. If you already have some of these plants in your landscape, remove seed/berry clusters before they ripen. Even if it's just in your back yard, remember that birds can be attracted to the berries and plant them along our creeks and roads, where they can take hold and create a problem within just a few years.

- Be extra vigilant after doing any kind of work around your home or ranch that creates a disturbance, such as road work, new construction, or fence work. Seeds are frequently brought in with road base, and any disturbance of the ground can unearth dormant seed.

KERRVILLE BUTTERFLY COUNT

By TOM COLLINS

After the dedication of the Butterfly Theater at Kerrville-Schreiner Park on July 10, nine butterfly counters set out in search of butterflies in the gardens, parks and nature areas of Kerrville. The annual count is sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) and includes counting all the species and total individual butterflies found in a 15-mile diameter circle in a 24-hour time period. The Kerrville count center is at the intersection of SH 27 and Goat Creek Road.

The count produced 29 species of butterflies and a total of 163 individuals. The best butterfly of the count was a Red-spotted Purple found by Tony Gallucci at the Hill County Youth Ranch where he works. The Red-spotted Purple was at one time called a Red-spotted Admiral in older field guides, and is very similar to the much more common Pipevine Swallowtail, of which 33 were recorded during the day.

There were also high numbers of Queens (38) and American Snouts (28). Other high counts came from the Gulf Fritillary (11), Black Swallowtail (9) and Lyside Sulphur (8). Had the count been conducted a few weeks earlier, the total of the Lyside Sulphurs may have been in the hundreds. The Lyside is a tropical sulphur typically found only in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Occasionally there are invasions of this species northward and this year was one example. Tony Gallucci reported over 300 on one bush at the youth ranch, and I had as many as 50 per day on my ranch here in Center Point.



Lyside Sulphur

Photo by Tom Collins

And finally, if you get a chance to see a California Sister on a count as we did, then your day has been a very good one.

The next local butterfly count will be Saturday, July 22 in Center Point. Join Compiler Bob Tanner at Camp C.A.M.P. on Skyline drive in Center Point at 8am. The count will begin with a hike along the bluffs of the Guadalupe and then move on to other areas. Many of the same species as were seen on the Kerrville count are expected. This is a great way to start learning butterflies, so join us if you can. Bring your drinks, lunch and \$3 to cover the cost of the NABA final report.

A PAGE FROM THE HERBARIUM

THIS MONTH'S PLANT:

TEXAS FROG-FRUIT

PHYLA INCISA SMALL OR PHYLA NODIFLORA VAR. INCISA

BY SUSAN LONGACRE

Regarded as a pest by some folks, the low-growing Texas Frog-Fruit can be your answer for an excellent flowering ground cover for a 'problem area' in your landscape. It grows across almost all of Texas, on soils of many types and under a wide variety of moisture regimes. Frog-Fruit blooms from March to November and in the Hill Country can be found in dry creek beds, roadsides, fields and moist bottomlands. It can even be used to replace a lawn, and it can be mowed!

Leaves of the Texas Frog-Fruit are the major food source for larvae of two butterflies – the beautiful little Phaon Crescent (*Phyciodes phaon*) and the striking Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*). Females lay their eggs on the undersides of the leaves, and males patrol the area around Frog-Fruit, looking for mates.

Frog-Fruit is in the Verbenaceae or Vervain Family, along with species of Verbena and Lantana. Family characteristics that Frog-Fruit displays:

- it is an aromatic herb/shrub;
- it has square stems and opposite leaves; and
- the flowers are racemose – meaning simple, elongate and with pedicels all the same length.

Generally less than 6" tall, Frog-Fruit is a low perennial with a creeping growth habit and stems that extend out as far as 3 feet. Stems are numerous, 4-sided, often reddish-purple. A real "ground hugger", this plant branches, has swollen nodes that often root, and tips that are upright. Leaves are thick, up to 2" long, ½" wide, opposite, stalkless, spatulate to oblanceolate and are toothed or serrated above the middle of the blade.

Along with other many-flowering members of this family, Frog-Fruit's tiny (1/4") blooms are clustered in small, terminal spikes that initially are deep purple and globe-like. As the flower heads develop, the tube flowers appear surrounding the imbricate globular center. With continued growth the flower head elongates, becoming cylindrical and about 1" long. Individual flowers are tubular, 4- or 5-lobed at the rim and are white to pale lavender with yellow inside the tube. Flower heads occur on stems or peduncles up to 4" long. Fruit on this genus consists of a drupe that splits into 2 nutlets encased in a calyx.

The Texas Hill Country Virtual Herbarium is a project dedicated to creating a photographic database to be used for identification of plants native to the Texas Hill Country area.

*For more information, contact **Barbara Lowenthal**.*

MASTER NATURALIST MILESTONES / ACKNOWLEDGMENTS / KUDOS

Cathy Downs of our Class of 2005 has just earned the special recertification award available only to first year members. Cathy has completed over eighty hours of volunteer work and sixteen hours of advanced training to certify a second time within a 15-month period. She will receive her 2006 Texas Prickly Pear pin. Cathy chairs our Curriculum Committee which plans and runs the training for our Class of 2007.

Barbara Lowenthal of our Class of 2002 has recertified for 2006 and will receive her Texas Prickly Pear pin. Barbara is the project coordinator for maintaining the butterfly garden at Kerrville-Schreiner Park in Kerrville and for the virtual herbarium project, which will permit on-line identification of Hill Country native plants.

Bob Richie of our Class of 2003 has earned his Silver Dragonfly for 500 hours of cumulative volunteer service. Bob serves as our Vice President for Programs this year and is a frequent volunteer at the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area (also known as the Bat Tunnel) near Comfort. Recently Bob volunteered at the children's summer camp on photography at Riverside Nature Center.

Since January 1, 2006, our members have contributed 3,468 volunteer hours to their communities. These volunteer hours have a value of \$62,563, based on the 2006 value of \$18.04/hour for volunteer work. What is more remarkable is that only half of our members have reported their hours so far this year. Just think of the hours we could report to the State TMN program for their matching grants if all our members reported their good deeds!

Our members have also attended 552 hours of Advanced Training so far in 2006. That is a whole lot of nature learning!

Congratulations to all our chapter's achievers this month!

Sandy and Raul Peña and their rainwater harvesting system were featured in the June 17 *San Antonio Express-News*. The article describes their 12000-gallon system and gives a number of resources for rainwater catchment.

In case you missed it, you can read the story on-line at

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/salife/gardening/stories/MYSA061706.1P.rainwater.6c1814.html>.

Barbara Lowenthal, coordinator of the butterfly habitat project at Kerrville-Schreiner Park, was interviewed by the *Kerrville Daily Times* for an in-depth article covering the Butterfly Theater and the NABA butterfly count. The article, which appeared in the July 8-9 weekend edition, included gorgeous color photographs as well as a number of tips and resources for creating a butterfly garden.

CALENDAR

July 15: Native Plant Society of Texas – New State Office Opening and Celebration – 2-5pm. Celebrate the opening of NPSOT's new state office and the 25th anniversary of NPSOT's official founding. 320 W San Antonio Street (corner of San Antonio and Milam Streets), Fredericksburg.

July 19: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter board meeting – 2:00pm at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville. Chapter members may attend.

July 20: Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation – 7pm, Lyndon B. Johnson Historical Park Visitor Center, Avenue G and Ladybird Lane, Johnson City. **Carly Veditz** will present a program on wildlife protection and building more sustainable relations between humans and wildlife. For further information, call 830 868 7128 X244.

July 22: NABA Center Point Butterfly Count – *See above for details*. Contact [Tom Collins](#) for further information.

July 24: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter monthly meeting – 7:00pm, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville. *See above for details*.

July 29: Invaders of Texas workshop – 9am–4:30pm, Kerr County Extension Office, 3655 Highway 27 East. **AT hours available**. *See above for details*.

July 29: Guadalupe River Cleanup – 8am-11:30am. Ingram Lake, UGRA Lake, and Flat Rock Lake areas. Registration will begin at 8am at the

Ingram Boat Ramp, the Guadalupe Park in Kerrville, and the Kerr County Park across from Kerrville-Schreiner Park. Contact Lindsay Brandt or Neville Triplett at 830 896 5445 or see <http://www.ugra.org> for details. **Project ID #CC-01-A.**

July 29: Hill Country Archeological Association – 12:30pm, Riverside Nature Center. **Mary Beth Tomka** from the Center for Archaeological Research at UTSA will discuss Hill Country and Spanish Colonial ceramics. Meeting is free and open to the public.

August 17: Rainwater Harvesting – 7pm, Lyndon B. Johnson Historical Park Visitor Center, Avenue G and Ladybird Lane, Johnson City. **Mike McElveen** will speak on rainwater catchment systems for home or business. For further information, call 830 868 7128 X244.

Please send newsletter contributions and comments to Phyllis Muska at pmuska@omniglobal.net.

