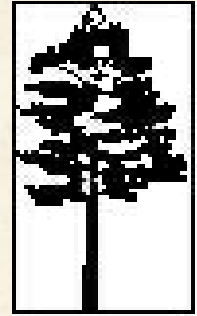


Lost Pines Master Naturalist



Volume II, Issue 3

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edited by Jeannie Jessup



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Invader! *Forestiera pubescens*

By LPMN member Liz Pullman

Finally some signs of spring are showing up in the LPMN counties! A few of the early blooming spring species such as Crow Poison, Missouri Violets, Anemones and Texas Redbud have emerged in scattered locations as well as the March targeted plant - *Forestiera pubescens* - commonly known as Spring Herald and Elbow Bush. The first mentioned common name stems from the early appearance of the flowers and leaves in late winter "heralding spring" while the second common name denotes the growth patterns of the branches and twigs which are angular thus reminding folks of "arms akimbo" - Elbow Bush. This shrub is common along the trails of McKinney Roughs although strangely, it has not been officially recorded in Caldwell County. It should be here, y'all, so start looking.

Blooming frequently starts in February and extends through mid-March but is somewhat late this year. Research on Elbow Bush flowering time uncovered several "Ifs, Ands and Buts". For instance, bloom time can be before, during or after the emergence of the leaves depending on which reference is consulted. Another interesting note is that the shrub is "usually" dioecious. One source noted that the branches can grow out very long and "vine-like". In any case, male and female flowers are easily identifiable although both forms are unspectacular in appearance lacking showy colorful flowers. Yet, an Elbow Bush in full bloom will grab your eye as you walk by. The nectar is valuable to early flying insects and the young leaves provide browse for other wildlife.

After blooming, Elbow Bush fades into the background and only becomes noticeable again as the clusters of 1-seeded drupes begin to turn a purple black. Being a member of the olive family (Oleaceae), the fruit resembles the Ligustrum privets in size, color and shape and is utilized by birds and other wildlife.

There are other *Forestieras* present in or near our area. These are Swamp Privet (*F. acuminata*) with longer smooth leaves and Upland Swamp Privet (*F. ligustrina*) which blooms in late summer. In the dry limestone hill country west of us is *Forestiera reticulata* with semi-evergreen leaves and summer flowers. Only Elbow Bush has pubescent (downy) leaves and the scientific name reflects this field mark. *Forestiera pubescens*.

Please note that the genus *Ligustrum* is a member of the olive family and all four of ours are invasive exotics. An interesting study in Good vs. Evil exists within the olive (Oleaceae) family in our area. The four species of *Ligustrum* were introduced, became aggressive and have earned the label "Invaders of Texas". Their relatives, the four native species of *Forestiera* are non-invasive - very well-behaved plants. The plant lesson for March: "Avoid introduced plants. Choose a native instead."

Dragonfly Trail Work Weekend Bastrop State Park

Wildflower Walks



There will be work weekend on Saturday and Sunday March 26th and 27th. Trails need to be cleared of brush and stumps, invasive plants need to be removed, and some erosion control work needs to be done. The proposed west loop of the Dragonfly Trail needs to be laid out and marked. While there's a lot of work that needs to be done, you'll have time for hiking, bird watching, and socializing.

We have some new power tools, and there will be a training session on tool safety. Camping is available on Saturday night - no water or electricity, but there is a toilet. Bring lunch, water, gloves, insect repellent, and wear sturdy shoes. Coffee and donuts will be available both mornings and some food will be provided for campers.

Meet at the Recreation Trails parking lot at 9:00 am. From Highway 71, take Tahitian Drive south until it dead ends at Riverside Drive. Turn right and drive past the golf course. Stay on Riverside past the golf course where it becomes a gravel road. Turn left into the large parking lot.

If you plan to camp, let Dale Morrison know so he can plan Saturday evening's food. You can also contact Dale if you have questions. His phone number is 512-629-3345.

Image by LPMN member Paulette Boudreaux

For the past few years, LPMN volunteers have led visitors to Bastrop State Park on interpretive walks in a part of the park normally closed to the public, the Alum Creek area. This section of the Park has a distinctly different feel than the original, central area of the Park, where we lead the 1 mile interpretive walks at 10 AM Saturdays.

The Alum Creek hikes are easy 2.6 mile walks through mixed forest and open meadows. In addition to a chance to see spring wildflowers (if the rains cooperate), deer and wild turkey are common in the area. Highlights along the trail include a large number of flowering dogwoods and the biggest loblolly pine known in Bastrop County. Hikes this spring are scheduled for Saturdays on March 12, 19 and

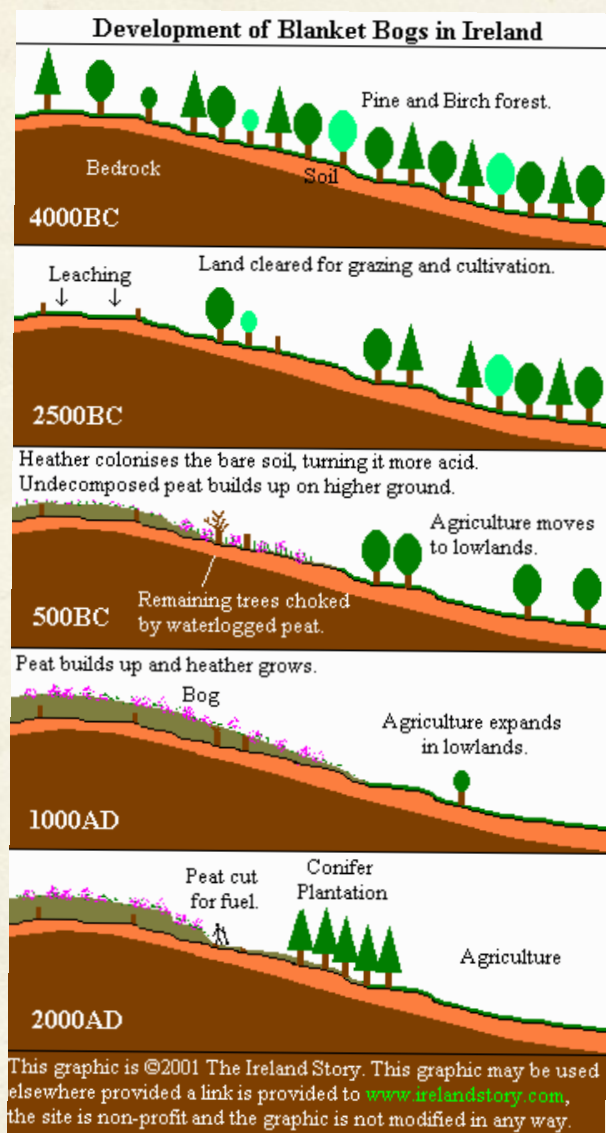


26; April 2, 9 and 30; and May 7 and 21. They begin at 2 PM and take 2-2.5 hr. If you'd like to come out and enjoy an afternoon walk in a seldom-visited corner of the park, bring water and good walking shoes. Meet your volunteer leader in the parking lot between the swimming pool and refectory. From there it is a short car pool to the trailhead. Volunteer hike leaders this spring are Caroline Easley, Gene Moulden, Louise Ridlon, Andy Butler and Sue Arcy.

Image by LPMN member Andy Butler.

Importance of Bogs

By LPMN member Lisa King



Through Ireland's "Irish Peat Bogs".

Bogs have been used for the past few centuries as a source of fuel in Europe. While many of the bogs in Europe are now gone, Ireland's bogs now have an increased importance to the scientific community, as well as the tourist industry.

Although most bogs appear similar, there are in fact two very distinct types. Blanket Bogs are expansive, generally formed in wet or upland areas. (Refer to **Figure 1**) Raised Bogs (**Figure 2**) are smaller, generally formed in lowland areas.

Blanket bogs are formed where the rainfall is high. This is typical of western and mountain regions of Ireland. Referring to **Figure 1**, you can see why they are called blanket bogs as

My mother-in-law, Bridget Grogan King was born and raised in County Mayo, Ireland. She had many stories to tell of her childhood including those about chores around the farm where she was raised.. When Jeannie asked for Irish submissions for the newsletter in honor of St. Patrick's Day, I had to tell you a bit about the bogs. It is one of those things I sort of knew but had never put into words and I must admit, I had to do a bit of research.

A lot of what I have written here came from *Travel*

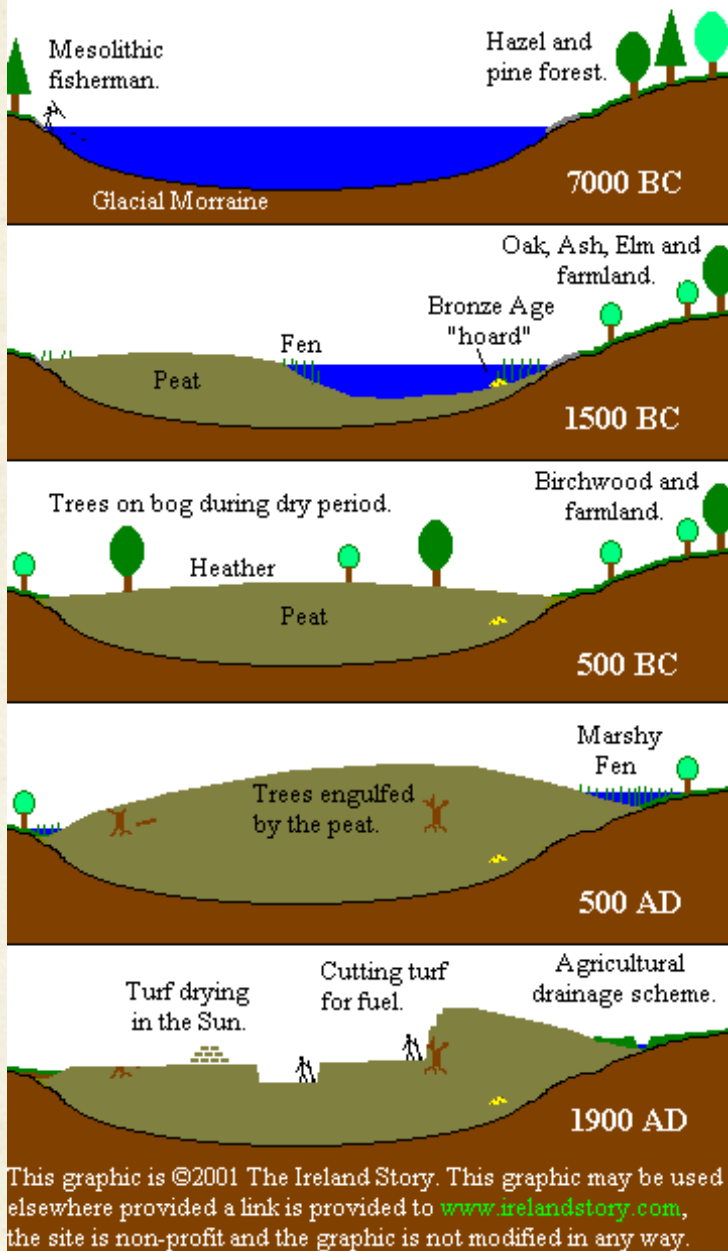
they appear to hug the topography like a blanket. With almost 1 million hectares (unit of area defined as 10,000 square meters) of Ireland covered by blanket bog, it is far more common than the smaller-scale raised bogs. The cutting of peat or 'turf' for fuel began in the 17th century and continued at an increasing rate until the mid 20th century. About 15% of blanket bog in the Irish Republic, and 50% in Northern Ireland, has been destroyed by cutting. Since the turf from blanket bogs is not the same quality as the turf from raised bogs, blanket bogs have escaped the destruction.

Irish Blanket bogs are also being drained to convert them into grassland for grazing or planting of conifer plantations. Ireland has the lowest percentage of forested land of any country in Europe, and the large scale development of conifer plantations has been an attempt at resolution. I think I need to plan another trip to Ireland as I have yet to visit one of the Conifer Plantations.

Private turf cutters continue to use blanket bogs although the blanket bogs are not used so much by industry as in the past. Thus these important sites will be preserved for future generations.

Starting in the 1700's, the raised bogs of Ireland were utilized as a cheap source of fuel. Most of this was cut by hand, and laid in the sun to dry before being burned. My mother-in-law talked of "footing-the-bog". The

Natural Development of Raised Bogs in Ireland



Grogan siblings would follow the men cutting the turf and use their toes to tilt the pieces of turf on end to allow them to dry. After World War 2, the government set up Bord na Móna (to cut peat by mechanical means and this simply accelerated the process. In 1969, there were just 100,000 hectares of raised-bog left in Ireland, of which Bord na Móna owned 45,000 hectares. Most of this will be exhausted by the middle of the coming century.

In recent years, there has been increased awareness of the importance of raised bogs.

Today in Northern Ireland, almost all raised bogs are being preserved as Areas of Special Scientific Interest. It has been noted that the removal of large areas of bog is leaving behind a new landscape for which some use will have to be found. Most of the cut-over areas are being carefully restored to blend in with the local environment.

During a trip to Ireland in 1982, we visited Ballyhaunis where the Grogan kids were raised. An old schoolmate of theirs was in the process of building a new house. The outside walls were being constructed of masonry blocks instead of wood studs. The house was to be heated with water heated using 'turf'. A return visit in April 1986 proved it worked well during one of those 26 blanket nights!

I have to share the next picture as we have such good memories of this trip. In 2006, we took a trip to Ireland with



Paulette and Henry Boudreaux. We visited all the famous tourist attractions and at one particular castle we found the ancient rooms were being heated by burning peat in the fireplaces. Outside the back we discovered a huge pile of 'turf'. Henry, keen on having a piece as a souvenir, grabbed a piece as we all quickly piled into the vehicle and sped away like common thieves. We had a good laugh, but the fact is, the Irish people are such lovely and welcoming folks, all you need do is ask for a piece of 'turf' and they will give you some☺

Sustainable Bamboo

By Minoo Sherkat LPMN member in training and Education Coordinator, Texas Bamboo Society

The United Nations has called Bamboo, the plant that will save this Planet and Chinese, call it a mystical plant.

Bamboo is a grass, but with a woody stalk; a group of woody perennial evergreen plants in the grass family Poaceae, sub family Bambusoideae with about 1200 members.

There are over 1250 species of bamboo growing from sea level to 13,500 feet, with varieties found on every continent but the frozen poles. Bamboo has become a hot "green" commodity used in everything from fiber to flooring to fabric. However, few understand its unmatched abilities to sequester CO2 to help fight climate change.

Growing habit: Two growing habits: running (R) , clumping (C). All have underground stems called rhizomes by which the plant colonizes - or spreads into an area. Clumpers stay in one place. Runners don't; they make a grove.

Running: Rhizomes can extend some distance, are jointed with nodes at which a culm or another rhizome can grow; some are invasive; if unrestrained, can lift sidewalks and driveways, enter a neighbor's yard unwanted, sometimes giving bamboos a bad reputation. Rhizomes stay near soil surface - top 12 inches - unless soil is very loose. Then they may go deeper. Constrain with concrete walls, plastic barriers, or keep in containers. Rhizome tips push their way to new territory. New culms can come up some distance from original stand -more than 10 ft. for larger varieties.

Clumping: Rhizomes are short. New shoots, called culms come up close to parent culm.



Identification: Classification of a bamboo species depends on observation and description of all its parts: rhizome, culm, culm sheath, branching habit, leaves, and finally flowers - and consequent seeds - which are most difficult to observe because most bamboos flower very infrequently - 20+ years. Further, mature plants can often look quite different from juvenile or just-out-of-the container nursery stock.

Bamboo is used as a living fence for privacy, noise control in residential areas as a decorative plant in landscaping, or as soil remediation, revitalizing dead soil and soil erosion control by conservationists.

The United Nations has introduced bamboo as a replacement for cutting valuable trees and deforestation in Africa and areas of India . Up to 25% of bamboo culms can be harvested each year and the roots will happily send new shoots up. Bamboo will live and produce up to 100-120 years. Thus the sustainable name . Taking what our environment has excess of, namely CO2 and Sunlight, and producing Organic Matter + Oxygen + Raw Material.

South America is in the forefront of Bamboo Architecture ,the research done by the Bali group is worth looking into www.bamboocentral.org is the site. For more information on locally grown bamboo, please go to: www.texasbamboosociety.org .

Image of rare flowering specimen from Florida from the Wikipedia site: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ArundinariaGiganteaMar03.jpg>

Volunteer Opportunities

New Volunteer Activities



Spring Beauty and the Bees. (Picture above.) 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/>.

Empty Bowl Project. 10 am – 3 pm, April 16, Smithville. Speakers are needed during the day to give 10 - 20 minute long presentations on topics such as native plant landscaping, organic soil amendment or similar natural resource topics. Shared booth space will be available for free during the day for all scheduled speakers. Please contact Jill Strube at jstrube@ci.smithville.tx.us or go to <http://smithvilleemptybowl.com/> for more details about the project.

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.

Alum Creek Interpretive Hikes. Bastrop State Park. 2 pm Saturdays, April 30, May 7, and May 21. 2.6 mile hike that in-

cludes great dogwood groves and lots of wildflowers. Contact Andy Butler at : 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.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Monarch_in_slay.jpg

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

Go Fish! June 11 and 18 and July 9 and 16. Bill Brooks is really needing volunteers in order to continue the great fishing program at Bastrop and Buescher State Parks. This is a free event for families with children ages 5 and older where they are taught how to fish. Experience not required. Contact Bill if you can help at Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu.

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/>



<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ChimneySwift23.jpg>

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

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 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 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.

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 for more information.

Native Texas Wildscapes. LCRA - McKinney Roughs. March 26, 9 - 12 pm. Save natural resources and money using water-wise landscaping plants suitable for the Central Texas climate. Learn how to select and place native plants for a water conserving landscape. Focus on plant choices right for your site, attracting wildlife, harvesting rain-water and use of dry creeks for slowing down water runoff and erosion. http://www.lcra.org/parks/parks_calendar.html

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/>.

Spring Weedfeed Class, April 1 to May 1, Austin. Sponsored by Useful Wild Plants. Scooter Cheatham & Lynn Marshall will teach this popular class. Space is limited. Minimum age is 18. \$425- per person. 512.928.4441 (ask for Lynn) or weedfeed01@gmail.com.

Native Edible and Medicinal Plants. LCRA McKinney Roughs. April 9, 9 - 12 pm. Edible wild plants are everywhere, abundant, local, free, and a sustainable source of variety in the diet. Learn about the many common, renewable, edible and medicinal wild plants growing in your neighborhood. There are thousands of species of edible and medicinal plants in the world, yet fewer than 20 species provide 90 percent of our food. There are hundreds of less well-known delicious and nutritious edible plants that live in our back yards and fields. FREE. Registration required. http://www.lcra.org/parks/parks_calendar.html

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

Texas Native Bees in Your Garden: Bring 'em On. March 28, 7 pm at the Zilcher Botanical Garden Center, Austin. Kim Bacon will introduce you to a variety of Texas Native Bees and how to encourage these mega-pollinators to visit your garden. Part of the Austin Butterfly Forum monthly chapter meeting. <http://www.austinbutterflies.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/earthday_festival/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.

"It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want - oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!"

-Mark Twain

Advanced Training

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 construct-

ed. 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)

March 24 – Waterfowl Management, Jim Cathey
April 21 – Aquatic Weed Control, Billy Higginbotham
May 19 – Dove Management, Dale Rollins
The other topics and dates are listed on the website listed to the left.

Update. These programs HAVE been approved for advanced training both from the state level and our local chapter. Go forth and webinar!

Wildflower Photo Contest!

March 15 - June 15.
Sponsored by Ladybird Johnson
Wildflower Center.

<http://www.wildflower.org/photocontest/>

Pine Tree Pollen - a Dusting of Yellow.

With all of the yellow pine pollen coating everything these days, it begs the question - are pine trees flowering plants? The answer is NO! Pine trees are gymnosperms and by definition evolved before flowering plants, or angiosperms, did. The key difference that separates the two is whether or not the ovule is "naked". The word gymnosperm comes from a Greek word meaning "naked seed" as their ovules, and later seeds, are exposed on the bracts of cones. Angiosperms have

ovules which are hidden away in the recesses of flowering parts, resulting in a need for stigmas and styles and other flowering organs. These parts are what make up the flower and have resulted in the co-evolution of pollination via insects and other animals and very often wind. Gymnosperms, lacking such an encumbrance, rely only on the wind and gravity for the pollen to find an ovule and thus result in seed creation. There are other basic difference between the two groups, but the basics are there in all of that yellow powdery glory.

Just For Fun

Join the fun Friday evenings this spring at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. [Nature Nights](#) are fun explorations of plants, animals, and the ecology of Central Texas. Each evening features interactive presentations, hikes with experts in their fields, and nature crafting for kids of all ages. Cost, \$1 per person. April 1: Wildflowers & Pollinators.

Zilker Botanical Garden Festival. March 26 and 27. \$7 entrance fee.
<http://tinyurl.com/4kegwmc>

Stargazing at the Roughs. March 25 and 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

Milam County Nature Festival. April 9. Lots of topics including the festival mascot, the Horned Lizard, bees, native grasses and snakes by our very own Bill Brooks! For more info, check out the website at:
<http://txmn.org/elcamino/naturefest/>

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>

Tidbits

Welcome! Longleaf Ridge Chapter of TMN has completed phase one (of three) for opening a new chapter! Serving the areas of Jasper and Newton counties, they plan to begin their first training class as early as April 2011, pending approval of their Phase II application.

Bug Guide - a wikipedia type guide on the internet with over 23% of the spider and insect species represented! Everyone from university experts to bug geeks are contributing, making this a great place to check out your favorite critter.
<http://bugguide.net>

TMN has a podcast! Check out the February and March editions at the TMN website via itunes at:
<http://txmn.org/podcast-2/>

LPMN is Hospitable again! Thanks to Carolyn Easley for filling that position! If you have any need of hospitality, she's the lady to go to. :)



Native Plant Sale

April 8 - 9. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. At the Wildflower Center's Spring Plant Sale and Gardening Festival you can choose from over 300 species of Texas native plants. The event also features artists and authors signing their works in the store, guided walks and talks and tips for your garden from experts. Admission is \$8 for non-members.
<http://wildflower.org/plantsale/>

Fly Fly Butterfly by Diego H. Pedreros V. A book about the mystical Monarch Butterfly! A big portion of the sale of the book may be designated to go to Monarch Watch. For the book, go to:
<http://www.forlymonarch.com>.
For more information about the Monarch Watch program, go to:
<http://monarchwatch.org/blog/>.

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

I'm writing this the day after we returned home from a trip to California to celebrate my mother's 90th birthday. I had two or three false starts trying to write a column about Texas while in another state—it doesn't work! We returned to find the landscape, so winter-worn when we left, beginning to wake up. Henbit and crow poison adorn the yard with blossoms. A row of daffodils I'd forgotten I planted greeted me with yellow blooms. A quick survey found the winter birds—yellow-bellied sapsucker, American goldfinch, yellow-rumped warblers, pine siskins, chipping sparrows, and the lone rufous hummingbird-- were still around. But where I had been in a winter-induced lethargy ("It's too cold": "I'll just sit and enjoy the sun"), now I felt an energy to get out and work. On our first day home Frank and I filled feeders, raked out flowerbeds, cleaned the pond, cut out dead shrubs, anything to get us outside. The reward was not only a cleaner yard, but hearing a flock of sandhill cranes noisily heading north. I'm sure we haven't seen the last of the cold weather, but the natural world around us has wakened and led us into a new season. Hopefully the energy that comes with spring will translate into action with many of our volunteers.

In anticipation of that renewed energy, the Pines and

Prairies Land Trust is sponsoring a Spring Cleanup weekend at the Colorado River Refuge and Recreation Trails. Trailmaster Dale Morrison has compiled a list of projects that require more than two or three hours. The plan is for volunteers to attend a training session on tool safety on Saturday morning, spend the day working on projects, then enjoy the camaraderie around a campfire that evening. Some food will be provided. Bring tents, camping trailers, vans, or whatever, and spend the night camping along the Colorado with members of our chapter and other volunteers. Tools will be provided; just bring your work gloves, insect repellent, lunch, and water, and your initiative.

I'm sure you've all noticed the news about state and federal budget cuts. Unfortunately, one of the proposed cuts is to the State Wildlife Grants programs. This would directly impact the Texas Master Naturalist program. As a private citizen, you are encouraged to voice your concern to your senators. Remember, though, not to speak in the name of the Texas Master Naturalist program. This is contrary to the state program's bylaws, and could result in dismissal from the program. To receive updates on matters involving the TMN, sign up for the TMN listserve: send an email to listserv@tamu.edu with the message "Subscribe tmn". You won't usually receive more than two or three emails a week, and it helps you keep up on the activities of the state organization.

Our newest trainees have already been involved in volunteer activities. Dale reports new helpers with the Dragonfly Trail bridge-building projects. A number participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count in February. Others ensure that snacks and refreshments are available at training sessions. Once again, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and eagerness of the trainees. It's been enjoyable to revisit the curriculum while attending the training classes. A few years' experience provides a different perspective from which to view the presentations. I hope many veteran members will attend a training class or two.

The speaker for our March 21 chapter meeting, Paul Yura, received rave reviews from last year's class for his presentation on weather and climate. We'll meet at 6:30 at the Lockhart State Park Recreation Hall. This is a joint chapter/training meeting. We'll see whether March is showing its lion or lamb character by then!



Lost Pines Master Naturalist Monthly Meeting Schedule

Mar. 21, 2011. 6:30 PM. Lockhart State Park Recreation Hall. Paul Yura will speak about weather and climate (joint meeting with 2011 training class).

April 18, 2011. 6:30 PM. Bastrop State Park Refectory. Flo Oxley, director of plant conservation, will give a talk. (Joint meeting with 2011 training class.)

Newsletter Deadline

Deadline for the next issue is **March. 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.

STATE PROGRAM CONTACTS

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

State Coordinator: Michelle Haggerty, 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

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Cedar Creek Park Butterfly Discovery Garden

LPNM volunteers were involved in planting this new garden on March 5! Pictured above is Anna Stalcup digging a hole for honeysuckle (the native type we hope!) - eventually there will be a trellis for the vines, too. Also involved in the fun were Tammy Vickery and Louise Ridlon. An additional planting date was on March 12 that included more of our volunteer family... we're still awaiting pictures from that event.

The Butterfly Discovery Garden is currently being built in the center of the circle drive around the senior domino pavilion. The plan is for a smooth, wheelchair accessible walking trail. For more information on the garden, go to:

<http://cedarcreekpark.org/thegarden.htm>