



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

Volume 5, Issue 3
Fall/Winter 2009

In This Issue:

- Greetings from new Chapter President
- TMN—Lindheimer 2010 Officers
- Chapter Members Hour Reports Needed!
- Volunteer Training Reminders
- 2009 Community Naturalist Recognition
- Class Action
- Class 12: First Impressions:
Band of Brothers
- Mesquite Creek—an Update
- Mesquite Creek—Bird Survey
- Friesenhahn Cave—an Update
- Lights, Camera - Action!*
Filming at Canyon Lake Gorge
- Rocking L Ranch Rangeland Legacy
- Condalia—A Little Known Plant for Wildlife
- 2010 TMN Annual Symposium is Coming to New Braunfels!
- TMN—LC Website Notice

Greetings from David



It is my honor and privilege to serve as President elect of the Texas Master Naturalist-Lindheimer Chapter (TMN-LC) for 2010. I have the formidable task of following in the footsteps of past presidents Jim Dougherty and Diane Schaule who, along with dedicated Board and chapter members, have created an organization of Master Naturalist volunteers second to none. Comal County has been the recipient of your dedication to enhance the education, outreach and service to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within the county.

Our chapter continues to grow with its largest Master Naturalist class to date (24) starting in November, 2009. Several new projects are being reviewed by this group while our core volunteers continue almost daily involvement with ongoing projects and commitments.

Over the past 36 years, I worked in the private sector as a senior manager in the chemical industry. I have served on many boards and community organizations. With the help of the TMN-LC membership I pledge to continue the legacy of our chapter and provide the leadership to enhance the volunteer spirit and experiences among our members.

Best Wishes, *David Reel*

2010 TMN—LINDHEIMER OFFICERS ELECTED AT DECEMBER MEETING

At the December 1st Class meeting the following slate of officers were elected to serve as your Lindheimer Chapter Board of Directors for the 2010 calendar year. They officially took office immediately upon the completion of the voting.

- David Reel—President
- Coco Brennan—Vice President
- Irene Newhall—Secretary
- Earl Dittman—Treasurer
- Jim Dougherty—Past President

The following members were appointed as Board Committee Chairs:

- Art Williams—Education Coordinator
- Membership Records—Diane Schaule
- Communications—Edie Zaiantz
- Lydia Dougherty—Out and About
- Skip Johnson—Volunteer Projects
- Caroline Carpenter—Community Recognition

Our special thanks to our very dedicated outgoing officers: Kim Wright, Ray Laxson, Ann Tubbs.

And a very big heartfelt thanks to Jim Dougherty for all his contributions and leadership during this most challenging year! We are indeed fortunate that Jim will continue to serve as Past President.



LINDHEIMER CHAPTER MEMBER HOUR REPORTS NEEDED! Diane Schaulé

The Texas Master Naturalist program year ends December 31, 2009, and Texas Chapters are required to report their annual activities and accomplishments to the State Office by January 15, 2010. All the volunteer and advanced training hours earned by the Lindheimer Chapter are consolidated at the State Office level for our sponsors, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

The annual report is a critical summary of what the Texas Master Naturalist program has accomplished during 2009. The Lindheimer report, along with the other Texas chapters, reveals amazing accomplishments during the year. Lindheimer is just one of 40 Chapters statewide. Over 5000 TMN volunteers have been trained since the program's inception in 1998 and twenty-seven states have copied the Texas Master Naturalist program. TPWD uses the monetary value of overall volunteer efforts as part of matching funds programs to access grants and local and state resources. The total value of the volunteer efforts is \$1.6 million to date, and is an important resource in helping the agency gain much needed funding.

This is my way of reminding each Chapter member that Lindheimer Chapter is part of a much larger program and our individual efforts combine to make a big difference in Texas.

If you forgot to report hours during the year, now is the time to come forward and do so. Thus far, 2009 Chapter member reporting of volunteer and advanced training hours has exceeded the 2008 totals.



PLEASE SEND ME YOUR 2009 VOLUNTEER AND ADVANCED TRAINING HOURS BEFORE DECEMBER 31ST!!

Thanks in advance! Diane

ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEER AND ADVANCED TRAINING REMINDERS !

Lindheimer Chapter Master Naturalist and Students are reminded that approved Volunteer and Advanced Training opportunities can be found on the Chapter's website:

<http://grovesite.com/page.asp?o=tamu&s=LC&p=112412>

Other opportunities not listed on the website may be approved after review by the Projects Committee. To submit either a new Volunteer or Advanced Training opportunity for approval, download and fill out the "TMN form-activity approval.doc" found at:

<http://grovesite.com/page.asp?o=tamu&s=LC&p=320815> (on the website) and submit to Skip Johnson (caskjohn"at"gvtc.com) *before* the activity occurs.

Activities are considered based on how well they support the Texas Master Naturalist Mission as stated below:

"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."

The more information you can provide on the form that demonstrates how the opportunity you are proposing supports the mission, the easier it is for the Projects Committee to make a decision in a timely manner.

2009 TMN- LINDHEIMER CHAPTER COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AWARD – Art Williams

In 2008, the members of Lindheimer Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists decided that they wanted to do something to publicly recognize some of the fine work done by organizations and individuals which best exemplified and supported the goals of the Master Naturalists.

The Chapter formed a committee, chaired by member Ann Tubbs, to establish guidelines for what became known as the Community Recognition Award. This was to be presented to an organization or individual in Comal and surrounding counties where the Lindheimer Chapter operates, for their efforts in the area of environmental preservation or restoration..

After lengthy deliberation, the committee developed three criteria, and asked members to submit projects that met one of three.

Specifically, a project should:

- Preserve or restore an area, or its flora and fauna,
- Result in measurable conservation, protection or waste reduction of an important natural resource, or
- Apply a unique skill or creative imagination to the solution of a problem affecting the natural world.

Throughout 2009, the Lindheimer Master Naturalist members sought local activities that met the award criteria.

The committee then reviewed all submissions and concluded, unanimously, that the work that Waste Management is doing at the Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat Area (MCWHA) was most deserving of the first Community Recognition Award. Waste Management's effort met not one but all three of the criteria, the only submission to do so.

MCWHA is a 300 acre former ranch on FM 1101, just north of the Mesquite Creek Landfill. Waste Management is determined to reclaim the area from its former agricultural use and make it a model site filled with native plants and grasses that will be a visual treat for visitors and a source of food and shelter for birds, butterflies and animals. To this end the company, along with numerous community volunteers, has already established a native plant pollinator garden, built walking trails around the property, and has begun work to enhance the habitat value of a former stock tank.



Ric Green (District Manager of Waste Management), Victoria Manning (MCWHA Consultant/Coordinator) and David Garcia (Mesquite Creek Landfill Site Manager) are congratulated by members of the Lindheimer Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists.

Longer range, there are plans to reduce the number of Invasive Plant Species found on the property, improve the diversity of former pasture areas now overgrown with invasive grasses and Mesquite, and turn a unique grove of Cedar Elms into a contemplation area. Although Waste Management has used its own resources for much of the work, it actively encourages groups such as the Boy Scouts, the Native Plant Society and the Texas Master Naturalists to carry out volunteer projects that benefit MCWHA while advancing the mission of these groups.

As the Habitat develops, it will be available to the residents of, and visitors to, this area for their enjoyment. The integrated habitat that Waste Management intends to develop will be a sanctuary for many plants and animals that are pressured by the increasing urbanization of Comal County. As well, it will be a pleasant educational experience for visitors who will be able to see those plants and animals in their native setting.

The Lindheimer Master Naturalists congratulate Waste Management on winning this award and enthusiastically support what it is trying to do. In recognition of this effort, the Chapter has presented Waste Management with the Community Recognition Award plaque and will plant a native tree on the property as a living symbol of their endorsement.



CLASS ACTION—Art Williams



The Lindheimer Chapter began its twelfth class in November and we had 24 students show up. This is by far the largest class since the Trailblazers way back in 2004. After a spirited vote, it selected the "Free Mesquiteers" as its name.

Demographically, the Free Mesquiteers resemble the overall membership of the chapter. The class is composed of 14 women and ten men and has four couples. Five of the students live on city lots but the rest have acreage, most commonly between one and nine acres. All students expressed a love of nature or the outdoors in their application. That is not surprising. We have never had an applicant state he or she hated the outdoors but still wanted to be a Master Naturalist.

The next job for the class is to select their project. They have three on offer: from Warbler Woods, from Mesquite Creek and from Bill Brown Elementary School. Right now, we are making trips to each area for the students to see the property and understand what it is we

want them to do. That will be complete by the end of December and a decision will be made about the project either before or at the January class.

We are trying something a little different with class 12. This class will have some of its lectures presented on site rather than in the classroom at the extension office. The January class, on trees and grasses, will be held at John Knox Ranch. We hope to arrange later classes at the LBJ Wildflower Center and perhaps the Fish Hatchery in San Marcos. The final class, in October 2010, will be at Ray Laxson's ranch, to see what's possible in making your property critter and plant friendly. We think this hands-on training will be more effective than yet another PowerPoint presentation.

There will be updates on the class activities from time to time during the next year. Meanwhile, be sure to reserve the evening of October 21, 2010. That's when the Free Mesquiteers will graduate. It will be a BIG party!

New Member's First Impressions

No one recruited me for the 12th class of Lindheimer Master Naturalists, but I do believe I've found a band of brothers.

Opening night the meeting room was crowded.

Organizers bustled about; we started late, but despite confusion, everyone was interested and considerate. Speakers were brief and enthusiastic about birds, grasses, trees, rocks, the landfill, the gorge – so many subjects, so little time.

Then came the second meeting and a book 3" thick, filled with the curriculum to be covered. I am inundated with reading material, well-organized, supporting upcoming topics. Someone has done a lot of work to get this together.

There seem to be a lot of *someones* behind this program. They plan curriculum, keep records, send e-mails, cook food, serve as guides and speakers, and do a myriad of things I can't even imagine at this point. They do it all for free and they seem to love it.

Speakers are energetic and well prepared, so in touch with their subjects that, even after a long day, I look forward to the meetings. I look forward to the friendly faces of my classmates. I look forward to our class project, whatever it may be.

We are the Free Mesquiteers – ready to learn, ready to work, ready to share. It's rare to find a group whose common goal is truly education and service. I feel gentler already.

Mary Powell

Band of Brothers

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that [joins] with me
Shall be my brother. Be he ne'er so vile,
This day will gentle his condition."
– Shakespeare King Henry V*

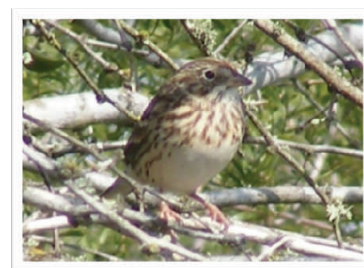
MESQUITE CREEK WILDLIFE HABITAT AREA – AN UPDATE—John Siemssen



adding the control of invasive plants to the list of projects required for certification.

There are definitely opportunities to control invasives at the Habitat. Among the more common plants that will need to be identified and removed are: Chinese Tallow Tree, Chinaberry Tree, Johnson Grass, and Bermuda Grass. Team Leader Susan Bogle says she plans to begin with small areas to gain some initial successes and then begin to branch out.

Birds Surveys –



Vesper Sparrow in thicket

Another interesting project that several TMN volunteers have helped with is a yearlong Bird Survey of the Habitat.

Bill Holliday and Bob Norris of the group “Comal Birders” had birded the area for years prior to Waste Management’s acquisition of the property. This past May they began a formal survey of the Habitat. In the seven months since they started they have made over 40 field trips to the habitat, putting in over 100 hours of observation. The result of all of this is a total of 122 different species of birds seen to date. All of this is carefully logged on Bill’s website: <http://www.bills-earth.com/birds/comalbirds/mesqwild/mesqmain.html>, and will provide valuable baseline data to help measure the impacts of future habitat improvements at the site. (See Bill’s Bird Census article on next page.)

Photo collage courtesy of: Waste Management Mesquite Creek Landfill; Photographer: David Garcia, WM Site Manager
Pollinator Garden & Sparrow Photos courtesy: of John Siemssen

Much has been happening at the 300 acre Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat Area since our last newsletter. Volunteers have helped in many different areas, and new and different opportunities are continually developing. Some of this work is summarized below.

The Pollinator Garden – After battling the heat and drought of the summer, we were blessed with cooler temperatures starting in September, and RAIN. After months of volunteers coming out three and four times a week to water all the new plants, we thought we finally got a break. Then came the weeds!

So the emphasis changed in the fall from watering to trying to stay ahead of the weeds. They seemed to be as happy as we were to finally get some moisture from the skies. However, our volunteers (and helpers from Waste Management) came through again, and the garden is going into the winter looking great.



View of pond after cattail removal

Domino’s Pond –

This pond was the one place at the Habitat that kept its water through the heat of the summer. That being said, algae blooms created concern for the health of the turtles that were in the pond. Another concern was the cattails that seemed to be taking over the water’s edge. Rick Hodges of Texas Lakes and Ponds had read about the Habitat in a Waste Management newsletter, and offered to join the Wildlife Habitat Team. He recommended removing as many of the cattails as possible and replacing them with native reeds and rushes. He also suggested reshaping the pond to create deeper areas along the edge as well as “benches” (shallow areas) for aquatic plants.

Team leader Charles Tubbs will be collecting both aquatic and terrestrial plants for the pond and the area surrounding it. Lots of volunteer help will be needed to assist with the planting in the coming months. Meanwhile, Rick is developing an aeration system to help clarify and improve the oxygen level of the water.

Invasives taskforce – On October 17, a group of 10 Lindheimer Chapter Master Naturalists participated in the Invasives Management training sponsored by the City of New Braunfels.

These volunteers, plus others previously trained, will help form the core of the Invasives Management Team for the Habitat. The Wildlife Habitat Council has strongly encouraged



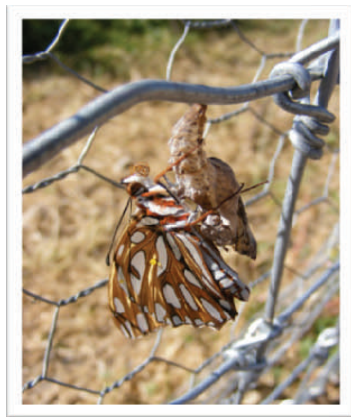
Fall Blooms at the
Pollinator Garden



White Peacock—a rare South
Texas stray visits the garden



Freedom Lake (with water!) as
seen from the Pollinator Garden



Gulf Fritillary emerging
from chrysalis



Frostweed display
after first hard freeze



Bee Tree photographed by
Comal Birder, Bill Holliday

THE MESQUITE CREEK WILDLIFE HABITAT AREA BIRD CENSUS—Bill Holliday

The bird census currently being done will establish a baseline. However, when changes occur going into the future, it is still necessary to resolve whether the bird number change is due to a habitat change on the property, in the general region, or if the change is due to a far-away habitat that is used by those birds at a different time of year. For example, cranes might be low this year because they don't have standing sorghum or last year's harvested cornfields to forage in this year, thanks to our drought. The Mesquite Creek property now has the lake again for their roost, but the surrounding area does not have the grain this year to support them, so most have moved on, closer to the coast instead of hung around, as they did in 2007.



Another example would be the Scissortails. Although the Scissortail habitat on the property is fine, they spend the winter in an area where their habitat is

diminishing and where they are killed for their tail feathers. So if we see fewer these years, it is because of changes in Central America, not Mesquite Creek.

A third example, increases in titmice and chickadees however would reflect changes in Mesquite Creek habitat, specifically becoming more wooded. That would be because those birds are local permanent residents, not influenced by habitats outside the property.

Regardless of the habitat changes, the relatively large number of species we are finding reflects a higher than expected subtle habitat diversity, or at least, that the habitats present are not just barely adequate, but very adequate to support so many bird types.

Editor's note: Bill is a long standing member of the Audubon Society and a past Audubon chapter president.

FRIESENHAHN CAVE—Kim Wright

The Lindheimer Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists has had a unique opportunity to get their hands dirty on a sweet little project at the Friesenhahn Cave (pronounced: /free-zen-han/) in San Antonio. The property is owned by Concordia University in Austin and is under the direction of Dr. Laurence Meissner. Dr. Meissner is a biologist who has a passion for the chance to make fabulous discoveries in this small cave from the Pleistocene epoch.

The original explorers did not conduct their evaluation of the cave's contents in a very scientific manner, so Dr. Meissner has organized a group of well-trained Master Naturalist volunteers to excavate sediments from the cave and to sift through the dirt for bones (not fossils) of mammoths, scimitar cats, rodents, and turtles that were trapped in the cave after the entrance collapsed so many thousands of years ago. A complete skeleton of a mother scimitar cat and her two kittens were found there and are on display in Austin. Many tiny jawbones, teeth, vertebrae, and post-cranial bones of rodents have been gleaned from the excavated dirt by sifting the sediment through two different sizes of screens. Pieces of mammoth teeth also have caused rather a sense of excitement when discovered in the finely sifted dirt.

When you realize that you are the first person to lay eyes on these bones, it makes your heart race a bit! It's the perfect project for someone who likes beachcombing or Easter egg hunts!



The status of the project at this time has moved from previously sifted dirt from unknown regions of the cave to sediments from specific grids laid out in the cave. Loads of this unsifted dirt are delivered to the AgriLife Center, where trained Master Naturalists can double sift and pick through to find any treasures. Rather large mammoth bones and pieces of mammoth skulls have been found in this dirt. So there are many chances to make an important discovery in the name of science.

Training can be offered to those who might be interested in this valuable scientific endeavor. You may contact Sheila Bartram, who is the liaison for the cave, or Kim Wright, who offers training for those who are interested in this project.



LIGHTS, CAMERA – ACTION! at the Canyon Lake Gorge—Susan Bogle

Many Canyon Lake residents were startled to see the activity that was occurring in the Canyon Lake Gorge one evening a few weeks ago. The first drop just beyond the lake's spillway was lit up like daytime with massive flood lights, while white smoke was billowing everywhere. There were even some huge boulders that had not been there that morning. But it wasn't a local catastrophe, just movie magic in action.

Production was in process for the next movie in the series of Predator films. According to Toni Atterbury, a spokesperson for the production, "Central Texas offers a variety of extreme landscapes to filmmakers. The Gorge location near Canyon Lake is striking and believable playing a location on an alien planet. It is one of a handful of locations in Texas, such as McKinney Falls and Hamilton Pool used to create the world of "PREDATORS." The stars of the movie include Oscar®-winner Adrien Brody ("The Pianist"), Topher Grace ("Spider-Man 3"), Alice Braga ("I Am Legend") and Walton Goggins ("The Shield"). The Gorge Preservation Society (GPS) was very careful to assure that the integrity of the Gorge was protected and maintained during this process. Jaynellen Ladd, the GPS natural resource specialist, was on site until 4:30 in the morning to monitor all the activities of the production. She was determined that the area would be left unharmed and undisturbed – which it was. The many members of the Lindheimer Chapter who are guides, docents or volunteers in the Canyon Lake Gorge now have yet another interesting fact to relate about its history.

ROCKING L RANCH—A Texas Rangeland Legacy

Ray Laxson-- Spring Branch, Texas

Over the last several months I have spent considerable time uncovering items of historical interest here at our property and in correlating the items to certain mile-stones. My findings and conclusions, based on generally accepted facts from literature or material presented at some of our Master Naturalist meetings, make this a case study for what has happened to much of the range land in the Texas Hill Country.

Our property consists of outcrops of Glen Rose limestone interspersed with areas covered by a couple feet of topsoil. Today we mostly have lots of mature oak trees with open grass pastures and a few cedars. We also have numerous standing cedar (Ashe Juniper—*Juniperus ashei*;

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juniperus_ashei) stumps that have been cut by ax. At the back of the property we have an 8-acre cedar thicket where cedars have not been cleared and the property is very rocky. There is also a deep canyon that contains Ahern Creek, a small hill country stream.

We know from some of the early explorers that several hundred years ago there were vast spans of native grasses and a few oaks and other hardwoods covering the hill-sides. I believe I have enough information to describe the events that led to the current state where we have lots of mature oaks but no young ones, few native grasses but lots of KR Bluestem.

The oldest evidence of human activity on the ranch are dart (spear) points, arrow points and other tools. The oldest spear point found and identified is called a Bul-



Dart Points

verde point and has been estimated by experts as being aged at 3,000 to 2,500 BC. A second spear point called a Montell point was found and was probably made from 1,000 BC to A.D. 200. Arrow points have also been found and since the bow and arrow was not used in Texas until about 700 to

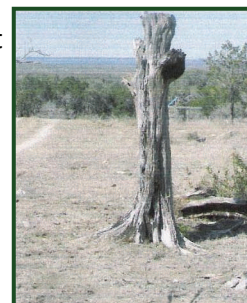


Arrow Points

1,000 A.D., these arrowheads are up to 1,300 years old. For thousands of years the property probably remained unchanged as a grassland savanna and was thinly inhabited by the Native Americans who roamed the area. Settlement of this part of Texas occurred in the mid-1800s (New Braunfels, 1845), but I have no specifics on our property. I think the first significant change to the landscape occurred around 1880. Barbed wire was developed in 1873 and provided a means of controlling livestock. A few years were required for landowners to see the advantages of fences and to get their property fenced. I have collected several samples of very old barbed wire, including, from a nearby property, a piece that was patented in 1879 called Brinkerhoff Opposed Lugs Lance Point. Prior to fencing, fires were set periodically to refurbish the prairie landscape and to encourage new growth.

After the property was fenced, burning was discouraged since livestock could use the dormant grass over the winter period when no green grass was available. With fences, livestock was restricted within the fenced area as compared to letting them forage over the open range wherever grass was abundant. Some pastures were likely overgrazed and

some topsoil was lost. It is apparent that in places up to a foot of topsoil has been lost around some of the old cedar stumps. With few fires, cedar encroachment proliferated. The few fires that did result probably found less fuel (less grass) since the restricted livestock kept it cropped short and many of the cedars survived.



**Note Soil Erosion
At base of stump**

So, beginning in about 1880, cedars began to spread from rocky ravines and steep hill-sides where they historically had occurred to the grass savannas.

In 1914, Frank Dobie:

(<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/DD/fdo2.html>)

Texas scholar and prolific writer, makes mention of cedar choppers in the Austin area. In 1920 the boll weevil ended cotton farming in our area and Bergheim, a small community about 7 miles from our property, became the cedar capital of Texas powered by cedar choppers. Cedar choppers are individuals who cut cedar with an ax and generally got paid for the number of stays or fence posts they cut. Cedars that had grown up after the wildfires ceased were cut to be used as posts, railroad ties, stove wood and to turn into charcoal. I believe that many older cedars cut by the cedar choppers around 1920 were up to about 40 years old (1880 – 1920). There are many old cedar stumps still standing that show signs of being cut by ax.

Many of these stumps are up to about 24" in diameter and, based on other known cedar growth rates on the property, many are estimated to be around 40 years old.

(continued on next page)

I cut and polished one cedar stump and attempted to count the growth rings. There were an estimated 100+ rings - I found out later that cedars shut down growth during periods of drought and there may be many rings of varying thickness for any given calendar year depending on rainfall events.



If only this old stump could talk!

I also noticed that nearly every oak tree had an old cedar stump within a few steps of the oak. It occurred to me that the cedar with its low branches had served as a nurse tree to the oak and had protected the oak seedling from

Back to changes on the property - during the 1940s, 50s and early 60s goats and sheep were grazed throughout the hill country including our property. During the major drought of the 1950s the property was probably overgrazed and I believe that is when much of the topsoil was lost. Since then there has been an invasion of the non-native King Ranch bluestem, AKA "KR Bluestem," (*Bothriochloa ischaemum*:http://www.texasinvasives.org/invasives_database/detail.php?symbol=BOISS) after much of the native grass did not survive the drought and the extended heavy grazing. KR Bluestem was frequently used by the highway department for stabilization during the 1920s and 1930s and has spread throughout the Hill Country.



Old Cedar Stump & Adjacent Oaks

When the cedar choppers cut the cedar around 1920 some of the older protected oaks managed to survive on their own. Younger oaks less than about 15 years old were within reach and were killed by livestock and deer. The older oaks that got an early start in the shelter of the cedars may have gotten their start around 1895 - 15 years after most of the fires stopped. So, most of our oaks today probably range from about 95 to 120 years old. We have almost ZERO young oaks.

To further verify the age estimate of our oak trees I collected six samples from trees of known ages (ones I planted) plus limbs and wedges from oaks that had topped. I created a worksheet of growth rings per inch vs. radius of the sample. Although six samples may be too few to yield a representative solution, I decided to see what conclusions I could draw. As it turns out, most of the samples showed from 8 to 10 growth rings per inch of radius. It appears that the older the tree the more growth rings per inch (i.e. slower growth). Since most of our oaks are between 18 and 24" in diameter, using 8 to 10 growth rings per inch gives a range of 72 to 120 years. The oldest (largest) oak we have is over 36" in diameter and using this relationship will give an age of over 200 years old.

of screw-worms, especially newborn livestock. In about 1965 the screw-worm was eradicated in Texas and the deer population began to explode. Over the years there has been a decline in livestock prices and ranchers have had to generate other sources of income such as charging for hunting privileges. Many of the ranches have been subdivided and sold to developers. Our property was sold to a developer about 35 years ago (around 1975) and was subsequently sold to us in 1997.

Deer have multiplied to the extent that they are eating themselves out of house and home and are likely causing many hill country plants to become extinct. On our property, with the exception of a small 4-acre enclosed area, there are no young hardwoods to be found anywhere. We built a high fence around our property - not to keep deer in so much as to keep deer out. It is not uncommon to see upwards of 35 deer outside our fence. Today our property is operated as a wildlife management area. We limit our deer population through hunting and provide good habitat, food and water sources for our turkey and quail. We also keep new cedar growth cleared and are reestablishing some of our native grasses such as switch grass and Indian grass. We keep a small herd of cattle that do a great job of tromping around and spreading grass seed in our 7 pastures. The riparian area by Ahern Creek has been fenced to keep the cattle off the floodplain where we have a variety of native Texas grasses and trees including pecan and little walnut. Today, subdivisions, shopping malls and airports surround our property. But, no matter - we are striving for a return to the 1880s. It should be an interesting trip.

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Sheep/goat Locator Bell

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CONDALIA – A LITTLE KNOWN REMARKABLE PLANT FOR WILDLIFE — John Siemssen



Condalia Trees in Gruene parking lot

One of my favorite wildlife plants is *Condalia hookeri*, (commonly known as Blue-wood Condalia or Brasil. It's usually seen as a thorny shrub, but it can grow to a 30' tree given enough space and sun.

It would make a great landscape plant, but it's very hard to find in local nurseries.

So... what's so great about Condalia? To start with, it's a wonderful cover plant. Each branch is tipped with a sharp thorn, and in the wild it can form impenetrable thickets which birds and small mammals can use to escape from predators. As you might expect, it is a part of the (mostly thorny) South Texas shrub community, but it will grow as far north as Travis County.

In addition it's a great food plant for many species of animals. The flowers are very small, greenish, and quite inconspicuous. Still, bees and butterflies have no trouble finding them, and I've seen them all over a plant on our property on a sunny afternoon. Blooming is followed by small fruit, which start off green, then turn red and finally black when they are fully ripe.

The ripe fruit is sweet and has been used to make Jelly, but you'll be fighting birds and lots of



Tiny Condalia Flower and Bee

small mammals for them.

A disadvantage for the jelly maker, but a huge benefit to wildlife, is the fact that Condalia doesn't bloom and fruit all at once, but rather it's continually blooming and fruiting over the entire summer and fall. So it's hard to collect a lot of fruit at any one time, but the plant is providing for wildlife all season long.



Condalia Fruit (Ripe-black & Unripe-green and red)

What about its landscape value? One of its most attractive features is its small lime green evergreen leaves. They are closely spaced on the branches, giving the plant a unique look. In fact, once you learn to recognize it, it's easy to spot a Condalia from a hundred yards away. Since it's evergreen (or almost so...the old leaves hang on until the new leaves begin to come out in the spring) it's especially easy to spot in winter.

Another reason to love this plant is its drought tolerance. In this past summer's heat and lack of rain, even as live oaks were suffering, the Condalias I saw in unwatered locations looked as green and fresh as ever. I have found Condalia at Maldonados Nursery in New Braunfels. Otherwise, if you want one, you may need to contact a nursery in South Texas, or just be very patient and start your own by collecting and planting fresh, ripe seed or trying semi-hardwood cuttings. Maybe, if enough of us ask for it, we can get more of the local nurseries to consider offering this wonderful native plant.

More info at:

<http://uvalde.tamu.edu/herbarium/coho.htm>

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2010 TMN Annual Meeting is Coming to Comal County - Mark your Calendars!

The 2010 TMN Annual Meeting will be held at the T-Bar-M Resort and Conference Center here in New Braunfels on October 22 - 24.

In addition to interesting and informative sessions, there will be lots of opportunities to help out and meet new people from other chapters, so mark your calendars! More information will be forth coming as the time gets nearer.



ATTENTION: The current and up to date TMN-Lindheimer website's home page features three (3) signature chapter projects: Canyon Lake Gorge, Friesenhahn Cave, and Mesquite Creek Wildlife Habitat Area. If you are doing an online search for the website you may come across the old outdated website which is still lurking out there in the digital biosphere; it has a home page featuring a group of members visiting the Honey Creek State Natural Area. If you reach this page you will know you're not at the current website! Here is the URL for the current website:

<http://grovesite.com/page.asp?o=tamu&s=LC&p=112412>



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