

Texas Master Naturalist Lindheimer Chapter



A publication of the Lindheimer Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program through Texas AgriLife Extension in Comal County, 325 Resource Drive, New Braunfels, TX 78132.

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WANTED! A Few Good Women and Men

The Lindheimer Chapter is seeking active members interested in assuming leadership positions for the upcoming year. The positions of President, Vice-President, and Treasurer will be vacant. The nominating Committee, chaired by the Past-President, will develop a slate of candidates for presentation to the Chapter members, and voting will take place at the November Chapter meeting. Please contact Ray Laxson rlaxson@gvvc.com if you are interested in one of these leadership positions. These elected individuals will assume their responsibility immediately following the election.

Also vacant will be Chairs of the Special Projects Committee and Out and About Committee. While these Chairs are also included on the Board of Directors, they are not elected positions, but rather are appointed by the President. We established three new positions this past year: Community Recognition Committee; Publicity Committee; and the position of Historian. These are currently filled for the remainder of 2008 and 2009. Please contact Diane Schaule at schaules@gvvc.com if you are interested in chairing either Special Projects or Out and About Committees.

During my tenure as President of the Lindheimer Chapter, I have observed a cohesive, highly motivated group of individuals committed to maintaining and supporting the goals of the Texas Master Naturalist program. While the certification pins are nice to have, you all are genuinely interested and enjoy the hours spent in learning and volunteering for the Chapter. Great teamwork!

Tax Reminder!

One small consolation in the rising gas prices and overall economic upheaval is the IRS mileage deduction. IRS allows 14 cents per mile for miles driven in service of charitable organizations. This includes mileage to and from the volunteer activity. We live in the wide open spaces of Texas here in Hill Country and our TMN members most likely drive greater distances to volunteer projects than a Chapter in a heavily populated area. If you're not doing so already, track your mileage to and from official Chapter-approved functions and keep good records for tax time.

IRS Publication 526, Charitable Contributions, contains detailed guidance on this subject.

Disclaimer: The information above should not be construed as tax advice. Please consult your tax professional for guidance.

Diane

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Special Projects:
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Ray Laxson

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Janet Siemssen
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Texas AgriLife
Extension Service Advisor:
Glenn Avriett

Visit our Website at
TMN - Lindheimer Chapter

Lindheimer Naturalists in the News:

On September 20 Ray Laxson gave a presentation on whitetail deer at the RavenStar Outdoor Education Center in New Braunfels. His presentation of the life cycle of whitetails and antler growth was covered by the Herald Zeitung. Youngsters were encouraged to "pair-up" matching sets of shed antlers. Antler pendants - polished cross sections of shed antlers - were passed out and the youngsters made themselves a necklace or bracelet. Everyone had a great time! Also in September, John Siemssen and David Boylan were given "volunteers of the month" recognition by Texas State University for their ongoing work for the "Texas Stream Team," formerly known as "Texas Water Watch."

Fischer Park Update - Art Williams

About a year ago, the Lindheimer Master Naturalist chapter signed a partnership agreement with the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) of New Braunfels to adopt Fischer Park, the 60 acre parcel of land purchased by the city on the east side of IH-35.



There were great plans to develop the area in the mind's eye of park planner Wade Tomlinson: public hearings would be held to learn the wishes of New Braunfelsers; the park would be sub-divided into recreational areas; the Master Naturalists would be involved in building trails, in creating a birding area, in planting trees, in developing a riparian section around the two ponds. We would have as many projects as we could handle.

But the fall of 2007 and the spring of 2008 drifted by with no activity that wasn't initiated by the Lindheimer chapter itself. Kelly McDermott spearheaded a group that did an exhaustive survey of the two ponds and produced a report detailing the swamp creatures that lived there. Another group planted trees PARD received as a donation. And Dana Green patiently reported the birds that use the park by surveying them bi-monthly for a year. However, there were no public hearings, no master plan for park development, and PARD's attention seemed directed to other issues.

We think that may be about to change. I had a lengthy conversation with Wade recently and he explained what has been going on over the past months.

Originally, Wade was going to design the master plan for the park. But late in 2007, it became apparent he did not have the time to do it, and PARD decided to bring in a consultant. PARD is a government agency. For a government agency, hiring an outside consultant is not an easy decision. There must be much consultation between departments, many memos written, public notice to be given, sign-offs to be obtained from

everyone involved and many, *many* meetings to be gotten through. Progress to such an end is measured in months, sometimes years.

That is done now. Wade said Terra Planning of San Antonio has been selected to complete the design, and they will begin work as soon as money is approved to pay them. Wade assured me this approval would be given in the budget discussions in September. Terra will be the organization that will arrange the public meetings this fall, and will produce a report that will recommend how the park should be apportioned.

LMN wants to play an active role in this discussion and certainly wants to steer the final recommendations toward the trails, animal sanctuaries, and habitat restoration that we know need to be prominent features of the park. To that end, the LMN board will be looking to the members for input on the way we want the park to develop. You will hear more about this process shortly. Start thinking about the park, and what we want it to be, your ideas will be welcomed.

Heritage Happenings - Haskell Hart

The [Heritage Museum of the Texas Hill Country](#) (located on FM 2673 between Sattler and Startzville) has had a very busy year. Construction of our 12,000 sq. ft. dinosaur track barn is almost complete; and we have applied for a grant for rainwater catchment, which will hopefully sustain extensive landscaping. Specifically, we will be planting a "Garden of the Cretaceous" and a "Heritage Garden" next year. We would also like to improve our Nature Trail, constructed in 2004 by the LMN Class.

The Museum has had four events so far this year. Dinosaur Day was on April 20. On June 22 we resurrected "Turn Back the Clock Day," a celebration of human and natural history of Comal County. On September 23, the Museum hosted the Canyon Lake Chamber of Commerce Mixer. The big fund raiser of the year was the annual Harvestfest on October 7, at the GVTC Auditorium. The theme this year was Community Block Party on this National Night Out.

Our biggest need that Master Naturalists can fill is for docents on the weekends; we are always short handed. Training is very minimal and it enables us to keep the Museum open DAILY, 1-5 PM. If you want to be a docent, especially if you live in the Canyon Lake Area, please contact Jill Lawless at 830-899-4542, 1-5 PM weekdays.

If you can help with our landscaping projects or the Nature Trail, please call Haskell Hart 713-962-3848. It counts for volunteer hours!

How Deep Is It? - Barry Brupbacher



This question is asked by almost every tour group that goes through the gorge when they reach the pool that we call The Lagoon. Although there have been many guesses, educated and otherwise, no one knew for certain, because the depth had never been measured.

Last Spring Cinde Thomas-Jimenez approached the G.P.S. Board with the idea of having divers explore the lagoon. The board agreed to the idea, and all the necessary approvals were obtained.

On June 10, a preliminary scouting trip was made to determine the best route for getting the necessary gear and equipment into and out of the site. Then on June 17 the actual exploration of the pool was conducted.

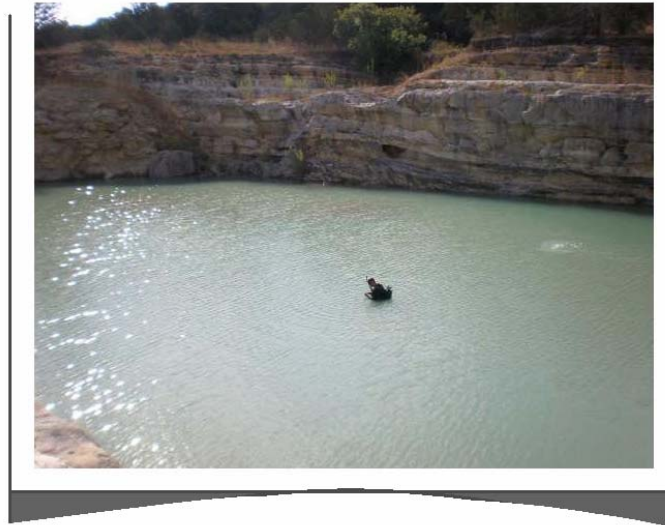
Jaynellen Ladd of GBRA organized the effort and furnished her Jeep to haul the equipment as near to the site as possible. The actual exploration of the pool was done by two divers, Mose Johnson and Barry Brupbacher, who are both Dive Instructors with many years of diving experience. Barry is a member of the Gorge Preservation Society and the Comal County Master Naturalists. Also assisting were Jamie Kinscherff, Susan Bogle, and Judy Brupbacher, who are all members of GPS and Master Naturalists.

The divers started out by doing a swim along the bottom of the lagoon from the upstream end to the downstream end, noting the depths, bottom features and composition, and visibility. On this first pass, it was noted that the bottom was generally 7 feet deep in the upper 2/3 of the lagoon, one spot being found that was 8 feet. The Lagoon runs roughly East Northeast to a point approximately 120 feet downstream of the waterfall, and then it makes a turn toward the North. About 10 feet upstream of that point it begins to get gradually shallower, finally reaching only a few inches or less of depth at the end. Water temperature was measured at 23°C (73°F).

The bottom is covered with a thick layer of very fine silt. There are also numerous boulders and some tree branches or entire small trees. Visibility on this day was 1 foot or less. If the silt is disturbed in any way, the visibility goes essentially to zero. The silt is extremely light and does not resettle easily. No evidence of spring flow was noted, but this could have been missed because of the poor visibility.

After the initial swim-through, the divers worked upstream along the wall under the high cliffs. This side appeared that it might be deeper than the other side, but nothing deeper than 7' was found. The small grotto at the upstream end was probed, but it only extends a few feet under the rock, there is no evidence of a spring or other flow coming out of it.

The divers then did a series of traverses across the lagoon at 10-foot intervals, starting at the center of the waterfall and progressing downstream. The maximum depth at the waterfall was 5 to 6 feet. 10 feet downstream it was 7 feet, and it was 8 feet at 20 and 30 feet downstream. From that point on, the maximum depth was 7 feet until the point previously mentioned where the lagoon starts getting shallower.



There are definitely fish in the lagoon, but because of the poor visibility, the divers weren't able to identify anything. One small sunfish was seen and numerous minnows or shiners.

Those who had envisioned a deep pool full of Guadalupe Bass will be disappointed, but now we know what's there, and we can answer the question – "How deep is it?"

A Walk in the Park - Visiting Naturalists - Art Williams

The members of the Lindheimer Master Naturalists are unassuming folks who work quietly at their volunteer projects to make things—and people—greener in Comal County. So it's not surprising that we don't always recognize the esteem in which our chapter is held by other chapters and State Office.

Program Director Michelle Haggerty likes to hold her meetings in New Braunfels because Comal is near the geographic center of Texas (actually, that's just north of Brady, in McCullough County) but principally because she knows "Texas friendly" is practiced nowhere better than right here. So when she could have picked any place in Texas to hold an informational meeting for representatives from other states that wanted to start a Master Naturalist program, she selected the TbarM Ranch, on Highway 46. And she asked the Lindheimer Master Naturalists to provide a great day of Advanced Training, and show the group volunteer projects typical of a Texas chapter. Five people from five different states showed up.



Pictured from left to right:

Bob Blair from St. Paul, Minnesota;
Wanda MacLachlan from Columbia, Maryland;
Rebecca Pfeifer from New Palestine, Indiana;
Sonny Arnold (Texas escort); Candice Rupprecht from Tucson, Arizona, and Audrey Hatch from Corvallis, Oregon.

They were being escorted around by Sonny Arnold (from Hearn, Texas), the assistant Program Director, and on September 10th, they arrived at Canyon Gorge, looking forward to their hike into one of Comal County's many gorgeous natural sights. Their guide for the tour was Lindheimer Master Naturalist Susan Bogle. The group was late starting, and Susan tried to hurry them along so they would end at the planned time. But when they were late ending too, Susan confided to me that they wouldn't be rushed, they wanted her to talk about everything they saw. – Well, of course, Susan! Even if they are operating under the disadvantage of not being from Texas, they are still wannabe Master Naturalists, the nosiest Parkers around. Master Naturalists want to poke, fondle and know everything about everything they see. And in the gorge, there is a lot.

After the tour, Master Naturalist Judy Scott, the US Army Corps of Engineers Lake Director generously opened the

office lunchroom so the group could sit in comfort for a bit after walking for three hours. In the afternoon, I took them for a tour of the Lindheimer House and gardens. This group pottered around the garden longer than they did the house and the friendly docent was kept hopping, running around the large backyard answering questions from all over.

Next we went to Landa Park, specifically to see the Comal Springs. Only Audrey, from Oregon, had ever seen a spring-fed river before so we stood for quite a while reading the material provided by the Edwards Aquifer Authority and talking about the history of the springs. While I was covering some of the history of Landa Park with two of the group, the other three wandered off into the park and up Panther Canyon, and more time passed while I rushed around herding these kittens back into their van for the final visit on their tour.

We then went to the Extension office grounds to see the projects that the Lindheimer group is supporting. We walked around the rainwater collection exhibit, the arboretum, the native grass plot that is the project of the current class and the trails that connect them. Here I gave up trying to keep to the schedule. After all, it was their dinner that was being delayed and if they preferred to talk about things naturalist to eating, I wasn't going to argue even though I wondered about their priority. But then, I didn't know what they were having for supper.

In any case, we spent at least an hour talking about the specific projects, but more about why these projects were selected, what the participation of the members was, and how projects represented the tangible manifestation of the mission of the Master Naturalists movement.

These folks had traveled thousands of miles to the state where it all began to learn how to develop, foster and encourage a Master Naturalist organization. Two of them, Indiana and Arizona, already had a program in place and were training students. The others were still planning. All of them wanted to know how our chapter worked within the state office purview because none of the other states were organized on a local chapter level. They asked how the Lindheimer chapter found new members, how we ran our classes, how we kept members involved after graduation, where we decided on projects and where I saw the chapter in five years. They made me think about things I had not considered in awhile, and about other things I hadn't thought of at all. It was a good discussion. When we were finished and everyone was walking back to the van, I wished the rest of the board had been there to listen in. It made me realize how much the Lindheimer chapter has accomplished in the past ten years without being aware of it.

I hope we have an opportunity to see how these other naturalist organizations develop in the coming years as they establish themselves and begin to attract members. We may, too, if the Lindheimer chapter works at staying the go-to chapter when state office wants to showcase what great things can be accomplished with those unassuming folks.

The Little Bobwhite Hen - Actress Extraordinaire! - Ray Laxson



On our wildlife management operation here in the Texas hill country, one of our target species is bobwhite quail. Bobwhites have not fared well over the last several decades and are non-existent in many of their former ranges. Most of the decline can be linked to loss of quail habitat; fire ants have also added to the decline. For several years we had not seen nor heard any bobwhites on our property, but about 3 years ago a few started showing up. Last year we planted a 4-acre food plot, fenced it off from the deer, and had very good luck with wild turkeys – about 30 poults hatched and have since repopulated our place and several of the neighboring properties. We also saw a few pairs of bobwhites last year but we never saw any bobwhite chicks or any sizable coveys of quail.

In August of this year, 2008, I was throwing out another mixture of seeds in the food plot area hoping that we just might get some much-needed rain. The drought has been severe so far this year and the food plot has done poorly. Imagine my surprise when I stumbled on 3 adult bobwhites and about 2-dozen baby chicks. One hen shepherded the chicks under a kidney bush and the other hen put on quite an act. First off, she performed the broken wing act, fluttering around and trying to get me to follow her away from the bush where the chicks were now hiding. I remained still trying to see where the chicks had gone. Since I did not take the broken wing bait, the little hen then got much closer to me – maybe

within about 6-feet - and put on a performance like I had never seen before. In addition to the broken wing act she also had a broken leg act, a broken neck act and executed an elaborate set of flips and spins occasionally landing on her back with her little short legs spinning in the air!

I became concerned that she was going to severely injure herself and turned around and started to leave. The little hen followed me and whenever I stopped, she went into her injured bird act. She followed me for about 100-feet and pulled her little act each time I stopped. Finally when I turned around again, she was gone into the high grass. It is easy to imagine that the little hen was back under the bush bragging to the little chicks that she had chased off the 2-legged predator.

Because of the number of chicks, maybe 2-dozen, I think that the 2 hens had combined their broods into a single batch. The other adult bobwhite may have been a rooster but I could not get a good view of him. I will not go back into the food plot pen for a while as I don't want to scare them out of the protected food plot.

I will take my camera with me and just maybe I can get some pictures of all the little guys and their fearless mom.

Bobwhite Chicks Complete Flight Training

With the passage of time I am now pleased to report that one covey of bobwhite chicks has completed their flight training. A rooster and hen were waiting in the grass beside the road and I stopped to see what they were doing. When I approached, the adults lifted off followed by about 8 little chicks. The chicks reminded me of a flight of bumblebees – they were very small but strong fliers. They flew about 75 feet and landed by the adults. Two of the chicks did not slow down to a safe landing speed and crash-landed and bounced about like tennis balls. It didn't seem to hurt them as they soon joined the rest of the brood.

Since they are now able to fly, they are less likely to have problems with ground predators. A couple days later I flushed a different covey of about 10 birds – these chicks were about half grown. So, it looks as though we have at least 3 hatches of quail this year. Maybe we have a fresh start on our bobwhite population. A significant factor in our bobwhite effort has been our 4-acre food plot. With protection from cattle and deer with a high fence, an amazing amount of plant diversity has emerged. Bobwhites, doves and turkeys have made full use of it. Over 20 species of native grass have been identified, not counting the sunflowers, alfalfa, corn, milo, chile petin, careless weed, pigweed, ragweed, and even a few cotton plants left over from feeding the deer cottonseed.



A few other interesting facts about bobwhites: a hen generally lays about 12 to 15 eggs, and the incubation period is about 23 days. Sitting on the ground, even in tall grass, for 23 days without being discovered by a ground predator is quite a feat. Quail will make use of water if it is available, but if water is unavailable they manage to get moisture from seeds, plants and dew. Good quail habitat requires considerable open space- their little short legs make it difficult to traverse thick tall grass. We're hoping that bobwhites are making something of a comeback here at our place!

Bee Blitz Alert - Kim Peoples Bacon

Texas Bee Watchers are Citizen-Scientists who are currently developing a list of Texas Bee-Friendly Plants for use by land managers, homeowners, and others.

If you have noticed a plant that attracts bees this fall, please go to the website (www.beewatchers.com) and enter the name of the plant on the appropriate page of the website. If you'd rather, you can also email me the name of the bee-friendly plant at beewatchers@mac.com.

The ONLY way we can prepare a list of Bee-Friendly plants for Central Texas is if we observe and record them.

Please help add the names of Fall Bee-Friendly plants to our list. Of course, you are welcome and encouraged to add the name of a bee-friendly plant at any time (not just during a Bee Blitz) on the website.

I'll be updating the website in the weeks to come with more native bee photos, news about a bee-friendly demonstration garden in Austin, and some bee biology information to help you identify native bees in your own Central Texas garden. Keep checking and thanks for helping increase awareness of native bees in Texas.

Migrating Monarchs stopping to rest by the Guadalupe River - Comal County, October, 2008



Photograph courtesy of David Puepke - "Comal Birds" member



Photographs courtesy of John Siemssen

