

Earth Day – Tye Preston Memorial Library 2013



Talk about a GREAT time! TMN-LC members and the community all benefited from a beautiful sunny day at the library with the annual Earth Day celebration. Many (#) exhibitors had been recruited by a dedicated Earth Day committee resulting in more information for the participants than ever before.

Among the tables displayed was Pedernales Electric Cooperative, Inc., a Bee-keeping group, Texas Wildlife Association, with many nice gifts for passersby. Just a sampling of the tables and events having child participation activities included native plants with their corn husk dolls, wildlife rehabilitation with adorable baby raccoons, Bird & Beaks, and the all time favorites “Learn to Fish”, and Creative Face Painting. Our thanks goes out to our co-sponsor, Tye Preston Memorial Library for hosting the event. We also want to thank all the exhibitors and volunteers, as well as the ED committee and organizer for their time, effort and contributions making our Earth Day Celebration a tremendous success.



Exhibitors were: Ron Schmidt (Beekeeping), Cibolo Nature Center, Corps of Engineers, Ed Preiss (container Gardening), Edwards Aquifer Authority, Friends of TPML, GBRA, Girls Scout Troop 1152, Fossil Dig (GPS, Canyon Lake Gorge), John Knox Ranch, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Also those of the LMN Chapter: Handouts, Bass Casting, Birds and Beaks, Butterflies, Chapter Projects, Earth Day Champion (Children’s Program), Face Painting, Mesquite Creek Natural Wildlife Area, Native Grasses, Rainfall Simulator, Rainwater Harvesting, Travelling Trunks, Wildlife Guzzler, and Wildlife Management.



Also the Master Gardeners, New Braunfels Astronomy Club, Old Tunnel Bat Cave State park, Pedernales Electric Co-op, Ravenstar, Texas Wildlife Assn., and Wildlife Rehabilitation.

Submitted by Ray Laxson

GIT ALONG LONESOME RANCHERS

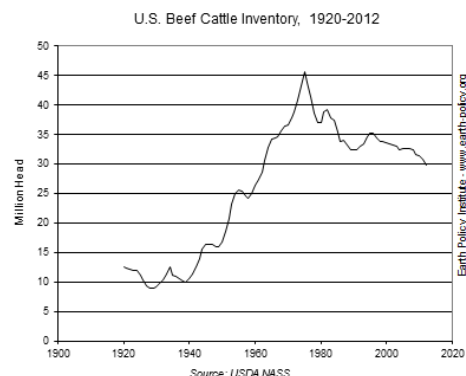
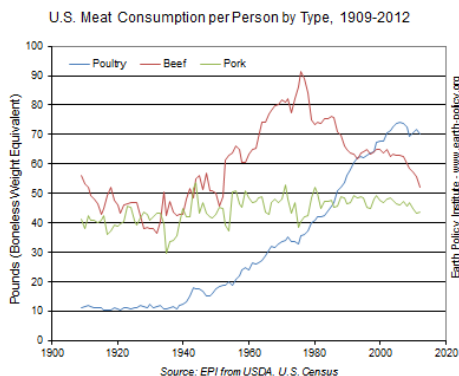
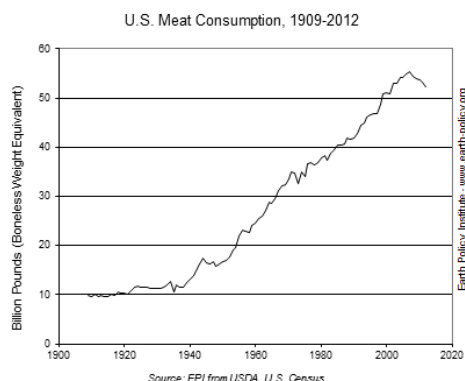
In the November, 2012 issue of Texas Monthly there is an excellent article by S.C. Gwynne explaining the plight of our Texas ranches today. Texas ranches are a dying breed.

Several years back I attended a livestock sale in Sequin and while I was there I struck up a conversation with a well-dressed elderly gentleman who was wearing a Stetson hat and cowboy boots. He told me that the cattle market had ‘gone crazy’. He said that when he was a young man, 15 calves would be enough to buy a new Ford pickup. This held for many years and while the cost of pickups increased over the years, so did the price for the 15 calves – still enough to buy a new pickup. “Know how many calves it would take today to buy a new Ford pickup? – more than 50,” he said. He said that he could not survive at the current unreasonable price level.

As examples in the Texas Monthly article, Gwynne has selected two Texas ranches – the JA of about 130,000 acres near Palo Duro Canyon founded by Charles Goodnight in 1877, and the Brown ranch, about 16,000 acres near Beeville. Neither of these ranches has any extensive mineral nor hunting lease income and rely entirely on cattle production. Both ranches have remained profitable so far, but profitability is declining. The economic model that formerly drove hundreds of Texas ranches is no longer sustainable for a number of reasons. First, beef prices and US per/person beef consumption has declined dramatically from 1980 levels while expenses have doubled or tripled. In past years, 100 cattle could support a family – today it takes 500 or more. Texas family ranches are also victims of escalating land prices, increased property taxes and expenses, and devastating inheritance taxes. Drought, especially the last 3-5 years, has pushed many ranches over the edge. Last year alone, USDA has estimated that Texas livestock owners lost \$3.23 billion. As a result of low demand and the drought, beef cattle inventories have fallen dramatically in recent years and are now 33% below the peak levels set in 1962.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE CATTLE MARKET?

The graph below that shows US meat consumption per person by type explains much of what has happened to beef demand. Annual individual beef consumption increased from 45 lbs. in 1940, peaked at 90 lbs. in 1976, and has since fallen to 51 lbs. in 2011. Total beef consumption in the US is still on a decline. There are several reasons for this decline. There have been recent health concerns about red meat consumption, mad cow disease issues and bad PR in general. Competition from leaner, less expensive meats, such as poultry, has been detrimental to the beef market. Poultry consumption surpassed beef consumption in 1995, and is now about 37% greater than beef. The only bright spot is that pork consumption has remained relative flat over the last 100 years.



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The Texas Department of Agriculture says that Texas has 150,000 properties classified as ranches. The average number of cattle per ranch is 30 – far short of the number needed to generate any significant income. Most of these smaller ranch operators today are people who bought the property primarily for recreational purposes, and do not rely on ranch income for financial support. These ‘recreational ranch’ owners have driven up the price of land to levels far beyond the level that could be used to economically justify a cattle operation.

I am sure that a question will come up about a very famous Texas ranch – the King Ranch and its 825,000 acres located in south Texas. This ranch has extensive mineral resources, an active hunting lease operation, an active cattle and equine breeding program plus several services offered to the public for a fee. Eventually, inheritance taxes make take a toll on the ranch, but that remains to be seen. So far, the 1933 oil lease with Exxon has helped the ranch pay its considerable estate taxes.

THE INHERITANCE TAX

A comment about the inheritance tax – commonly referred to as the death tax. Unless laws are changed, in 2013 the tax will be levied at 55% on all the deceased’s estate valued in excess of I million dollars. Based on a conservative rate of \$700/acre, the price some large ranches have been sold for recently, all acreage above 1,500 acres could be subject to the death tax. A 1,500 acre ranch is too small to support a cattle operation of 500 cattle, except in unusual cases. In order to pay the death taxes, many of the existing ranches of today will be sold, at least in part, to pay this tax upon the death of the owner. The Texas Monthly article mentions that the current Brown ranch patriarch is 68 years old and his 16,000 acres could be worth around \$6,000/acre, or around 96 million dollars. The death tax on land value alone could amount to over 52 million dollars. That is an impossible amount to generate from raising cattle. At least part of the ranch may have to be sold to pay the death tax.

STAYING IN BUSINESS

With the price of land now at elevated levels and the profitability of ranches at low levels, why does anyone stay in the ranching business? Most of the ranchers love their ranch, their lifestyle, and the property has been in their family for a long time. They feel obligated to pass it on to the next generation. To most of the ranchers, money alone is not the ultimate goal.

Many of the ranches of today are diversifying in an effort to maintain profitability. The Brown ranch, for example, is cross breeding Japan’s Kasha cattle – famous for their tender and exceptionally marbled beef – producing a hybrid that brings a higher than normal price in the market. The JA ranch started off with 400,000 acres and parts of it has been sold off to compensate other heirs and to pay estate taxes thus ending up at the current 130,000 acres. The JA ranch is in the midst of restoring native grasses, similar to what was done at the Bambergers property. Other ranches are producing specialty products such as grass fed slaughter beef that bring higher market prices. Many of these extra efforts help, but are not the answer to the disappearing Texas ranches.

SO LONG TEXAS RANCHES – IT WAS A GOOD LIFE WHILE IT LASTED.

Ray Laxson



Volunteers Needed For State Meeting

It's almost that time again, before we know it, the **14th Annual State Meeting** will be here! This meeting will commemorate the **15th year anniversary** of our program and will be held from Oct. 25-27 at the beautiful T bar M Resort in New Braunfels, TX.

It is well-known that the previous state meeting held in New Braunfels in 2010 was a great success, topping attendance rates of previous years. This success is due in no small part to the dedicated participation of the *Lindheimer Chapter*. Thank you for all your hard work! We are calling on you again to please share your valuable skills and energy to make our 14th Annual State Meeting the best yet.

Dedicated teams of volunteers are needed in the following areas:

- Setup/Breakdown
- Registration
- Greeters
- Guides/General Information
- Volunteer Support
- Speaker Aides
- Panel Moderators
- Session Attendants
- Tech Assistance
- Runners
- Transportation
- Photographers/Videographers

We would be honored to work together with you again. If you are interested in volunteering in any of the above areas, or if you think of another area you would like to work in, please contact me.

Nadia Gaona
Intern, Texas Master Naturalist Program 210-334-7400
ngaona@gmail.com

Congratulations to Craig Hensley

Craig, Interpreter/Park Ranger at Guadalupe River State Park has been named Community Outreach Employee of the Year by Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.

In addition to his work at the park, Craig speaks to various groups sharing his excitement and knowledge of all things natural. He was our speaker at the May meeting, teaching us much about Damsels, Dragons and the Scale –Winged Wonders of the Hill Country.

Since I work with Craig as a volunteer at the park, I must say that I am not a bit surprised that he was chosen to receive this honor. Craig's knowledge of the natural world is amazing. Couple that with his sense of humor and ability to connect with children and adults and you have the very best in park interpreters.

Watch for pictures in the "Texas Parks and Wildlife" magazine, as well as in "Texas Monthly." TPWD will also post a U-Tube video at some point.

Articles, Pictures Needed

Lindheimer Master Naturalists,

This newsletter is for you, by you and about you. I cannot put together a newsletter without your contributions.

Please send me pictures and articles about projects that you are working on, whether chapter projects or community outreach projects. If you'd like to submit an original article about a subject that you think would be interesting to fellow naturalists, please do so. Also, be on the lookout in publications you read for interesting and informative material that you would like to share. Send to: crlintexas@yahoo.com with "LMN Newsletter" in the subject line.

A huge thank you to all those who contributed to this, my first, issue of the **Texas Master Naturalist Lindheimer Chapter Newsletter.**

Carol Landry

2013 Lindheimer Master Naturalist Officers Elected in December

President - Henry Hahn
Vice-President - Art Williams
Treasurer - David Reel
Secretary - Kim Wright

Coco Brennan will serve as Immediate Past President

Committee Chairs will be as follows:
Communications - Edie Zaiontz
Community Recognition - Theresa Frasch
Education - Art Williams
Historian - Volunteer Needed

Membership/Records - Mary Cunningham
Out & About - Toni Alison
Outreach - Caroline Carpenter
Projects - Janet Hahn
Publicity - Cheryl Smith

Thanks to the hard working and dedicated members who will be leaving the board: Janet Wilson (Out & About), Charlie Thomas (Membership), Marlin Brendsel (Education), Laurie Espil-Goode (Publicity), and Yvette Vollbrecht (Historian).

And finally, thanks to Janet Siemssen who has done a great job as editor and publisher of our newsletter. Carol Landry took over from Janet on Jan. 1, 2013.

Indian Blanket (featured plant)

By John Siemssen

Indian Blanket, or Firewheel, is a wide spread spring blooming annual or short-lived perennial that is found throughout most of Texas and the rest of the US. It has dramatic flowers with red ray petals tipped in yellow and a brownish red center. The flowers appear at the end of the spring succession of wildflowers in the Hill Country that begins with Bluebonnets, which are then succeeded by yellow coreopsis and finally ending with the wonderful red and yellow of Indian Blanket. Blooming starts in May and continues to provide color through the summer. It is typically found in dry, open areas in calcareous or sandy soils. In fact, in rich, heavy clay soils it will grow large and sprawl, but will not bloom well.



The ease of growing Indian Blanket makes it a favorite wildflower to plant in gardens. It can easily be started by planting seed directly in the ground in early fall. Make sure the seed is in contact with the soil to allow germination. The seed can be mixed with Lemon Mint (*Monarda citriodora*), which also does well in dry sunny areas. If planted with Bluebonnets, Indian Blanket will provide a colorful cover for the drying Bluebonnets. Although Indian Blanket is moderately deer resistant, it will be browsed in areas where deer are prevalent.

There are several other interesting species of Gaillardia that occur in Texas. Among them are:



Left: Red Indian Blanket (*G. amblyodon*) has solid red flowers. It is found in sandy soils in East Central Texas.

Right: Pincushion Daisy (*G. suavis*) looks like Indian Blanket that has lost its ray petals. It has a mildly sweet fragrance and prefers more acidic soils. It occurs through Central and West Texas, north to Oklahoma.



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Pearl Milkweed Vine (*Matelea reticulata*) – AKA: Green milkweed vine, Net vein milkvine, Netted milkvine. The most common milkweed vine in the Edwards Plateau; found in thickets on rocky hillsides in Central, South and West Texas and works well as a woodland-edge garden feature. It blooms best with plenty of sun, but does well in some shade. It's not a flamboyant vine, but produces attractive heart shaped leaves and green star-shaped flowers with a pearly iridescent center. Although Milkweeds are host plants for both Monarch and Queen Butterflies, Milkweed Vines are mainly preferred by Queens. It propagates via seed dispersal in the fall from seed pods. Very deer resistant.

Submitted by Janet Siemssen

(INDIAN BLANKET, cont. from page 11)



Left: Red Dome Blanketflower (*G. pinnatifida*) has all yellow petals with a red center. It is found from Central Texas, west to Arizona.

Note: Seeds of all the Species mentioned in this article, with the exception of Red Indian Blanket, are available from Native American Seed (www.seedsource.com) in Junction, Texas.

Photo Credits:

Indian Blanket: Norman G. Flaigg; Red Indian Blanket: Norman G. Flaigg; Pincushion Daisy: Sally and Andy Wasowski; Red Dome Blanketflower: Lillian G. Flaigg; All from the Wildflower Center

The TMN 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. Many communities and organizations rely on such citizen volunteers for implementing youth education programs; for operating parks, nature centers, and natural areas; and for providing leadership in local natural resource conservation efforts. In fact, a short supply of dedicated and well-informed volunteers is often cited as a limiting factor for community-based conservation.

We meet on the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at the Comal County AgriLife Extension Office: 325 Resource Drive New Braunfels, TX 78132-3775
Phone: 830-620-3440

As of this date, Map at: <http://www.mapquest.com/mq/5-VMrDGXs>

We welcome anyone interested in the various guest speakers' topics and the Texas Master Naturalist program.

For more information about our chapter visit our website which can be viewed at:

<http://txmn.org/lindheimer/>

Marie Miller, TMN-LC
Communications & Webmaster

Agri-Life Extension Service Programs

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