

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter

T E X A S



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

Rare, Endangered,
and Threatened
in the four counties.



Cave myotis bat
Myotis velifer
Bandera County

Congratulations,
Ron!
Page 6.

February
2011



Volume 9
No. 2

FEBRUARY MEETING ... WILD CATS of TEXAS

Texas has the richest diversity of wild cats in the United States. This list includes mountain lion, bobcat, ocelot, and jaguarundi. Jaguar and margay have also been recorded. Each cat has a unique story that **Dr. Mike E. Tewes** will share with us.



Mike and his graduate students have studied these highly adaptive

predators over the last 30 years. He will discuss his research, biology, management, and conservation of the "Wild Cats of Texas." Dr. Tewes holds the rank of Regents Professor and directs the **Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute** Feline Research Center.

Join us Monday, February 28 at 7p.m. in the UGRA Lecture Hall.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ... Phyllis Muska

Yes, but . . .

I think it's a common experience among our members to come out of basic training with so many new perspectives on so many different topics that it is easy to feel confused. Throughout our training, speaker after speaker answers our questions with an unsatisfactory *It depends...* or, *I don't know*. At first it may be disheartening to learn that even experts do not know everything, even in their own fields of expertise.

Then, as we get a little smarter, we become aware that the more we know, the more there is to learn. It then becomes easier to admit to being unsure. Otherwise, once we think we know it all, we effectively close off our minds to further learning. At our January meeting, Richard Heilbrun, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department wildlife biologist based at Government Canyon in San Antonio, gave a thought-provoking presentation

on Wildlife Laws and Conservation Ethics, culminating in a live poll with instant results reflecting the views of our audience. Many of us responded to a number of the poll items with *It depends...* With most of the situations presented in his poll, knowing more about the particular circumstances affected our answers. For example, is it always a bad thing to feed deer? When is it OK? Is high fencing a property ever a good thing?

What about treating a rehabilitated raccoon like a pet? Always bad? What if the raccoon cannot be released back into the wild? Does that affect the "rightness" or "wrongness"? There are not necessarily "right" or "wrong" responses to any of these scenarios. But in keeping with our mission as Master Naturalists, we should always be open to how we perceive a given situation, rather than rushing to a conclusion which

continued. page 2.

THIS MONTH WE HONOR

<u>Milestones</u>	<u>2011 Re-Certification</u>	<u>Special First Year Re-Certification</u>	<u>First Year Certification</u>
<i>Brushed Silver 500 hours</i>	<i>Horned Lizard</i>	<i>Horned Lizard</i>	<i>Dragonfly</i>
Ward Miller	Cynthia Johnson	Jim Burgin Thomas Hynes	Dean Schmelling

kristie

After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring.
 He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him.
 The moral: When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut.

Will Rogers

Do you know?

In 1983, the Texas Legislature created the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. The Fund supports research, management, habitat acquisition, and dissemination of information pertaining to nongame and endangered wildlife in Texas. This fund is sustained entirely by voluntary contributions and purchases of nongame art prints, decals, and stamps.

You can contribute to non-game and endangered wildlife conservation efforts - send your donation to:

**Wildlife Diversity Program
 Texas Parks and Wildlife
 4200 Smith School Road
 Austin, Texas 78744**



President's Message continued.

is only partially informed. We all make value judgments, but we owe it to ourselves, to our fellow chapter members, and especially to those folks to whom we are providing "outreach, education, and service" to be as thoughtful and thorough as possible in coming to a decision about how to handle a given situation, or how to respond to a question. Quite often, the only appropriate response is, indeed, *I don't know...* or, *It depends...*, and when that is the case, we should not be afraid or embarrassed to say so.

Maybe Gertrude Stein said it best with her pronouncement that:

*There ain't no answer.
 There ain't gonna be any answer.
 There never has been an answer.
 That's the answer.*

Does it get any easier? Well, *it depends...*

ADVANCED TRAINING

AT 11-016 FOOD, WATER, SHELTER AND SPACE FOR HILL COUNTRY WINTER BIRDS

Tuesday, February 22, 7-9P **Gillespie County Historical Society** building, free
Fredericksburg Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) monthly meeting:
Bill Lindemann will discuss needs of Hill Country winter birds. For information visit the
Fredericksburg website, npsot.org/Fredericksburg/meetings.html.

AT 11-017 HOW TO GET CHILDREN INTERESTED IN GARDENING

Tuesday, March 1, 7-9P, **Riverside Nature Center** (RNC), free
Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas monthly program series: Stephen
Brueggerhoff, Vice President of Education for the NPSOT state board, will share ideas about
inspiring a love of gardening in children. Come early for refreshments and socializing. Visit
the chapter's website, www.npsot.org/Kerrville/.

AT 11-018 THE 2nd TUESDAY "BROWN BAG LUNCH AND LEARN"

Tuesday, March 8, 11:30A-12:45P, RNC, Adults \$6, members/children under 12 \$3
Tom Collins, Master Naturalist and expert on Hill Country fauna, will discuss migrating
birds. Learn who is coming back; who is passing through and where they are going; and
who you might expect to see at RNC or in your own back yard.

AT 11-020 PROJECT WILD WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 12, 9A-3P, RNC, free
During the six-hour training workshop participants will learn how to teach young people
about ecology and wildlife using fun, hands-on educational activities.
Registration: Pre-registration required, space is limited, call RNC, 830-257-4837.

AT 11-019 RIPARIAN WORKSHOPS

Friday, March 18, and May 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 9A-4P, free
Riparian Workshops for Landowners and Land Decision-makers by **Nueces River Authority
Riparian Landowners' Network**. Leading experts, Kenneth Mayben, James Smith, and
Steve Nelle, teach the hows and whys of rivers and riparian functions. Participants will learn
basic riparian dynamics: the interaction of hydrology - vegetation - erosion/deposition.
Registration: Accepted on a first come basis, space is limited. If you register, your participation
is expected. Contact Sky Lewey, slewey@nueces-ra.org or call 830-278-6810.

AT 11-011 WILDSAPES: THE PLANT-BUG-BIRD DINER

Saturday, March 26, 10A-2P, RNC, Adults \$35, Members \$28, Lunch included
Learn how your garden/property can provide food, water, and shelter for a variety of wildlife,
particularly songbirds. Even a small oasis - urban or rural - can provide important habitat.
Presenters include Susan Sander, founder of RNC, and local Master Naturalists.
Registration: Required, call RNC, 830-257-4837.

Twinkling chambray eyes
Sharing stories whispered by stone
Timeless Teacher Adored
For Bill Ward
by Leanne Beauxbeannes

Past President's Board Position and Other Musings

The Past President's position is, at least for most of the year, one of the easiest on the board. Officially he/she simply attends board meetings and participates in discussions. In the fall, however, the past president is chairperson of the Nominating Committee. Sometimes it is not easy finding people willing to serve on next year's board, so a certain amount of "encouragement" is required.

Unofficially the past president serves as a source of information as to past board actions, previous discussions of various issues, procedures, who to talk to about this or that, etc. I know when I first became president, I was very grateful that the position had just been formed and that I had Sandy Peña on the board to help guide us through some complicated issues. I believe future boards will continue to find the position very useful.

An Organization of Friends

Recently, upon departing from the board and having spent more time on the board and committees than most people, I decided to share some of my thoughts with the new and continuing board members. I have been asked to share some of those thoughts with the rest of the chapter.

First, I want to say that for the past nine years Master Naturalist has been by far the most important organization I have been involved with and one I continue to care deeply about. Part of this is because of the many, many opportunities it has provided me to learn about a subject I dearly love, *i.e.* anything and everything having to do with nature in the Hill Country. But, a big part is also the people. A few of us were friends before the chapter started, but most are folks I would never have known were it not for our chapter. I have said many times, I believe the Hill Country Chapter is much more than an organization of people with similar interests;

it is an organization of friends.

Our Chapter is Special

The entire Texas Master Naturalist program is a great organization, but I believe our Hill Country Chapter is truly special. Our chapter has a higher percentage of the total population of our area as members than most chapters. This may be due partly to demographics, but I think it is at least partly because of the quality of the organization. It also turns out that although we have considerably fewer members than some of the larger, big-city chapters, last year we had more volunteer hours than any other chapter in the state! Our training program has been compared to those of other chapters and it has been concluded ours is one of the best. (Being a native Texan, I like to brag.)

I have attended most of seven of the nine training classes we have had and marveled at the enthusiasm, inquisitiveness, and energy of every class. No wonder we are doing so well!

Think about it

For the last eight months or so I have written a column for the Kerrville Daily Times on a variety of nature-related topics. This exercise has made me think about what the general population (as opposed to Master Naturalists (MNs)) knows and what they do not know, and perhaps most important, what they need to know.

One of the things I have been thinking about, which we as MNs talk around, but which we seldom address directly, is land fragmentation. This is the effect those of us (I include Priscilla and me in "us") who have bought a very small piece of what used to be a large ranch have had/are having on the ecology of the Hill Country.

When a large ranch with only one family living on the land is converted into 20, 30, or 50 ranchettes, a long list of problems arise for the native habitat: more wells, septic systems, fences, roads, impervious cover, horses,

continued. page 5.

longhorns, exotics, dogs and cats, and a patchwork of land management systems, some of which are truly dreadful. It is easy to get depressed just thinking about it.

I have also been thinking about how there is hope. Hope because we as a society have learned more about what constitutes good and poor land management practices. Hope because the new people, while possibly totally inexperienced in managing land, are not subject to the pressures of making a living from the land. Hope because the very fact that they (we) spent the money to buy the land means they (we) probably can afford to spend way more than the original rancher, per acre, to take care of it.

Education!

And that brings us to what we as MNs can do to help mitigate the problem. I know that many of you have heard me repeat the quotations below, but they bear repeating in this context. "In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught" Bada Diom, and the MN mission statement, "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."

Together, I think these two quotations make it clear what we as Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalists should be doing, and that is to educate these inexperienced new landowners about the native habitat they now own and manage. I can think of nothing more important, nothing more in line with our goals and mission, nothing more worthwhile, and nothing more gratifying - and it is largely up to us. The AgriLife Extension, Parks and Wildlife, Forest Service, and NRCS agents do a great job, but there are far too few of them to reach everyone that needs help.

Anything and everything that we as individual MNs can do that in a direct or indirect way contributes to the education of landowners and the public in general is a worthwhile activity, and the greater the impact the activity has the more worthwhile it is. But there is a prerequisite for doing this. Before we can educate others, we must educate ourselves - we have to become experts. None of us may achieve a level that can be truly described as MASTER naturalist, but the more we know the more effective we can be as educators. I urge all MNs to never be satisfied with what you know; we can all become more knowledgeable.

Take the Challenge

So, my challenge to everyone is to continue to attend every possible AT event, including all chapter monthly meetings and as many NPSOT and Nature Center presentations as possible, and take every opportunity to educate yourselves on all topics of Hill Country ecology (even if it is a topic you think you know). Then look for effective ways in which you can contribute to the nature education of your friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens. If we can all do this, our chapter will continue to do great things and to truly make a difference.

Jim Stanley

Hill Country Naturalist

Visit Jim Stanley's website to read his columns for the Kerrville Daily Times.

You will also find:

- photos to help with tree identification
 - slides for grass and tree ID
 - ecology resources

www.hillcountrynaturalist.org

Our Chapter
Congratulates
RON HOOD

Chapter member **Ronald Hood** has been recognized with two awards acknowledging outstanding service and volunteerism.

Ron's dedication to the Texas Master Naturalist program earned him the highest Master Naturalist honor - the gold with diamond dragonfly - for achieving 5,000 volunteer service hours.



Ron also received the President's Call to Service Award.

The President's Council on Service and Civic Participation established the President's Volunteer Service Award program to thank and honor Americans who by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service.



Ron Hood receives his 5,000 hour service award along with members recertifying: Laura Baker, Linda Ross, and Peggy Robinson.

Volunteer Opportunity



If you would like to volunteer at the Festival helping with registration, assisting Steve Dodge with parking, or personing the Speaker's Table email Jane Crone, jcrone@austin.rr.com



Wow!

What a great way to start 2011. We had **83** members and guests at our January chapter meeting!

from Christina Williams

TPWD will incur steep budget cuts for 2012-13. The budget crisis facing Texas state government will have a significant impact on outdoor recreation opportunities and natural resource management.

Read the complete story: chron.com/disp/story.mpl/outdoors/tompkins/

Riverside Nature Center’s Education Committee decided to use resources to create a **Junior Naturalist** program in January 2010. The planning began right away. Now, one year later, I am glad to report we are more than halfway through training our first class of Junior Naturalists, and the program is successful by every measure!

This article has two purposes: first, to report on the process and progress of the Junior Naturalist program and second, to give well-deserved recognition and thanks to all who have come together to provide this unique education to local children.

**THE JUNIOR NATURALIST PROGRAM:
A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

WHO?

The Junior Naturalist program currently serves twenty-two children in kindergarten through third grade. This age group was not targeted by Riverside Nature Center’s (RNC) youth education programs. Program leaders number about one dozen and are mostly Master Naturalist volunteers from the Hill Country Chapter.

WHAT?

The program’s goals: Bring children and their families into nature on a regular basis. Instill a sense of excitement, passion, and concern for nature. Offer core knowledge of natural resources in the Hill Country.



In order to accomplish these goals, two groups were formed under the Junior Naturalist umbrella.



**Junior Naturalist
of the Texas Hill Country**

Sponsored by Riverside Nature Center

A Project Update from Stephanie Stone Perry

The Junior Naturalist Homeschool group meets for classes during the week. The Junior Naturalist



Explorers group for public and private schoolers meets during the week-end. Each group has twelve classes focused on nature topics. Students have a reading assignment before

each class that is to be completed with the help of their families. The readings are designed to give students basic knowledge of the week’s topic so they come to class prepared to jump into hands-on, exploratory learning activities. Class times are filled with experiments, crafts, nature walks, journaling, guest speakers, and other activities. The Family Field Trip is an important component of the program. Three field trips bring Junior Naturalist families together for fun in nature.

WHEN?

The 2010-2011 program began in September and spans seven months, ending in March.

WHERE?

Classes are held at RNC. We venture out for Family Field Trips.

WHY?

Volunteers have put hundreds of hours into this labor of love (and had a blast doing it!).

Hands-on learning activities are provided for education and enjoyment. Students are pictured observing wildlife, writing in their naturalist journals, studying specimens, sieving leaf litter to find arthropods, making suet logs, examining tracks, sorting ecoregion photos, graphing the amount of litter picked up, and other activities.

As we entered into creation of the Junior Naturalist program, I and the other leaders reflected on this quote from Baba Diom, "In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught." This is the ultimate reason we feel our hours are well-spent. We teach about the natural world in hopes of fostering a love of nature within these kids that is so strong they will choose to follow a path of conservation. In a time when a plethora of social, emotional, and physical issues challenge children, programs encouraging outdoor experiences are important.



Junior Naturalist classes encourage curiosity and exploration.

An amazing recruitment effort was made by Priscilla Stanley (chapter volunteer coordinator extraordinaire) in the months leading up the September start date. The program was also

blessed with a strong administrator in Julie Clay, who whole-heartedly took on the task of making sure I had/have all my ducks in a row. (Julie thinks of it all, never missing a beat!) Priscilla kept recruiting. She spent a considerable amount of time gaining understanding of our project's volunteer needs and finding Master Naturalists who were a great fit. Within a

month, our team of two grew to a team of more than ten remarkable volunteers, who I cannot brag on enough! These new Junior Naturalist

leaders stepped up and took roles as teachers, assistants, editors, class activity planners, substitutes, and other positions. Each brought a healthy dose of enthusiasm and talent. I feel incredibly fortunate to work with this fabulous group of volunteers. The students could not have a better group of adults working with them! Please thank these volunteers for



Peggy Robinson observes cricket frogs with students. David Edgar joins Junior Naturalists for a riverside walk. Julie Clay prepares "potato traps" for catching "bugs." Proud grandpa and MN, Ward Miller, poses with his favorite student at Old Tunnel WMA. Ronnie Wilson and volunteer Shannon Nisbett bird watch with students.



Clockwise from top left: Ronnie Wilson shows Junior Naturalists suet mixing techniques. Jason Perry shares an aquatic insect sample with a student. Peggy Robinson assists in class. Jason demonstrates how to use an aspirator to "suck up" an insect for observation.

phenomenal job they are doing.

Hill Country Chapter members involved include:

- Peggy Robinson
- David Edgar
- Jason Perry
- Fane Downs
- Ronnie Wilson
- Ward Miller
- Deborah Sargent
- Julie Clay
- Stephanie Perry
- Maggie Tatum

Two other wonderful volunteers are Karen Clint and Shannon Nisbett.

As of the first week in February, these Junior Naturalist leaders have held nine classes per group (eighteen total) covering Texas' major ecoregions, stewardship, naturalist tools, ecosystems, herpetology, ornithology, mammalogy, ichthyology, entomology, geology, and hydrology. The remaining



Families and volunteers gather at Old Tunnel WMA for a Family Field Trip. A beautiful evening, interpretive talk, and bat emergence were enjoyed.

three classes will cover seasons, weather, plants, and archaeology. We have had Family Field Trips to Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area for an interpretive talk and bat emergence, and a Star Party at RNC focusing on asteroids.



Families meet for a Star Party Field Trip at RNC. Kids had an asteroid program; parents had their own program.

Our final field trip to Schreiner Park will be themed "Family Fun in Nature." It will include a hike, activities, and camp cooking, plus an optional campout. During classes and field trips, the leaders have been very effective connecting with children and families, and fulfilling program goals.

We have been fortunate to have other Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalists as guest speakers. The children have been delighted with the knowledge and passion these special guests have brought to our group.

Wonderful guest presenters have included:



Leanne Beauxbeanne talks to a student about her journal entry. Rebecca Shupp shows students how a skull pieces together. Leanne speaks about skunks and their adaptations. Guy Harrison teaches students about insects. Kevin Pillow has students' hands in the air to identify a bird by its' call.

Leanne Beauxbeanne and Rebecca Shupp for mammalogy, Kevin Pillow for ornithology, Karen Millikan for herpetology, and Guy "Doc" Harrison for ichthyology and aquatic insects. Adrienne Grubbs gave an outstanding Star Party kids' program. I cannot thank these folks enough for their generous contributions to the program. Many people have donated materials, and even more have given words of encouragement. All are

appreciated so much!

Commencement will be held in late March to honor the accomplishments of the Junior Naturalists who have completed the program, to encourage the children to continue with their naturalist studies, and to thank families for their involvement. This event will mark a milestone for the leaders, as well. Starting the program was a fairly aggressive and involved project. All leaders took ownership of the program and should feel very proud of their accomplishments this year!

What does the future hold for the Junior Naturalist program? My greatest hope is that the program continues to grow and evolve while

staying rooted in its primary goals. I hope volunteers (old and new) continue to take pride in the execution of the program. The 2010-2011 volunteer team set a high standard! I hope local families continue to value nature education for their children.

Almost every week a parent asks me, "What happens after this?" These families want to

continue to be involved at RNC. In response to this desire, we hope to establish a Junior Naturalist Club for kids who have completed the program. Thus a new volunteer opportunity presents itself, as we are seeking Master Naturalist volunteers to plan and execute a once-a-month Junior Naturalist Club meeting. These monthly meetings could be naturalist training, service projects, or other outdoor activities.

What Junior Naturalist parents say about the program...

"I continue to be very impressed with the volunteers that conduct the Saturday classes. They are always so enthusiastic about the subject for the day and that really comes across to the kiddos!

"My daughter already had a great appreciation for nature, but this program has helped her gain much more knowledge of the natural world and respect for what nature offers! It is incredible to see her enthusiasm when we go on our own nature outings as a family! Many thanks to you and all the volunteers that have made this program possible!"

"All three of my children have left the Junior Naturalist classes excited about what they are studying. 'I can't wait to learn more ornithology.' 'I'm going to be a bird lover.' I love to see them excited and intrigued by the natural world. Thank you so much for piloting this program. We are so thankful for it!"

We have had many inquiries from families who wish we could provide a similar program for older students and for students in other Hill Country towns. The development of naturalist programs to serve these groups is another

volunteer opportunity I hope someone will take. Let it grow!

Thanks again to everyone who has played a role, *any role*, in making the 2010-2011 Junior Naturalist program happen! Thanks in advance to all who will lead and grow this enjoyable, rewarding program in years to come!

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Riverside Nature Center Weekly Fauna Census

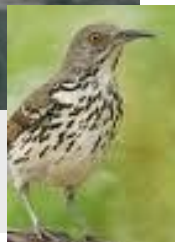
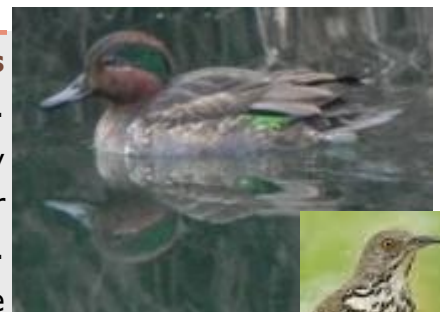
recorded two new bird species in January.

136th bird species - male **Green-winged Teal**. This is a very unusual place for a Green-winged Teal; they are dabblers and prefer marsh areas to feed. This bird appeared either sick or injured.

137th bird species - **Brown Thrasher**. This bird was seen in the

brush pile just below the trail entrance.

Carolyn Bean, Cynthia Johnson, Tom Collins



iphone apps for naturalists



Weather HD



Knot Guide



Satellite Flybys



What's your favorite app?
Share it with us at denbow@gvtc.com.

HEY, WHAT IS THAT ?
Be first to discover what may or may not be hidden in the image below and you will find yourself with the psychedelic dragonfly next month. [ENTER TO WIN!](#)



- #1 Norma Bruns
- Eileen Gotke
- Anne Cassidy
- Diane McMahon
- Charles Smith



TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST
ANNUAL MEETING
October 21-23, 2011
Mo Ranch
Hunt, Texas

Advanced Training Suggestions Are Needed

The State Office is requesting suggestions for Advanced Training for the annual meeting.

What training and education do you need to be successful in your volunteer efforts?

Please send AT ideas to State Coordinator Michelle Haggerty mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu by March 1.



My neighbor's Honda covered by snow overnight in Crested Butte, Colorado. My trailer later that day is below, I had already dug out the truck. Kristie





Michael Tewes

Ocelot wearing a radio collar, photo by Mike Tewes.



Michael Tewes

Jaguarundi photo by Mike Tewes.



Nathan S. Cook

Bobcat photo by Nathan S. Cook taken on January 7, 2009 in the area around Beeville.



Michael Tewes

Cougar photo by Mike Tewes.

League of Women Voters Kerrville Area

Water Forums



Recent weather conditions made many area citizens aware of how life would change if water were not immediately available. In this instance, it was caused by frigid temperatures that froze and burst pipes. With the help of area plumbers, space heaters, and some good old frontier fortitude, we have come through... for now. But what about tomorrow, next year ...seven years from now?

The Kerrville Area League of Women Voters is sponsoring a series of forums on water availability now and in the future for our area. The meetings will occur February 19, March 19, and April 9 from 9a.m. to 1p.m. in the UGRA Lecture Hall.

Each forum builds on the previous one to give a more complete understanding of water issues. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend all three.

February 19: *The Current State of Water, Where We are Today.* Presentations include a discussion by a state water law expert; Kerr County water as overseen by UGRA; an overview of the Headwaters Groundwater Conservation District and its role in Kerr County; a depiction of rainfall over time showing major droughts and floods; and a discussion of the water cycle, local aquifers, recharge, and transmissivity.

March 19: *Water Planning for the Future.* Presentations will include the Region J Water Plan, an overview of the Texas Water Development Board and Groundwater Management Area 9, the importance of water from TPWD's perspective, and City of Kerrville's municipal water reuse, aquifer storage, recovery wells, and drought triggers.

April 9: a presentation by UGRA of water quality study results and what individuals can do, a skit by League of Women Voters members depicting water interest groups, presentations on rainwater harvesting, native plants, and grasses.

For information on the League of Women Voters, and its statewide study of water resources, visit lwvtexas.org.

from Tom Collins

I found this beautiful **Song Sparrow** working the grass along the bank below the dam at Guadalupe River City Park.

One of the key diagnostics for a Song Sparrow is the broad lateral throat stripes seen in this photo along with the stout bill. Scientist have described some 31 subspecies of the Song Sparrow. The most likely subspecies we get in winter, as the Song Sparrow is only a winter Texan and will not nest in the Lone Star State, is some variation of the Eastern Race.

The scientific species name is *Melospiza melodia*. The genus name *Melospiza* translates to Song Finch - Melo (song), spiza (*spiza* is the ancient Greek catch-all term for finch-like birds). The species name *melodia* translates loosely to *melody*; pleasant song. The Song Sparrow gets its name for its highly variable song. It begins with three to four clear, whistled short notes followed by a rapid long trill ending in buzzy phrases, per Sibley: "seet seet seet zeeeeeee tipo zeet zeet."

Thoreau claimed to hear "*Maid! Maid! Maids! Hang up your Tea-kettle-ettle-ettle!*" Regardless of how it translates from avian to human speak, the male will launch into variations of the same melody and may try hundreds of them in a single day.

We Texans can only enjoy the way this "song finch" skulks along a creek bank, occasionally flitting to a short grassy motte or naked stubby tree to scan its surroundings. The only vocal sound we will hear is a husky "*jimp*."

The Song Sparrow has found its way into American prose and poetry.

An excerpt from Thoreau's Spring

Walden is melting apace. There is a canal two rods wide along the northerly and westerly sides, and wider still at the east end. A great field of ice has cracked off from the main body. I hear a song sparrow singing from the bushes on the shore - olit, olit, olit, - chip, chip, chip, che char, - che wiss, wiss, wiss. He too is helping to crack it.



Tom Collins

The Song-Sparrow

There is a bird I know so well,
It seems as if he must have sung
Beside my crib when I was young;
Before I knew the way to spell
The name of even the smallest bird,
His gentle, joyful song I heard.
Now see if you can tell, my dear,
What bird it is, that every year,
Sings "Sweet-sweet-sweet-very merry cheer."

He comes in March, when winds are strong,
And snow returns to hide the earth;
But still he warms his head with mirth,
And waits for May. He lingers long
While flowers fade, and every day
Repeats his sweet, contented lay;
As if to say we need not fear
The season's change, if love is here,
With "Sweet-sweet-sweet-very merry cheer."

He does not wear a Joseph's coat
Of many colors, smart and gay;
His suit is Quaker brown and gray,
With darker patches at his throat.
And yet of all the well-dressed throng,
Not one can sing so brave a song.
It makes the pride of looks appear
A vain and foolish thing to hear
His "Sweet-sweet-sweet-very merry cheer."

Henry van Dyke



All aboard!

It's time to volunteer at Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area!

Volunteers educate the public about the importance of bats to the environment and participate in activities, including:

- *Assisting with research at **Old Tunnel** and other Hill Country management areas*
- *Off-site programs for schools and organizations*
- *Astronomy programs*
- *Tending the Wildscape*

Volunteers are needed seven evenings a week, May 1 through November 30.

Choose one night each week or one night each month.

Volunteer as little or as much as you like.

- We have a cumulative awards program.
- We offer volunteer appreciation outings to other bat sites in Texas.
- We provide education through bat netting excursions.

Volunteer training is provided by invitation once each year prior to the beginning of bat season.

The 2011 training will occur **Saturday, March 26**.

Interested? Email Nyta Brown, nyta.brown@tpwd.state.tx.us to receive an invitation to the 2011 Volunteer Training.

Training class size is limited. Let Nyta know today!



LOOK



Lester Harlow from the Piney Wood Lakes Chapter has created the first TMN Podcast. The podcast will inform about fellow Master Naturalists, chapters, and projects. Chapters should feel free to use the podcast to communicate your activities. You may use it as a marketing and recruitment tool.

The podcast is available on iTunes: **Texas Master Naturalist Podcast**.

It's also available with this link: <http://tmnpodcast.libsyn.com/webpage>

The best way to listen is to get iTunes and subscribe to the feed. It is free and anyone can listen whether they have an iPod or not; it can be played on the computer. iTunes automatically loads new episodes each month.

Chapter Stats 2010

Total volunteers trained from 2003 to 2010:

267

Total volunteers receiving Initial TMN Certification from 2003 to 2010:

154

Active members reporting at least one hour of volunteer service during 2010:

146

Total service hours in 2010:

20,628



Cumulative service hours from 2003 to 2010:

88,669

Total Advanced Training hours in 2010:

2,390

Cumulative Advanced Training hours from 2003 to 2010:

11,520

Milestone Pins awarded in 2010:

250 Hours = 12 1,000 hours = 5

500 hours = 11 2,500 hours = 2

 5,000 hours = 1



Tom Collins

Frozen Town Creek at RNC with about ¼ -inch of ice from bank to bank.



History books traditionally depict the pre-Columbus Americas as a pristine wilderness where small native villages lived in harmony with nature. But scientific evidence tells a very different story: When Columbus stepped ashore in 1492, millions of people were already living there. America wasn't exactly a "New World," but a very old one whose inhabitants had built a vast infrastructure of cities, or chards, canals and causeways.

America Before Columbus NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL

Folks:
If you watch TV, this program is totally worth your time. It is one of the most well-made shows I have seen. You will be surprised to learn the origins of issues we struggle with today. Click on the link to see when the program airs again and set your DVR.

Kristie

channel.nationalgeographic.com/episode/america-before-columbus

Happening soon!

Watch for the announcement.

Seeds: the Fruit of the Matter

A gleaners class led by Susan Longacre and Barbara Lowenthal

Basic gleaning information and hands-on cleaning.

10a.m. to noon - early March at RNC

There is no charge for this class.

Reservations are necessary.

Email SusanLongacre@Chevron.com.

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



Hill Country Chapter

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Board of Directors 2011

Phyllis Muska - President

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Reidun Hilleman - Director of Volunteer Service Projects

Vern Crawford - 2010 New Class Representative

John Huecksteadt - Immediate Past President

FIND MORE INFORMATION ON
OUR WEBSITE!

TXMN.ORG/HILLCOUNTRY

Our chapter meets the fourth Monday of each month (excluding June and December) at 7:00p.m. in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehmann Drive in Kerrville.

We gather at 6:30p.m. for a fun social half-hour. Please join us.

We welcome anyone interested in our monthly topic or the Texas Master Naturalist program.

Questions about our chapter?

Contact Koy Coffey

Director of Membership

kcoffer@texas-wildlife.org

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.



Texas Star
Lindheimera texana

The Texas Star 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, denbow@gvtc.com.

Hill Country Chapter does not recommend or endorse items of interest published in *The Texas Star*. Items of interest are for information only. Opinions expressed are those of the authors.



TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

