



Desert Willow in bloom
at MCWHA's
Pollinator Garden
photo: John Siemssen



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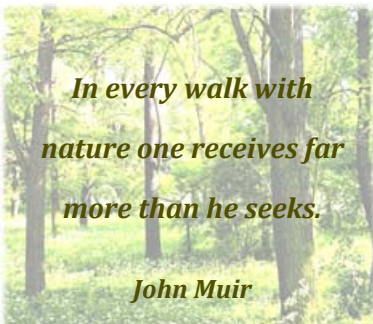
It's hot. That about sums it up. We had a few rain showers this summer so far, but not enough to even mention. So, it's Texas and if we wait a minute...it'll flood soon. I am using this time as a chance to weed out the weaklings in the yard. There only the toughest survive! The ones who survived the hard freezes this past winter but succumbed to the heat are tossed aside into the compost heap. The ones left are this year's winners. Freeze hardened and drought tolerant both. So if you are out working in the yard, Mesquite Creek or the TPM Library, be smart about the heat yourself: drink a lot of water, wear sunscreen and take a lot of breaks. Don't want any of our LMN'ers to be tossed on to the compost heap!

Our advisor, Glenn Avriett of the Texas Agrilife Extension Service, elected to retire at the end of August. We have appreciated Glenn's help and advice and will miss him sorely. There was a party to bid him farewell. In these days of extreme budget cutting and no end in sight, it behooves us to let the State employees we work with know how much we appreciate them and the work they do.

It's the time of year to make plans for the Texas Master Naturalists' State Meet. This year it will be held at Mo Ranch in Hunt, Texas. The Meet is a great way to interface with the other Chapters in our State and hear what they've been up to as well as to accumulate those precious Advanced Training Hours in some truly worthwhile seminars. Michelle Haggerty, TPWD (our State Coordinator), will be sending out the details for registration soon. At the State Meet we will be bidding farewell to Sonny Arnold, TPWD, the Assistant Coordinator for the Master Naturalist program, who has elected to retire this year. Sonny has been a friend and counselor to our Chapter and we all wish him well in his future endeavors.

Try to have a pleasant end of summer and dream of rain and cooler weather. When the chilly winds of winter are nipping at our noses, we will think of the summer fondly...or not!

Coco — 2011 President



*In every walk with
nature one receives far
more than he seeks.*

John Muir

- **Tell your friends: New classes start October, 2011. Check our website news for the info sheet to refer interested friends to for more information on how to become a Texas Master Naturalist. <http://txmn.org/lindheimer/>**
- **October 21-23, 2011 - Annual state meeting at Mo Ranch in Hunt Texas. More info to come. Check the TMN website for registration, etc. Information should be posted soon. <http://txmn.org/>**
- **Also be sure and check your e-mails regularly for "Out and About" announcements. There are many opportunities to volunteer and to learn new things — just make it so!**



Drought in the Hill Country - An Update

In the Spring 2009 issue of the TMN - LC Newsletter, Ray Laxson submitted the article: "Drought in the Hill Country." In his article he referenced Weather Bureau rainfall data dating back to 1871. Recently, after searching for a while, Charles Tubbs "rediscovered" this data source and shared it with a number of us.

With the drought we are currently experiencing, it seems a fitting time to resurrect and update Ray's original article. The basic data can be found at:

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/images/ewx/sat/satmonrain.pdf>

It includes not only monthly rainfall data, but also various summaries of average rainfall. (See Figure 1, right, for 10 year annual averages dating back to the 1870s.)

Rainfall Patterns

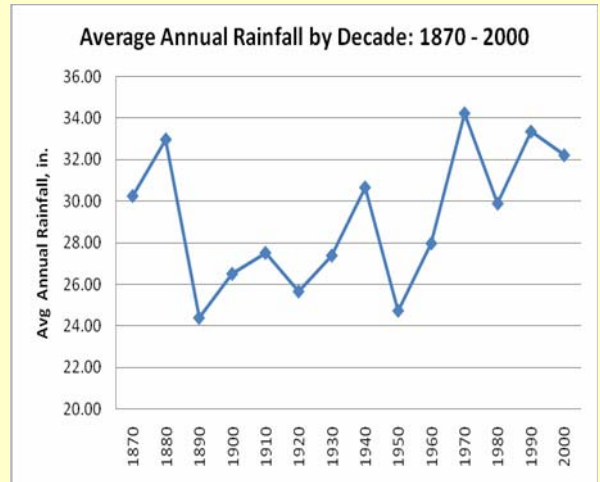


Figure 1

As Ray pointed out in his article, our rainfall seems to cycle between years that are above average, and those well below average (see Fig 2, left)

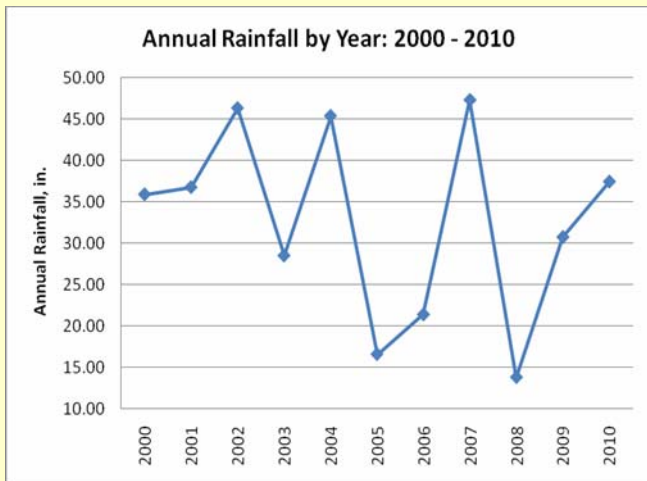


Figure 2

Examining more recent history, September 2010 and January 2011 were unusually wet, but January 2011 was the only month San Antonio's rainfall has been near normal since Sept 2010. (see Fig. 3 below)

The months in which we generally receive over 3 inches of rain are June and July as well as September and October. Charles looked back at individual years in which May and June were both unseasonably very dry (1875, 1906, 1923, 1998, and 2008), and noticed that we have gotten at least a one month and generally two months of nice rain in July, August, and September. In 1998 after a May of 0.34 and a June of 0.81, San Antonio got 7.78 inches in August and 18.07 in October! In 2008 after a total of 0.67 in May and June, August brought 3.86, and September 4.98. So we have something to hope for! (See Figure 3, right)

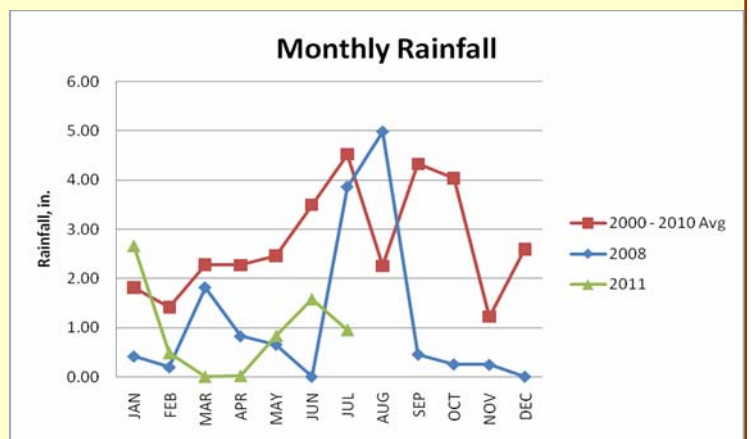


Figure 3

Temperature Trends

The same website also has temperature data for San Antonio, dating back to 1885:

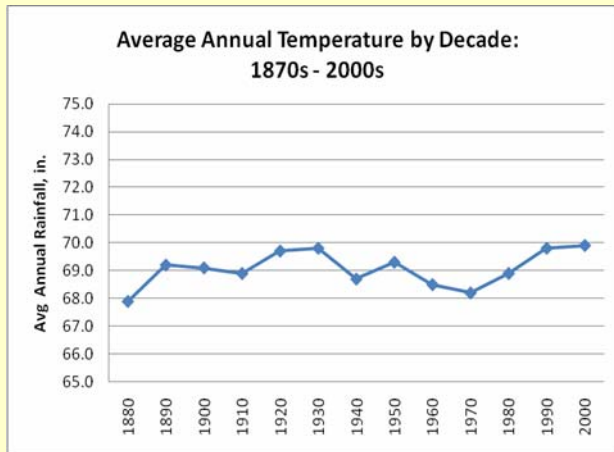


Figure 4

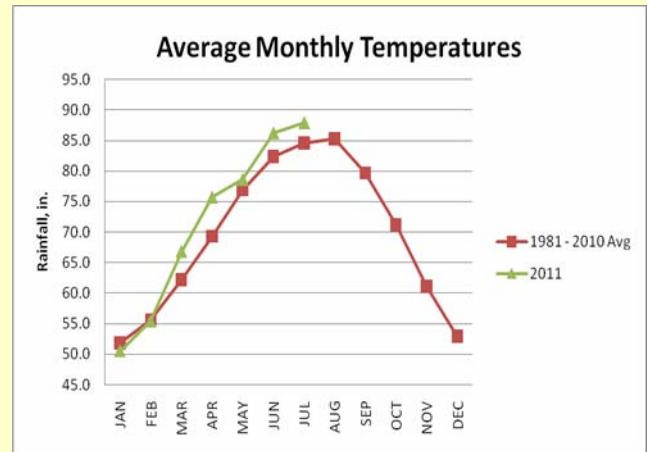


Figure 5

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/images/ewx/sat/satmontemp.pdf>

Decade average temperatures show little long term signs of the often talked about "Global Warming" for our area, although the last four decades do show a definite upward trend (see Figure 4 above left) However, average monthly temperature data since March of this year have definitely been above recent monthly averages (Figure 5 above right).

The bottom line: it's hot and it's dry. But we don't really need a bunch of scientific graphs to tell us that. After all, this is the Texas Hill Country, which has often been described as having long periods of drought separated by floods. The recent past has been no exception, and we can expect the future to provide us more of the same.

— Charles Tubbs & John Siemssen

The basic source for this data is: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ewx/?n=satclidata.htm>

More Texas Drought information at: <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/response/drought>

Editors note: According to an AP report received after the above was written, the U.S. Climate Prediction Center issued a "La Niña watch" on August 4th. They warned that the phenomenon, marked by a cooling of the tropical Pacific Ocean, could soon redevelop. La Niña typically results in less rain for southern states and it's blamed for drought conditions in Oklahoma and New Mexico also.

A La Niña watch means conditions are favorable for La Niña to return within the next six months. But Texas will probably know as early as October or November, said Mike Halpert, a deputy director of the Climate Prediction Center. Halpert also said that one upside is that second La Niñas are historically weaker than the first.

—Just Another Summer in Old New Braunfels — 1846 —

*We are having our usual weather here now, almost daily a heat up to 30 degrees Réaumur * [ca 100 F]."*

Ferdinand Lindheimer: 8 July 1846

"For months we had warm and dry weather and less breeze than ever here. Storms had been threatening for weeks, but whenever black clouds rolled into our vicinity or the wind that precedes rain blew over our town, they disappeared every time."

Sunday, the 26. [September 1846]

Above weather reports taken from: Minetta Altgelt Goyne, *A Life Among the Texas Flora: Ferdinand Lindheimer's Letters to George Englemann*, College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1991, pp. 161, 163. (available at New Braunfels Library in TX BIO) — Julie Crouch

* The Réaumur scale (°Ré, °Re, °R), also known as the "octogesimal division," is a temperature scale in which the freezing and boiling points of water are set to 0 and 80 degrees respectively.

Butterfly Garden – Tye Preston Memorial Library

How many Master Naturalists (and Master Gardeners) does it take to put in a single fence post? The picture should give you a hint.

A team made up of both Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners has been establishing a Butterfly Garden at the Tye Preston Memorial Library. This project has developed from a raw piece of land on the far side of the library



into a gently rolling, weed and rock cleared (mostly), mulch covered area almost ready for planting. The current work is concentrated on putting in a deer proof, and as we workers like to say “butterfly protection” fence. Once this is fully completed, the next large step will be to put in a demonstration rain catchment system in conjunction with the existing building gutters.

Materials for the garden, including the pipes for the fencing, the rain catchment barrels, and the skilled work such as the fencing, welding, and digging the post holes has all been generously donated. Additionally, several monetary donations have been made by local garden clubs and local artists have expressed an interest in providing works for the garden.

If you have not seen this work-in-progress, we invite you to drop by. Better yet, put on your hat and work gloves and join in. It’s amazing to see the weekly progress and rewarding to know you have had a part in building this new home for our beautiful butterflies. — *Linda Thomas*



The Albert & Bessie Mae Kronkowsky, Jr. Property, (3K Ranch): Future TPWD State Natural Area or WMA?

The Albert & Bessie Mae Kronkowsky, Jr. property, formerly the 3K Ranch, was bequeathed to the State of Texas by the Kronkowskys in 2010. This 3700 acre gem has been studied by Rufus Stephens, TPWD Regional Biologist. It lies 7 miles south of Boerne off Hwy 46. Most of the property lies between 800 and 1900 ft elevation. Pipe Creek, a perennial creek, flows through it in the western portion; there is also a 5 acre spring-fed lake. Access requires a 4 wheel drive vehicle. With its many canyons and a high ridge, one will still see only natural area within the property once the surrounding area is developed. At its many “contact springs,” where Edwards meets Glen Rose formations, there are Maidenhair and Shield ferns, as well as remarkably good stands of Eastern Gamma grass and the endangered Canyon Mock Orange.

A total surprise is the discovery of canyons of Basswood and Maple that are almost as extensive as in Lost Maples State Park, although not as accessible (much steeper). An immense Maple stands alone at one of the higher elevations! Other notable plants are large Madrone trees and the hill country Sycamore Leaf Snowbell. Over 70 percent of the area is estimated to be Prime Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat. There are also Shin Oak hilltops, suitable habitat for Black-capped Vireo (both of these birds are Endangered Species). Texas Spiny Lizards are plentiful. White-throated Slimy Salamander is present. The totally aquatic Cave Salamander is present in springs (the same species as in the San Antonio River watershed near Camp Bullis).



The Kronowsky area is not pristine, but there has been very little grazing and it has been high fenced for 6 years -- it does have good grass. KR Bluestem is present only near Hwy 46, but with no brush management for 20 years there are 10-foot high Ash Juniper. The deer population seems to have crashed during the 2009 drought because there are many 3-year old oaks and shrubs. Feral Hogs however, are abundant and damage is especially noticeable at the lake and at every spring. Bird, Insect, Invertebrate, Amphibian, and Grass surveys are incomplete. The TPWD Kerrville Regional District Office and staff have relocated to the Kronowsky site and will be the contact personnel.

Above information based on presentation given by Rufus Stephens, TPWD Regional Biologist, to San Antonio Audubon Society meeting, August 4, 2011.

— Julie Crouch, LMN Class 2010

Editor's Note: The transfer of the Albert & Bessie Mae Kronowsky, Jr. Property, (3K Ranch) was first reported in the Winter Edition of the TMN—L Newsletter.

Serenity Barn - Little Piece of Heaven!

The Trinity Charter School on the New Life Campus

You and I know the many, many, comforts that our dog or cat give us daily. The feel of their fur as we stroke away the day's stress and tensions; the rhythmic strokes, *easing* us back to our "good place." Regardless of our faults, our faithful companions convey unconditional love daily.

The young girls at New Life Treatment Center do not have the privilege of a faithful companion, cat or dog. The majority of young girls are wards of the great state of Texas, meaning that the treatment center must follow very strict and specific regulations, for their protection. Due to the possibility of animal allergies, the center cannot provide animal companionship in the cottages for any of the eighty girls placed there.

State regulation does allow the young girls to have the "Serenity Barn." This awesome barn, named by the girls, does allow them to have horses, goats, rabbits and to hatch out their own county prize winning poultry. The daily interactions of these "city girls" are therapy for everyone's soul, including the staff, volunteer adults, and donors.

How aptly named is this oasis, "Serenity Barn?" I can tell you that the description hits the nail on the head. Several times a day, these girls earn the privilege of "going to the barn" to take care of the animals. Somewhere mingled between the chores and duties, life's lessons are learned about responsibility, compassion, due diligences, as well as an animal's unconditional love.

These days, unconditional love is a sparse commodity. Imagine being far from all that is familiar; the state making all the decisions for your welfare. You are say, about ten years-old, living in a cottage with nine more girls who have been placed at New Life for the same reason, abuse....physical and sexual.

Doesn't a place like "Serenity Barn" sound like salvation? Doesn't the idea of going and taking care of an animal who will listen to your secrets as you care for them; offer you unconditional love as you learn the science of animal care and maintenance sound like a little piece of heaven?



I have witnessed first hand the healing power of the "Serenity Barn" at the New Life Treatment Center. Since the barn poles were raised, I have seen the power that the barn offers. Great and goods things are accomplished there. The young ladies have won trophies and ribbons at the Comal County Youth Fair. Pictures and details are on display at the offices.

As with all great things, there is a maintenance cost. The barn requires a monthly stipend of \$300 to keep everything going. The original grant was set to expire this past July and is not renewable. Bluntly, the girls, and their animals, stand the chance of losing the barn.

To learn more about New Life, please consider joining us for the Hope Tour the last Thursday of the month. For more information, contact Lisa Brown at 830.964.4390 or visit www.newlifechildrencenter.org.

— Amy Almond-Laechelin, M.Ed.,
Educational Diagnostician

Questions about donating to New Life can be directed to Lisa Brown, Director of Volunteer Services. You can email her at lisa.brown@lsss.org or call at 830-964-4390 x216.

Thank you!

(Amy is former teacher at Trinity Charter School on the New Life campus and currently serves on the New Life Advisory Board)

The Graceful and Elusive Wanderers of Texas

The Gray Fox - Our Own Native Species

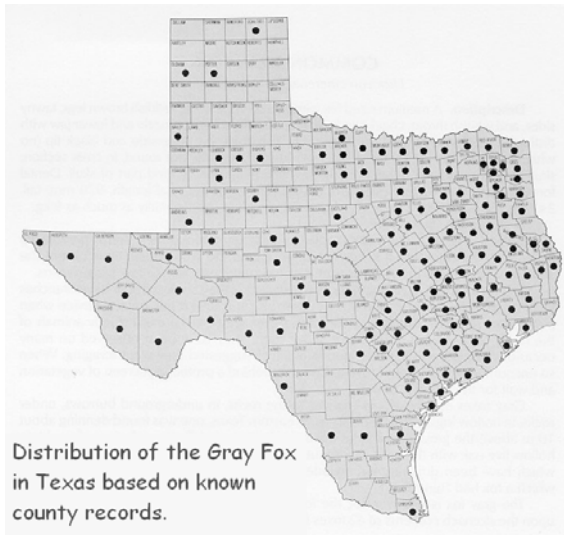


One of the most interesting and elusive creatures roaming the hills of Central Texas that area residents and visitors may be privileged to see is the Gray Fox.

The historical range of the Gray Fox (*Family Canidae: Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), a native species, is throughout most of the southern half of North America from southern Canada to northern Venezuela and Columbia. It is fairly common in many Central Texas areas. This petite creature is smaller than some well-fed domestic cats and moves ever so gracefully...as if a cross between a cat and a dog. Although a canid (family Canidae) like dogs, coyotes, jackals and wolves, the fox is genetically separate, having a different number of chromosomes, and therefore not able to cross-breed with dogs or other canids.

The Gray Fox prefers dry brushy, rocky areas as well as mixed hardwood forests. Although primarily nocturnal, it may sometimes be seen foraging early or late in the day, on the hunt primarily for small mammals, but being an omnivore it will also eat eggs, insects, birds, fruits, acorns and berries. The Gray Fox is the only canine that can climb trees where it seeks refuge and food. This fox is adept at climbing trees, particularly if they are leaning or have branches within 3 m of the ground, and it is not unusual for it to use this escape device when pursued. Gray foxes usually den in crevices in the rocks, in underground burrows, under rocks, in hollow logs, or in hollow trees. In eastern Texas, one was found denning about 10 m above the ground in a large hollow oak. In central Texas, a den was found in a hollow live oak with the entrance about 1 m above the ground. Two unusual den sites which have been documented include a pile of wood and a field of sorghum into which a fox had "tunneled." In Texas, the breeding season begins in December and continues on into March.

Description: Medium-sized and weighing between 8 and 12 pounds, with "salt-and pepper" fur outlined in rust colored fur on neck, flanks and legs; throat and belly are white. It has a bushy tail with a black tip and prominent black line that runs down the back of the tail. You may see also two black face patches, one below each eye



It has a bushy tail with a black tip and prominent black line that runs down the back of the tail. You may see also two black face patches, one below each eye

Range: Can be found throughout most of Texas.

Habitat & Habits: Prefers dry brushy chaparral, open woodlands, rim rock and rocky country; omnivorous — feeds on small mammals, birds, eggs, acorns, fruits and insects; mostly nocturnal but may occasionally be seen in daylight — dens in hollow trees, logs, ground burrows or beneath rocks; 3-7 young born from April through May.



Gray foxes are unusual because they are capable of climbing trees and unfortunately, henhouses.

Additional information at:

<http://visitwimberley.com/critters/grayFox.shtml>

<http://www.nsr.ttu.edu/tmot1/uroccine.htm>

The Mammals of Texas—Online Edition: <http://www.nsr.ttu.edu/tmot1/uroccine.htm>

A Tail of Two Foxes: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_lf_w7000_1664_10_08.pdf

The Red Fox - A Case of Mistaken Identity

Newcomers to our area often mistakenly identify the Grey Fox as a Red Fox. In general the Red Fox is somewhat larger when mature than a mature Gray Fox — it is also very rare in Central Texas and sightings here are unusual. The Red Fox prefers riparian areas and even more heavily wooded habitats than the Grey Fox. It has similar opportunistic eating habits as the Gray Fox.

The Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), has an interesting and complex history. It is thought to have its native origins in Eurasia with its range expanding into the far northern regions of the Northern Hemisphere during the last major ice age. Later roaming southward throughout the western United States, to moist cool upland slopes dominated by large coniferous trees at higher elevations.



It is also believed that the Red Fox population in Texas descended from stock that was introduced to America from England for sport and hunting between 1650 and 1750. The Red Fox population of Central Texas is thought to have most likely descended from forty foxes released between 1890 and 1895 near Waco. Offspring from these, plus an additional sixty imports, soon spread into the surrounding counties. Releases in other parts of the state further increased the Red Fox's range. Now it can be found in the eastern, north-central, and Trans-Pecos areas of the state, with the highest populations occurring in north-central Texas.

There are fox breeders in various other states but it is illegal to breed or import foxes into Texas to hold as pets. Texas Parks and Wildlife requires permits for the possession or rehabilitation of a variety of wild animal species in Texas including but not limited to: fur-bearing species (badger, beaver, all fox, mink, muskrat, nutria, opossum, otter, raccoon, ring-tailed cat, and all skunks), raptors/falcons/birds of prey, certain turtles, and other fish and wildlife. For information on fur bearing propagation permits, visit: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/permits/>

Description: The adult Red Fox can weigh from 6 to 15 pounds, with males on average 2.2 pounds heavier than females. Note the reddish coat and front black leg "stockings," white chest and white tail tip. It is not always red — sometimes it may look black or silver (color "phases"), but it will always have white on the tip of its tail. Its legs and face are shorter than the Gray Fox's and it has larger toe pads.



Range: More common in eastern and northern Texas and the Cross Timbers area; possibly as far west as the Trans-Pecos region

Habitat & Habits: Prefers heavily wooded habitats and riparian areas. Also mostly nocturnal, although may be seen late evening, early morning; opportunistic hunter with varied diet of birds, eggs, insects, and some berries and fruit. Various fox calls and sounds can be found online at: <http://www.angelfire.com/ar2/thefoxden/sounds.html>

Additional information at:

<http://www.nsr.ttu.edu/tmot1/vulpvulp.htm>

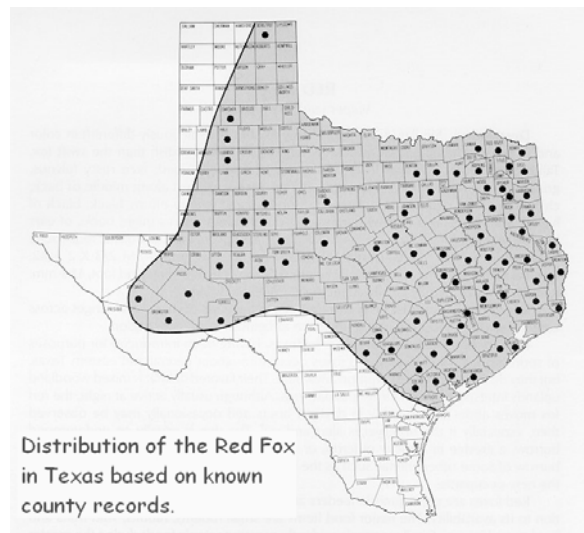
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Fox

<http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsid=13796253>

The Mammals of Texas—Online Edition: <http://www.nsr.ttu.edu/tmot1/vulpvulp.htm>

Red Foxes: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/nonpwdpubs/introducing_mammals/red_foxes/

Texas Parks and Wildlife Code: <http://law.onecle.com/texas/parks/71.004.00.html>



— Janet Siemssen

Warning: Foxes, like dogs, can catch rabies. We all know that our domestic dogs get shots so they can be protected from this deadly disease. In some areas, medicine may be put out in bait for foxes. But this is very expensive, so most foxes don't get the medicine. Normally, foxes are very shy. If a fox walks up to you and acts brave or friendly, it is probably sick. Do NOT touch it or feed it.

Hummingbirds Ask: Got Nectar?

Recently some friends of ours commented that they had to frequently refill their hummingbird feeders, since nothing was blooming in this dry weather. Granted, they are on a rainwater system and water for irrigation is a scarce commodity at their place, but still, we had plenty of blooms for the hummers on plants that have gotten little or no additional water by us.

Since it appears that this drought may continue for some time, I thought I'd suggest this list of Texas Native plants you might consider planting if you want to keep our little feathered friends fed and happy, while still doing your part to conserve water:

Red Yucca - In their book "Native Texas Plants," the Wasowskis describe Red Yucca as follows: "...the flowers bloom profusely for a long time, almost always with an attendant hummingbird." Actually it is not a true yucca and its flowers are really more salmon than red, but regardless, it is a surefire hummingbird magnet that seems to thrive on heat and drought. Note that, while the leaves are deer resistant, the flowers are not!



Desert Willow - This plant is another misnomer - it's not related to willows - but it makes an attractive small tree that blooms all summer with pale pink trumpet shaped flowers that hummingbirds visit regularly. A native of West Texas, it is fairly adaptable to a variety of conditions, as long as it is well drained. Several named varieties are available that have been selected for deeper flower color than the species.

Flame Acanthus - Another native of Central and West Texas, Flame Acanthus is an orange flowered spreading shrub that grows to be 3' - 5' tall. Very drought tolerant, it can even thrive in a patio pot. Late winter pruning will remove dead branches and encourage more blooms. Given favorable conditions, it can reseed aggressively.





Texas Lantana - While most hummingbird plants have trumpet shaped flowers, our native lantana is another plant that hummingbirds will visit. Very tough, it dies back in winter but comes back strongly each spring. Our native variety used to be called *Lantana horrida* for its strong smelling leaves, but today is known as *L. urticoides* due to its resemblance to nettles (the *Urtica* family). Be aware that there are many hybrids of the non-native (and invasive) *Lantana camera*, including some with Texas sounding names like Dallas Red.

Gregg's Sage - This great little shrub will survive all but the severest drought without supplemental water. However, its main attraction may be the variety of colors that it comes in, including white, pink, salmon, red and purple. This allows you to add a palate of colors to a native xeric hummingbird garden.



Esperanza - There are several kinds of Esperanza available at local nurseries. Look for our native West Texas variety, since it has greater drought and cold tolerance. It can be distinguished from the more common tropical variety by its narrower leaves. Esperanza has large clear yellow trumpet shaped flowers.

Pitcher Sage - Also known as Big Blue Sage, this plant will die back each winter. However, its roots can go down as much as 8', so it can survive with very little supplemental water. Besides its drought tolerance, it offers a wonderful sky blue color that can offset some of the warmer colors that the other plants on this list possess. Pitcher Sage may be difficult to find in nurseries, but it can readily be started from seed available from Native American Seed.



Hopefully this list will inspire you to plant some (or all) of these wonderful plants. You'll save water, and the hummingbirds will thank you. — *John Siemssen*



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Glenn Avriett

TMN-LC Newsletter
Janet Siemssen

Send your article suggestions or
submissions to:

tmnlindheimer "at" yahoo.com

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.

ADVANCED TRAINING: - Section J of Your TMN Membership Manual

1. Advanced Training is meant to provide TMN volunteers an opportunity to focus their interests on one or a few specific topics that interest them.
2. Advanced Training opportunities must be approved in advance by the Projects Committee.
3. Acquiring Advanced Training Hours:
 - a. Advanced training courses may be made available directly through TAE, TPWD, chapter sponsored activities, or any number of short courses provided by universities, conservation groups, or nature centers, etc.
 - b. The Projects Committee must review and pre-approve all advanced training. Educational television shows are not a form of advanced training and will not be approved.
 - c. The Projects Committee will use the following criteria when reviewing and approving Advanced Training:

Does the Advanced Training opportunity:

1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?
2. Provide the Texas Master Naturalist with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
3. Directly train volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services?
4. Provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts?
5. Take advantage of local partnerships?
Provide the Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?
7. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local chapter?
8. Provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas?

Note: Advanced Training opportunities must meet criteria 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8. It is suggested that the remaining criteria also be a part of the opportunity.

This newsletter would not be possible without the time and talents of our members. This edition was possible as the result of contributions from these members: Coco Brennan, Charles Tubbs, John Siemssen, Linda Thomas, Julie Crouch, Amy Almond-Laechelin, and Janet Siemssen.

We meet on the third Thursday of every month, except December, 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 new website which can be viewed at:

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

Edie Zaiontz, TMN-LC Communications & Webmaster

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