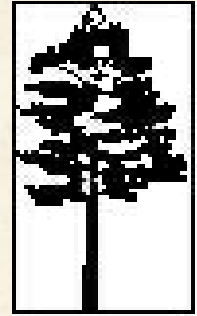


# Lost Pines Master Naturalist



Volume II, Issue 4

April 2011

edited by Jeannie Jessup

## Invisible Landlord

By LPMN trainee Larry Gfeller



in the position of having to ask permission to build *anything* beyond what is already here and the land we cleared is referred to as the "disturbance area" in official documents. Toads have the property rights and we, through their good graces, are also allowed to live here! Okay, I exaggerate some, but you get the idea. Bastrop county has a "toad lady" (Roxanne Hernandez) whose job is to sign up relevant land owners to participate in the habitat conservation plan to support Houston Toad recovery. She is like an improvised explosive device: quiet and unassuming on the surface, but can definitely get your attention. She is persuasive and believes in her mission (more on Roxanne later).

February through April, whenever the temperature is above 57 degrees and the humidity is 55 percent or more, I'll spend numerous nights out in the woods listening for the chorus of amorous Houston Toads looking for love. This is their mating season and they almost never come out of their burrows in the sand until after dark and then only if it has recently rained or the humidity is high. Chances of actually seeing one are rare, but like most guys, if the weather is right, they'll come out at night cruising for chicks. In 2010 somebody was getting' together because we saw a 460% increase in the Houston Toad population in monitored large tracts like Bastrop State Park, Griffith League Ranch and two other private ranches, according to official research data. We got a fair amount of rain in 2010 and it certainly seems to help put everyone in the mood.

Being in the woods is good for the soul. When we bought five acres of pine forest east of Bastrop, my wife and I had plenty of work ahead of us. It proved to be an adventure as we cleared a small space and put a log home on it. Finally, after two years of planning and construction, we were happy to claim that majestic forest as ours. What we didn't realize was that it really didn't belong to us. The suggestion that we were not the rightful owners was totally missed in our rush to be landowners—the first hurdle was to get a toad permit. That's because our property is smack in the middle of endangered Houston Toad habitat. Little did we know that was just the beginning.

Today, our property carries a wildlife exemption and I'm counting toads for the government! We are now

So far, my evening sessions have proved fruitless. It either didn't rain enough or our



property is not sufficiently romantic. If the Houston Toad is an endangered species, the Gulf Coast Toad definitely is not—all the toads I've seen so far have been Gulf Coast Toads. You can't easily tell them apart when they're babies, I'm told, as they both have spots on their bellies. But when they get older, the Gulf Coast Toad becomes this giant bullfrog-type monster that rules the night. Once the sun goes down, these croakers come out in force to feast on insects.

In fact, at our place, we have a permanent resident Gulf Coast Toad who lives in our front sidewalk drainpipe by day and terrorizes all manner of bugs and flying insects at night. I call him Rocky... Rocky Toad (after the popular ice cream flavor?). He scared the bejesus out of one of our little dogs early one morning while the pooch was en route to do his business. We keep a dog bowl of fresh water out by the front door (used mostly by the squirrels), but this particular morning Rocky Toad was nonchalantly floating in the bowl. I mean, legs splayed out, back arched, head out of the water. If toads liked cocktails, I'm sure he would have had a gin and tonic. After a hard night of eating bugs, I guess it was time for a leisurely soak in the tub. After the dog freaked out over the sight, Rocky took his good sweet time getting out of the pool. You could almost hear him cursing us under his breath as he stomped away under the shrubbery.

How does an ordinarily sane person come to take up dancing with toads? Like I said, the "toad lady" is persuasive (without being pushy). Hidden persuaders in the form of email notifications and updates about "toad events" were frequent. Eventually I found myself sitting in three hours of formal classroom training put on by the Texas Parks and Wildlife folks, and going home with an armful of binders and literature, complete with a CD of Texas toad and frog calls. The CD isn't exactly something you want to get caught with on your iPod, but I agree with that 19<sup>th</sup> century actress, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who once said, in a different context, that she didn't really care what people did as long as they didn't do it in the street and fright-

en the horses. This was all part of a larger program known as the Texas Amphibian Watch, wherein other nuts like me record the results of nocturnal surveys and visual sightings on a log and turn it in at the end of the year. It helps biologists track population growth, migration and other stuff biologists like to track.

There is, of course, an even bigger story. There is a government project, comprised of some 500 people nationwide, called America's Annual Frog and Toad census run by the U.S. Geological Survey. USGS started the amphibian survey in 2001. Volunteers are a stout group. They endure everything from highway traffic to barking dogs to mosquitoes and chiggers. Some even get shot at—after all, when you see a stranger standing in the dark, staring onto your property, it tends to make most landowners a bit nervous. So why is this amphibian census so important? Amphibians have very sensitive (permeable) skin, so their changing population helps scientists track pollution, disease and other ecological problems. Some research has indicated a sharp and somewhat mysterious decline in amphibians around the world, which helped spur the American census. But the science of counting amphibians is rather loose. The census comes up with a general rating of abundance on a scale of one to three, rather than an exact number. Three represents a constant chorus of frog calls, for instance. Scientists plan to use changes in ranking to track population shifts over time.

Who knows... perhaps someday I will hear (or maybe even get to meet) my little invisible landlord. Whether or not I do is unimportant. The knowledge that we are assisting in a struggle to save the little amphibian from urbanization and habitat loss is enough. If not on my property, then somewhere else. As for Roxanne, she *has* seen one (see photo) and she'd love to tell you about it. Seldom will you find a more enthusiastic supporter. Her official title is Lost Pines Habitat Conservation Plan Administrator. You can reach her at [Roxanne.hernandez@co.bastrop.tx.us](mailto:Roxanne.hernandez@co.bastrop.tx.us). Just don't frighten the horses.



# Fairy Thimbles

By LPMN member Liz Pullman



With a name like Fairy Thimbles, who can resist making *Penstemon cobaea* the Flower-of-April? My first research was in Shinnery Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas and I found the unusual comment, "One of the most striking wildflowers in NC Texas". The six hikers on the McKinney Roughs March 29 Biocensus concur! A colony of this species of *Penstemon* was found near Ridge Trail as we made our way up and out of the river bottomlands. Marsha Elrod first spotted the knee-high stalks with the large (2-inch) flowers. All six of us stopped and gawked at these wildflowers that would be at home in a formal English garden but were actually growing on a sunny gentle slope in dry gravelly soil. Below ground level, a thick and tough tuberous root assures their survival during the scorching heat of summer. (No, we did not dig down to check it out!)

Two different tales about the specific name exist. The older claims they were named for a Jesuit father, Bernado Cobo (1572-1659), a Spanish missionary and naturalist in Mexico and Peru. A later version claims the plant was found by Sir Thomas Nuttall in Arkansas who used the specific epithet *Cobaea*, after a plant found in Mexico. An obvious connection exists but Sir Thomas had no internet for checking out the earlier name.

The genus *Penstemon* reflects the flower structure - penstemon = five stamens. When one looks at the interior of the flower, four of these stamens are curved and rigid and provide a stable "roof" that does not collapse. There are markings along the "floor" of the bloom that guide pollinators into the interior and to the source of the nectar. The fifth

stamen (really a staminode) bristles with hairs and protrudes from the flower, earning the plant the name of beardtongue. Bees are the major pollinators and even large bees have room to move around in this big blossom. Moths, butterflies and hummingbirds all visit the plant and each assist in disseminating the pollen from plant to plant..

Being such a showy plant, *Penstemon cobaea* has many common names other than Fairy Thimbles. Also on the list are: Wild Foxglove, False Foxglove, Dewflower. Beardtongue, Wild Belladonna (although NOT related to *Digitalis purpurea*), and Balmony. As usual, there are medicinal uses, the most mentioned one being as an anti-inflammatory in the treatment of gunshot and arrow wounds. Early settlers used the name Balmony and brewed a tea from the leaves for intestinal problems.

*Penstemon cobaea* is available commercially and is often seen in rock gardens, native plant gardens and



wildscapes. It tolerates well drained loam, sand and limestone soils but poor drainage can cause root rot.

With a nod to something that eats the plant, Fairy Thimbles are the larval host plant of the Dotted Checkerspot Butterfly (once known as the Beardtongue Checkerspot) - *Polydrias minuta*. These butterflies whose habitat is described as "dry limestone ridges". once occurred over most of Texas but have disappeared in the recent past for no known reason. Remember the recent posts about the discovery of the Pine Elf and just keep on looking!!!

Images: left - Henderson, Mary S. and Mary Hall, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center; right - LPMN member Andy Butler



## *Aesculus pavia*

"Scarlet Buckeye", "Red Buckeye", "Firecracker Plant"

Perennial Shrub with Tap Root

Deciduous with Opposite Leaf arrangement and Palmate complexity; Elliptical leaves that are pinnately veined, serrated edges

Capsule Fruit 1-2 inches long, brown.

Size can be 10-40 feet, though 15' is average.

A handsome shrub with showy panicles of deep red, campanulate flowers in early spring; clusters 6-10 in. long. The seeds and young shoots are poisonous if ingested, and indigenous people crushed these parts and put them in water to stupefy the fish for easier capture. Soap may be obtained from the roots and a black dye from the wood. The species name, *pavia*, is in honor of Peter Paaw, a 16th century Dutch botanist.

I first saw this plant along the Colorado River, walking the trail in the Colorado River Refuge on March 9, 2011



## *Aesculus pavia*

## *Tradescantia gigantea*

Giant Spiderwort

Perennial Herb; deciduous with simple leaf complexity, lanceolate leaf shape. Size 1-3 feet; bloom time March-April with white, pink, blue, purple, or violet blooms.

Medium water use in sun or part shade.

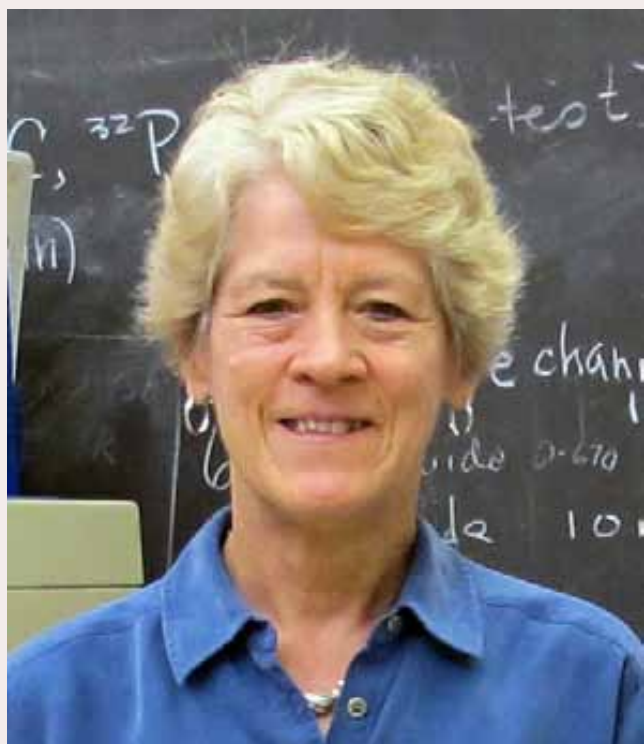
Dainty three petal flower with slender, hairy stamens. Flower color can be an indicator of the PH of the soil. Acidic soils produce blue flowers, while more alkaline soils create varying shades of pink and purple. All parts of this plant contain volatile oil that can cause severe skin inflammation, itching, and blistering on direct contact or if borne by sooty smoke. Washing thoroughly with soap or swabbing with alcohol immediately on exposure removes the oil irritant. The berries are poisonous if eaten. Fragrant with nectar source; not deer resistant.



## Spiderwort

By LPMN trainee Susan Whitton





# Meet Sue Fischer

By LPMN member Rik Martinez

So I met with Sue recently at the Coffee Dawg shop -- she was having a cappuccino. I wanted to fill in some blanks for the Meet Me column and felt I could get to know her better with a little 'face time'.

We talked for a little while about her work; she claims she is retired but 'not really' -- she is ramping down her (Cancer Research) work to about 40% (two days out of five) at the UT MD Anderson Cancer Center, Science Park Division near Smithville in the Bue-scher State Park area. There she has spent almost 28 years working in the Department of Molecular Carcinogenesis.

Looking back, Sue got her PhD in Physiology and Biochemistry, then did postdoctoral work at the Univ. Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center (UTM-DACC) in Houston for 2 years. Following that she

moved to Oak Ridge TN to join the Oak Ridge National Laboratory for 6 years, and, during the Reagan administration when tough times hit, the VRIF (Voluntary Reduction in Force) prompted Sue and other colleagues, including her husband Andy, to move their lab (12 people) to Texas.

Here in Texas she moved up the ranks from Assistant to Associate to Full Professor and even spent a very 'interesting' year as ad interim chair of the department. Her research interests focus on the role of inflammatory mediators (unpronounceable bio-active lipids) in skin, pancreatic and prostate cancer. Her lab generates genetically engineered mice for many of their studies as well as using cultured cells. In this role she has also developed a unique skill for writing grants; government grants for science research projects require a scientific method approach including hypothesis, specific aims, methods and expected outcomes.

But Sue also told me that she values her 'free time'; she enjoys her annual Spring hike with husband and close friends in the canyons of southern Utah, but noted that the trail 'feels like they are getting longer each year'. While hiking near Pagosa Springs in SW Colorado (near Durango) they found a great 9 acre homesite for their Colorado house; this provides their refuge during summer heat and venue for skiing in the winter.

Her passions continue to be the Interpretive Hike at Bastrop State Park and the Alum Creek Hike along Gottier Trace because she believes "...it is satisfying to see people become enthused about the park and learn why we need to preserve our wild spaces....I have always loved being in the outdoors and this (being a LPTMN) offered a means of learning more about our outside world and an opportunity to excite other people about it."

Her Mom, who recently passed, was a Cub Scout Leader for brother Scott, and Sue would 'tag along' on Scout outings. As a child she spent a lot of time at a 300 acre undeveloped tract of land next to her childhood suburban home, 'learned' about poison ivy the hard way while harvesting holly at Christmas time; the holly was wrapped in poison ivy vines which had lost all their leaves during winter, but still retained the toxic sap!

Sue also enjoys archeology, is a member of the Texas Archaeological Society, and routinely spends Sunday mornings at a dig off Hwy 304 exploring prehistoric (~2000 year old) sites where fire hearths and middens contain arrowheads, spearpoints, and buffalo remains. The site is located near Cedar Creek and has remnants from various periods.... and of course, it gives her a chance to add to her arrowhead collection!

By the way, Sue was in the first Lost Pines TMN class, in 2000, and was also responsible for recording hours for many years before Marsha took over the job. Also, early in the chapter's history she was treasurer. Besides hiking, backpacking, archeology and cross-country skiing, her interests include kayaking, and travel as well.



# Meet Dale Morrison

By LPMN member Rik Martinez



Or perhaps you already have.... Dale was recently spotlighted as a Master Trail Steward in a one-page bio that listed many of his accomplishments, beginning with volunteer work for the US Fish and Game in Southern California; then on to the Bakersfield Trail Bike Club, establishing two back country camp grounds where they built and maintained trails in the Golden Trout Wilderness area of the High Sierras. These were not short trails by any means -- one was 15 miles long, and another was 25 miles long!

Then, in the early 1960's, Dale began a highly successful nine year stint with Kern County Fish and Game Association in the San Joaquin Valley rearing, raising and releasing White Wing Pheasant into the wild.

Dale went on to work with the Boy Scouts to build 'check dams', creating spawning pockets for native rainbow trout in the High Sierras. But the Boy Scouts were not the only youth organization to benefit from Dale's passion for environmental work -- the Girl Scouts in Southern California also learned trail building and maintenance from Dale during Summer Camp.

Dale leaves a mark volunteering everywhere he goes. After California where Dale taught trail building to Eagle Scouts through the Bureau of Land Management, he continued with the Eagle Scout program in Nevada. There is a trail named after him in Red Rock Canyon outside Las Vegas! When the family moved to Dallas, Angie went to work and Dale went to Dallas Arboretum to volunteer there. He was there for 5 years

where he maintained the Texas Pioneer Village and did the Wild Walk About. Because of his efforts he was nominated for Volunteer of the Year for Dallas Ft Worth - quite an honor!

Despite a challenging health situation (Dale has a very bad heart condition - he has had an aortic artery replacement, a heart valve replacement, a pacemaker and a defibrillator installed in his chest) Dale continues his hard work today, focused on the Colorado River Refuge (CRR) where he has been intimately involved in planning and constructing numerous trails. Great thought has been put into the design and terrain of these trails to incorporate a variety of ecologies and landscapes while minimizing the negative impacts a trail creates. Perhaps one of his greatest ambitions is to link the trails of CRR with not only other city-managed trails such as Fishermans Park, but also, the downtown area, and even Bastrop State Park; according to Dale, they are all interconnected. Just give him a map, and a minute of your time and attention and you'll be surprised to see how his plan makes our world seem so small!

Dale's interests have always revolved around the outdoors. He and Angie hiked Bryce Canyon in Utah and many mountain trails in Nevada. Dale is a stream fisherman and would make great suppers from the wild trout he caught on their hikes up in the mountains.

Dale and Angie had a fascinating trip to Death Valley where they helped remove invasive species from the marshes and as a treat were taken on a hike to see footprints left in the mud from mastodons, prehistoric birds and other creatures.

By the way, in his 'first life' Dale was a Heating and A/C contractor in the Bakersfield CA area with three shops; Dale graduated from the LPTMN class of 2009.



# TPWD Go Fish!

By LPMN member Gene Moulden

Go Fish is a program developed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, to promote and encourage young boys and girls to learn how to fish. This program is geared toward children of all ages, but in many cases, adults also enjoy learning about fishing. There



are no charges for these classes. Park rates do apply. The children must be accompanied by a parent or a responsible adult to participate in the program.

The basic program includes five learning stations. To teach safety, how to tie knots, casting, fish identification and habitat, and fishing regulations. Small prizes are awarded at each station and after completion of each station, it is on to catching fish with live bait and real hooks.

Each child receives a goody-bag with a fish pin and a diploma. When the fishing classes have finished at 12:00, a raffle drawing is held with any registered child eligible to win. There are hook boxes, lures, back packs, tackle boxes and new rods with reels. There is a grand prize of a 6 mile paddle trip on the Colorado River furnished by Rising Phoenix Adventures awarded at the end of 2011 Fishing Classes. Other sponsors this year are Friends of the Lost Pines and Frontier Bank.

Our own Bill Brooks has been the instructor and coordinator for these Go Fish Classes at Bastrop and Buescher State Parks since the program began in 2005. It is estimated that 1800 people have attended this program in the past years. Last year's program

was especially good with six classes being attended by 298 kids, 185 adults. Twenty two kids caught their very first fish and 140 fish were caught in the year. This places these local programs #1 or #2 in all categories within the eleven Go Fish

programs at the Texas State Parks, some that are in much larger metropolitan areas. Bill states that the success of these programs depends on volunteers. It takes 8 to 10 volunteers to run each program, and there are never too many. There are plenty of places to work that does not require any special fishing skills. Training aids are furnished for each station and provide all information required.

If you enjoy outside activities, watching the excitement of children catching their first fish, and proud parents, plus four hours of volunteer time, come on out and have FUN! Park entrance fees are waived for volunteers. The only things you will need are sun block, insect spray and a good hat. "Santa" may even show up with a goody-bag for the volunteers. Remaining dates are: Bastrop State Park June 11th and July 9th; Buescher State Park June 18th and July 16th.

For more information, call the Bastrop State Park office, 321-2101, the Buescher office, 237-2241 or Bill Brooks, 581-0377, [Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu) your TPWD's GO FISH program coordinator.

**LIFE IS BETTER OUTSIDE!!**



# Volunteer Opportunities

## New Volunteer Activities

**Outreach Booth Volunteer.** Motivated individuals have a wonderful opportunity to meet people, discuss the Master Naturalist program, and the personal satisfaction gained by being a member. Explain the many and varied volunteer projects and the ways they support conservation, education, and recreation in our communities. Demonstrate the chapter's rainfall absorption simulator and discuss the importance of proper land cover in water conservation. Discuss the CoCoRaHS program and its benefits to science, the public, and to the individual volunteer. No previous experience is necessary. Training is available. For more information and to volunteer contact Jim Estes at [jestes@ionet.net](mailto:jestes@ionet.net)

**Spring Beauty and the Bees.** Volunteer request to help in a pollinator monitoring program. Duties are to observe local pollinators of spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica* and *Claytonia caroliniana*) - which is found in our area as one of our spring wildflowers. The goal is to document changing pollinator populations to determine how pollinator communities change depending on the year, the location, and the season. Only 2 hours of observations over the course of three weeks are required. For more information, go to: <http://springbeauties.wordpress.com/>.

**Interpretive Hikes.** Bastrop State Park. Saturdays, starting Feb. 26 through June. The spring 2011 series of Saturday morning interpretive hikes has been led by our chapter since 2000 and TPWD depends on us to do this. The hike starts at 10 am, is about 1 mile long (a loop) and takes about an hour. Please contact Sue Fischer at [smfischer@mdanderson.org](mailto:smfischer@mdanderson.org).

**Project Bud Burst.** Monitor the budding and blooming of a variety of plants. This is a great citizen scientist project! <http://neoninc.org/budburst/index.php>

**The Great Sunflower Project.** Plant a few seeds of select flowers and then count the

number of bees that visit one flower over a 15 minute period twice a month. Helps to monitor wild bee populations. <http://www.greatsunflower.org/>

**Nest Watch.** Report on egg number, babies and fledglings in an active bird nest near you. Data is used to estimate breeding success rates and other things - run by scientists at Cornell Lab of Ornithology. <http://watch.birds.cornell.edu/nest/home/index>

**Alum Creek Interpretive Hikes.** Bastrop State Park. 2 pm Saturdays, April 30, May 7, and May 21. 2. 6 mile hike that includes great dogwood groves and lots of wildflowers. Contact Andy Butler at: [abutler@mac.com](mailto:abutler@mac.com).

**Earth Day Volunteers.** April 16, 2011. Volunteers needed to assist the McKinney Roughs staff in the festival activities. Details to come. If interested, contact Lynette Holtz at [lynette.holtz@lcra.org](mailto:lynette.holtz@lcra.org).

**Journey North** is requesting sightings of Monarch butterflies and milkweed! For more info, go to <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/index.html>

**Chimney Swift Sightings.** As in past years we will be plotting the swifts' movements northward over the next few months. Please contact the folks at the following site when you see the first ones! <http://www.concentric.net/>

## Ongoing Volunteer Activities

**Native Plant Garden - Kerr Community Center, Bastrop.** There is a small native garden which has a sign depicting the species planted there. Most of the plants have died or are in poor condition. Upon speaking to Linda Greene who lives across the street and is keeper of the keys, I learned that they would be

happy to have Master Naturalist volunteers come and plant some new natives there. Maybe a butterfly garden.? They have quite a bit of land in that neighborhood so we might be able to do more planting on the property. Please let me know if you are interested in pursuing this project. Carol Reidy [reidycarol@yahoo.com](mailto:reidycarol@yahoo.com)

**McKinney Roughs Nature Survey** - Kathy McAleese is coordinating a long-term project to survey trails through the burned-out areas of McKinney Roughs. Plans call for at least two surveys per month, one during the week and one on a weekend. Actual days and times will vary based on the weather and Kathy's schedule. Please contact her at (512) 718-1313 or [kmcaleese@austin.rr.com](mailto:kmcaleese@austin.rr.com) if you are interested in leading or participating in either weekday or weekend surveys, or both.

**Hornsby Bend - Ecological Literacy Days** - Last Saturday of every month, 9 am - 1 pm. Combining volunteer work with learning about local ecology, the Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend begins with several hours of outdoor work - ranging from trail maintenance to habitat restoration to work in the native plant nursery - and ends with at least an hour of learning about local ecology - birds, bugs and more! Wear boots and work clothing and bring your binoculars. For more information, contact Kevin Anderson at [coordinator@hornsbybend.org](mailto:coordinator@hornsbybend.org) or 512-972-1960.

**Hornsby Bend - Monthly Bird Survey** - Second Saturday of each month. Meet at the Center for Environmental Research at 7 am for the morning survey (coffee and donuts at 6:30 am) and 4 pm for the afternoon survey. All levels of birders are welcome - the survey is a great way to improve your skills since we form teams matching experienced and novice birders. For more information, contact Eric Carpenter at [ecarpe@gmail.com](mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com).

## Replacement Name Badges

If you need a new name badge, the order for the spring training class will be placed soon. Still not sure on the price... If you're interested, contact Paulette Boudreaux at [pboudreaux@eccwireless.net](mailto:pboudreaux@eccwireless.net)



# Advanced Training

**Gardening Workshop - Creating Sustainable Gardens and Landscapes.** April 16. 10:30 to noon. Lockhart State Park. Taught by Tommie Clayton, Certified Master Gardener. Registration not required. \$2 park entrance fee per adult. Contact [Liz.Larue@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:Liz.Larue@tpwd.state.tx.us) for more information.

**Texas Monarch Monitoring Training.** April 13, 14 and 15. Cibolo Nature Center, Boerne. Training will provide participants with the skills and knowledge they need to tag monarchs, monitor milkweed for monarch life stages and contribute to international monarch research. Cost is \$30 and pre-registration is required by calling (830) 249-4616. <http://www.cibolo.org/>.

**Chimney Swifts.** April 19, 7 pm. First National Bank, Bastrop. Part of the Bastrop County Audubon Society Chapter meeting. <http://www.bastropcountyaudubon.org/>

**Walk and Talk Nature Workshops.** McKinney Roughs. Earth Day, April 16. Each walk will last 1 hour, with at least a half hour of that being outside - so dress for the weather. Cost is free. For more information, go to: <http://www.lcra.org/parks/earthdayfestival/index.html>

10:30 am. **Nature Sketching: *Notes from the natural world*** by Margie Crisp. Please bring your favorite sketchbook and pencil/pen/colored pencils. Small sketchbooks (4" x 6") and mechanical pencils recommended. 11:30 am. **Remarkable Plants of Texas: *Uncommon accounts of our common natives*** by native plant expert Matt Warnock Turner.

1:30 p.m. **Wildflowers, Cacti and Grasses: *Nature through the lens.*** Bring your cameras and join Brian and Shirley Loflin for photography hints.

2:30 pm. **Backyard Reptiles: *Recognizing and respecting reptiles that share your space.*** Meet the author of *Venomous Snakes of Texas*, Andrew Price, for a quick introduction on how to be safe and aware in venomous snake country.

**East Texas Plant Materials Center Field Day and Luncheon.** May 24, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm. Nacogdoches, Texas at the SFA Experimental Forest. Events at the Field Day will include tours of the Plant Materials Center's evaluation and seed production fields and facilities, along with information sessions about plant and seed collecting, wildlife, and pollinators. Please register for the Field Day before May 10th by contacting Nancy Posvar at 254-742-9880 or [Nancy.Posvar@tx.usda.gov](mailto:Nancy.Posvar@tx.usda.gov)

**Nature Nights - Butterflies and Moths.** May 20, 6-9 pm. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Visit discovery tables to learn how butterflies and moths behave and what they eat, create your very own butterfly mask and enjoy walks and talks in the Center's Butterfly garden led by Staff Gardener Samantha Elkinton and volunteer experts on these winged insects. \$1 entrance fee. <http://wildflower.org/nature/>

**Bamberger Ranch Tours and Workshops - Public Tour - June 15 and September 17, 9 - 12:30.** This fills up fast, register now. additional information for all programs at the ranch can be found at <http://www.bambergerranch.org/tours/#tour>

**Overnight Birding Workshop.** May 13-14. Ranch biologist, Steven Fulton, will lead this overnight workshop on the birds of Selah. Night hike to find screech owls and other nocturnal critters. Lodging will be at the Center. Rise early on Saturday for a birding tour that will cover several important habitat types. Space is limited to 20 participants, so register early. Cost - \$150 per person. <http://www.bambergerranch.org/tours/#overnight>

**Water Workshop.** May 22. Visit lakes and dams and learn about their design and function, and how they were constructed. Identify soils, and learn their potential use in dam and pond construction, and also how to identify sites on your land that can hold water when ponds are properly constructed. Inexpensive projects, some that you can do yourself, to help you develop hidden water resources. Cost - \$100 per person. <http://www.bambergerranch.org/tours/#water>

**Wildlife for Lunch webinars** provide sound, science-based wildlife management options delivered by experts to you in the comfort of your own home or office. It's Easy! All you need is a modern computer with a quality Internet connection and a bag lunch. Just point your browser to <http://forestrywebinars.net>, click on the "Wildlife for Lunch" link in the "Upcoming Webinars" section, and follow the instructions.

Dates (all times are Noon to 1:00 pm Central Time)

April 21 - Aquatic Weed Control, Billy Higginbotham

May 19 - Dove Management, Dale Rollins

The other topics and dates are listed on the website listed above.



# Just For Fun

The next four items are all at a plant nursery in Austin - It's About Thyme Garden Center. <http://www.itsaboutthyme.com/>

**Success with Olive Trees... and how to make your own Olive Oil'** April 17, 2 pm by Jim Henry, of the Texas Olive Oil Council. **FREE!** <http://www.texasoliveoilcouncil.org/>

**'Ponds and Water Features: a Beginner's Guide,'** May 1, 2 pm. Pond guy Kurt Hudgeons will teach you all about pumps, filters, fish and plants. **FREE!**

**'How to Incorporate Edible Plants into your Landscape'** May 15, 2 pm. by master gardener Amanda Moon. Learn about fruit trees, pecans, dewberries, rabbiteye blueberries, fruiting peppers and bright lights chard... and lots more. **FREE!**

**'Rainwater Harvesting 101,'** May 22, 2 pm. Presented by Scott Stewart (Horizon Distributors). Easy techniques for collecting and storing rainwater. Learn how to save money on water bills, how to apply to the City of Austin for a rain barrel rebate, and learn how this fresh water will make your plants flourish like never before! **FREE!**

[www.horizononline.com](http://www.horizononline.com)

**Stargazing at the Roughs.** April 22, 9:30 - 11:00 pm. Fourth Friday of the month through August. Explore the galaxy together as our astronomer takes you on a tour of the Milky Way that's truly out of this world! Learn about the constellations and marvel at the beauty and mystery of the universe in this spectacular **free** program for the whole family. Program will be canceled in the event of inclement weather.

[http://www.lcra.org/parks/parks\\_calendar.html](http://www.lcra.org/parks/parks_calendar.html)

**Inside Austin Gardens Tour.** May 14, Austin. This will include gardens that feature rain-water collection systems, drip irrigation, xeric and native plant selections, rain gardens, shade gardens, and water-conserving practices. Each garden will feature educational sessions throughout the day. Cost is \$10 for the entire tour or \$5 for an individual garden.

<http://www.tcmastergardeners.org/what/gardentour.html>



## We Want You To Answer Your Phone

In the next month or so, several volunteers will be contacting all of the LPMN membership. We want to ask you a few questions about your interests in the group and will use it to form a membership database. Please be expecting our call (or email) and be prepared to give us a few answers! Don't worry - there won't be anything super private asked or any pop quizzes.... Just the basics so that we can make better decisions as a chapter as we move into the next phase of our group's activities. Thanks!

**National Public Gardens Day!** May 6, 2011. National Public Gardens Day is a national day of celebration to raise awareness of America's public gardens and their important role in promoting environmental stewardship and awareness, plant and water conservation, and education in communities nationwide. <http://nationalpublicgardensday.org/>



# President's Column

By Louise Ridlon

April promises to be a beautiful, busy month for the Lost Pines Master Naturalists. Spring is in full swing, and more and more folks will be participating in outdoor activities. The Bastrop State Park walks should be well attended. (If you didn't get out to the park in the last few weeks to see the Flowering Dogwoods, you missed a spectacular sight!)

Many festivals will be drawing people out. Our chapter has committed to having a booth at the Wildlife Extravaganza in Smithville on April 9, and the Earth Day Festival at McKinney Roughs on April 16. In addition, plans are in the works to offer a presentation at an upcoming New Landowner conference in Caldwell County, offering our services to conduct on-site bio-surveys for new landowners. Walt Elson will be forming an *ad hoc* committee to organize volunteers who would like to participate.

With the increased demand for volunteers, it behooves us to find a more organized way to recruit members for these different events. I have suggested to the Board and the Membership committee that we compile a Member Directory, to include not only contact information, but also fields of interest and skills of each member. So when we have a need for volunteers to conduct a bio-survey, present a specific program, or represent the chapter at an outreach event, we can con-

tact folks who have indicated those preferences for volunteer activities. Gene Moulden and the Membership Committee will be surveying members as to their interests to use in this directory, so please respond to them in a timely way when asked. Having this information in a data base will cut down the number of "cattle-call"-type requests for volunteers, and help meet our needs more efficiently. Thanks in advance!

The Board agreed that we should recruit additional members for the Volunteer Service Committee, and give them the responsibility of researching volunteer opportunities. Because there is an imbalance of opportunities in the two counties we serve, we intend to have separate member contacts to identify volunteer projects in Caldwell and Bastrop County. The committee members would also be responsible for recruiting volunteers for those projects. If you are willing to serve on this committee, please let me know, or be ready to sign up at the April meeting. Check the LPMN website for a list of committee responsibilities, found in the Chapter Handbook.

The Colorado River Refuge was a flurry of activity on the March 26 work day. Volunteers from many diverse agencies, including a good number of LPMN members, were hard at work grooming trails, clearing trees and brush, installing signs and benches, and removing trash. Several hikers stopped to chat and thank the group for making the trails available as well as maintaining them. There was a real convivial atmosphere as workers stopped by to partake of the hearty victuals provided. All those who contributed their time and effort are sincerely appreciated!

Our new Hospitality chair, Caroline Easley, has a fun idea for refreshments. At the April meeting, we will have a burger fry, with members providing the ingredients: patties, buns, cheese, and all the trimmings. Contact me ([flridlon@hotmail.com](mailto:flridlon@hotmail.com)) or Caroline ([easleys101@earthlink.net](mailto:easleys101@earthlink.net)) to contribute.

Our April 18 meeting, to be held at the Bastrop State Park Rectory, will be a joint class/chapter meeting. The speaker will be Flo Oxley, Director of Plant Conservation for the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center. Thanks to the Training Committee for introducing a number of new speakers for the training classes, who also provide Advanced Training for the rest of us. Our timekeeper, Marsha Elrod, will give us a refresher on reporting Advanced Training and Volunteer hours at the meeting, too.





## Lost Pines Master Naturalist Monthly Meeting Schedule

April 18, 2011. 6:30 -9:00 PM. Bastrop State Park Refectory. Flo Oxley, director of plant conservation at Lady Bird Wildflower Center, will give a talk. (Joint meeting with 2011 training class.)

May 16, 2011. 6:30 -9:00 PM. Red Rock Community Center. Pamela Owen will talk about mammals. (Joint meeting with 2011 training class.)

### Newsletter Deadline

Deadline for the next issue is **April. 27, 2010**. We welcome relevant contributions, photos, announcements, or other material relating to the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program, particularly those pertaining to our local area. Please send information to Jeannie Jessup: [magicgenie@gmail.com](mailto:magicgenie@gmail.com).

### STATE PROGRAM CONTACTS

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

State Coordinator: Michelle Haggerty, [mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu](mailto:mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu); (979) 458-2034.

The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

### SPONSOR CONTACTS

**Caldwell Co. Extension Office:** Jeff Watts; [Caldwell-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:Caldwell-tx@tamu.edu); (512) 398-3122.

**Bastrop Co. Extension Office:** Rachel Bauer, CEA-AG/NR; [Bastroptx@tamu.edu](mailto:Bastroptx@tamu.edu); (512) 581-7186.

**Bastrop/Caldwell Co. TPWD Wildlife Biologist:** Meredith Longoria, 804 Pecan, Bastrop, [Meredith.Longoria@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:Meredith.Longoria@tpwd.state.tx.us); (512) 332-7280.



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### Prickly Pear Moth Battle in Louisiana

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=134914916>

This is a great story quoting TAMU's Baron Rector on the USDA's battle to stop the moth attacking the prickly pear! Great information - especially about the economic importance of this crop.

Picture: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Opuntia\\_littoralis\\_var\\_vaseyi\\_4.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Opuntia_littoralis_var_vaseyi_4.jpg)

### NEW VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

A new committee is being formed with the goal of assisting new landowners in learning the bio-diversity of their property visiting the property and identifying the significant flora and fauna species found. We will also suggest species to help achieve their goals in water conservation, erosion control, wildlife benefits etc. We intend to start offering this service in the coming months. If you are interested please contact Walt Elson [walt.elson@gmail.com](mailto:walt.elson@gmail.com).