

# VOLUNTEERS ROCK!

Volunteers at the Canyon Lake Gorge were hailed in an article by Barbara Elmore in the "GBRA River Run," a publication of the Guadalupe Blanco River Authority, Fall 2013/ Winter 2014 issue.

The Gorge has a volunteer team of about 75 individuals from various walks of life, but most are Master Naturalists. There are 14 guides that lead tours, 37 docents to help on tours and 12 volunteers maintaining trails and other areas. Volunteers are members of the Gorge Preservation Society, whose mission is to promote the enjoyment and conservation of the Gorge. The GPA now has about 200 members. Volunteers are recognized each year at an



appreciation banquet where awards are given out. Pete Bryant was given the star award this year for being the guide who led the most tours in 2013. The docent with the most tours was Richard Barnett and the trail worker honored for most years of service was Don Madden.

According to Elmore, all it takes is a tour of the Gorge to recruit a volunteer. There is a running list of folks wanting to be docents. When there are 25 they hold a class.

To read the entire (and very interesting) article and see a list of the GPS membership, go to [www.gbra.org](http://www.gbra.org).





# Now is the Time to Find Whitetail Antler Sheds

by Ray Laxson

March is the month that most of our Hill Country bucks will shed their antlers and get ready to grow a new set. This year I found my first drop on February 28. The next day I found his second antler about 100 yards away. I recognize these antlers as those belonging to a deer we named “Lucky” since he was on the hit list last year but did not show up on the last day of my grandson’s hunt. Attached is a pic of him from last year, and a pic of this years dropped antlers that I will mount to hang in the cabin.

It is not uncommon to see a buck running around with only one antler this time of year. Many people spend a lot of time collecting ‘sheds’ and then mounting matched pairs onto a display of some sort. But, you need to hurry – shed antlers are readily consumed by rodents and other animals as a source of calcium and they will not last long. I have rescued two or three antlers from our cattle – caught them munching away on a deer antler while they left the Purina cattle mineral untouched. With the early spring hormone change in

the bucks, the antler gradually loosens from the pedicle and will eventually fall off. After a few weeks the pedicle will become covered with velvet and growth starts again. A matched pair of

sheds makes a very nice ‘trophy’ and you don’t have to go to all the extra effort to process the deer for the freezer. And, the buck will grow a new (maybe bigger) set for the new season.

I have found sheds in many scattered locations – a particularly good location to check is around fences where the buck has leaped over the fence. When he lands, often he jars his antlers and may lose one of them. A watering location is another good site as is along heavily traveled deer trails.

If you find a set you would like to mount, it is fairly easy to drill a hole into the base of each antler and then attach it to a small block of wood with a screw. At



the log cabin on our property, we have about 100 matched sets of antlers mounted on the walls and ceiling. It’s interesting to note antler development from year to year on the same buck. And, most of the original owners of those sheds are still running around on the property.

Good hunting.

## Class of 2012 Makes Warbler Woods Signs

Chris Mitchell reported that the LMN Class of 2012 made the signs for Warbler Woods and he has also made a few more signs that were installed out there.

Chris has also made other signs for a few LMN projects and there are plans in the works for more signs.

If interested in helping or in getting some signs made, contact Chris at [cmithcell@texas-wildlife.org](mailto:cmithcell@texas-wildlife.org).





# Green Team Field Trips

*Submitted by Gwendolyn James*

The Green Team, the newest class of The Lindheimer Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, visited Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat in December (2013) and Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area in January (2014).

## Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat

The field trip to Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat was led by Monta Zengerle and accompanied by Charles Tubbs, both TMNs.

Despite the rain the day before, the sun came out and dried up most of the mud and allowed the group to hike over much of the 275 acre property. Monta and Charles gave an informative tour of the various areas.

The property, which was once a grazing area for cattle, was purchased by the Mesquite Creek Landfill and set aside for wildlife development. The area consists of grasslands, small forested areas, brushy areas, and several man made lakes.

The first stop on the tour was to the Pollinator Garden.

The garden contains over 70 native Texas plant species which provide a habitat for bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. The group was also able to touch and learn about the cochineal (which were on the back of the prickly pear cactus). Cochineal is a scale insect from which the crimson dye, carmine, originates.

The group continued their hike along the Domino's Pond Trail where they came to an elm grove. Monta talked about the possible ages of the trees that stood along the grove. From one point, the group could see the Mesquite Creek Landfill. Monta gave a short synopsis of how the landfill operated.

A very interesting stop was at Domino's Pond. The once upon a time "cattle pond" now turned "turtle pond" has been another special project worked by the habitat volunteers. The group has worked to eradicate the invasive cat tails, re-shaped the shorelines with shallow edges and planted native grasses and wildflowers. Volunteers walk the area regularly to spot and rid any invasive species on the property.

Other topics covered during the trip were controlled burns, wildlife that has been viewed living and reproducing on the property, and the need for volunteers.

All-in-all, the field trip was informative and interesting. It is not often that one considers quality of life and a landfill in the same thought. It is rewarding to know that Mesquite Creek Landfill believes in paying it forward.

Volunteers are always needed to work the area. Monta gave an invitation to any who are interested in touring the area, working the area, or simply coming out to enjoy the area by taking pictures, looking and listening to the wildlife, or even having a picnic. The area is opened to visitors through scheduled reservations through Monta.



*The Pollinator Garden at Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat Area*



*The Green Team hikes over Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat Area*

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