

# LOST PINES CHAPTER

Texas Master Naturalist



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## Tall Grass Prairie and the Future of Man by Larry Gfeller

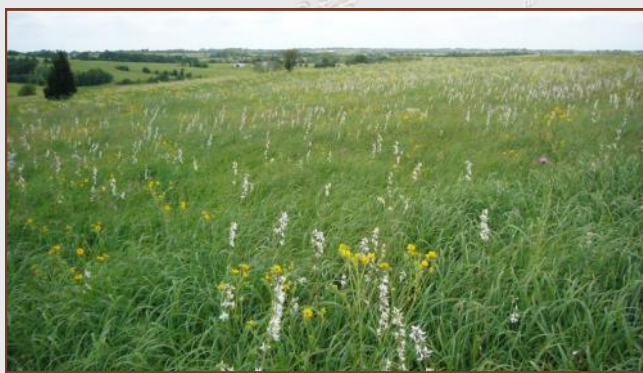
It was one of the most unique features of the New World, found nowhere else on earth. Less than 150 years ago it was a vast, seemingly endless ocean of green grasses, born from the sun, fed by natural rainfall, enriched by the soil and spread by the wind – our great North American tallgrass prairie. It stretched from Mexico to Canada, right through the heart of our continent. In the fall and winter, as it took on a blond and coppery cast, the great savannah made way for cool season grasses. This boundless resource nourished all life, be it animals that grazed it or lived within its protection, or those who depended on these animals for survival. It gave us pure clean water, clear blue skies and fertile organic soils.

Today, it's all but vanished. Gone. Within the last five or six generations 99% of the prairie has been lost to farming, urbanization and fragmentation of the land. Texas, the largest state within the great prairie, now leads the country in the number of acres lost. By the turn of the century, most of Texas was under cultivation for cotton. This proved to be a catastrophic disruption of the prairie – turned under by plows and the soil aerated, the process of losing organic matter was accelerated. It made the cotton grow better, though, moving the nutrients up top. Once these cash crops were harvested and the profits salted away, the soil continued to be worked and to be depleted of natural nutrients. Now we depend on chemical fertilizers to do the job.

Grass plays a much different role in our lives today. If we notice or care about it at all, it's usually as a fashion statement. Our roles have reversed, too. Instead of supporting us and our livelihood, most lawn grasses today depend on us for their survival. Without our water, our fertilizer, our pesticides and our tender loving care, many grasses in Texas would die in a season or two, because many species coveted for their beauty don't grow here naturally.

Some alien species actually invade our state. They not only survive in Texas, they thrive here. Bermudagrass, which originated in the Middle East, creeps along the ground and roots wherever a node touches the ground, resulting in a dense invasive mat that destroys other habitat and is very difficult to kill. Grasses from Europe—cheatgrass, cordgrass, King Ranch bluestem, for example—have displaced native grasses, reduced wildlife diversity and, in some cases, hosted insect pests we never had before. King Ranch bluestem was intentionally imported for its superior forage value, grazing quality and rapid growth. It eventually escaped the King Ranch in South Texas and now covers over half of the state.

We don't want the chemical life support many of these foreign grasses require to get in our drinking water—so pure water no longer means natural; to make water pure these days requires "treatment." The extensive root system of prairie grasses—especially in watershed areas that fill our aquifers, also serve to cleanse our water supply, straining out many of the impurities naturally. The deep



Native Texas tallgrass prairie

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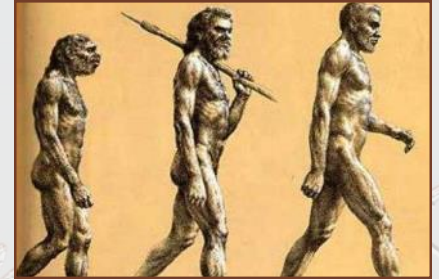


## Prairie, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

and substantial root system of our prairie bunch grasses (little bluestem, big bluestem, green sprangletop, Eastern gamagrass and others) not only meant the grasses could withstand the long dry periods known to this region but it also firmly held the topsoil against the ravages of wind and water erosion, while providing a natural form of soil aeration. Wildlife that used to depend on our tallgrass prairies are now also being squeezed. Quail, prairie chicken (Attwater's greater prairie chicken), certain birds that feed on seedheads, amphibians (Houston toad) and some reptiles (Texas horned lizard) are threatened or endangered today. These grasses serve as the larval host plants for a number of butterflies; without them in sufficient quantity, those butterfly populations are stressed. Less than 1% of our tallgrass prairie remains today; it is the most endangered piece of large ecosystem in North America.

Perhaps this is nothing more than evolution at work, for we no longer "need" the prairie. As for the threatened animal species, it could be the same. We no longer have dinosaurs—once the most dominant life force on the planet—and numerous other species have become extinct as the world changed. Some have had very close calls, only to be pulled back at the last instant (bald eagles, American bison, whooping cranes). Given our relatively short human lifespan in ecological terms, are we simply witnessing the slow moving wheels of evolution? Will our descendants adapt to global change in ways we can't imagine? Could they, say, sustain themselves breathing only carbon dioxide, or evolve to live without water at all? Or instead, could we be on some cruel and ironic evolutionary trajectory, destined to be overtaken as a dominant species by the very apes we are descended from?



Some believe in the "balance of nature," that is, that our biosphere automatically maintains itself through delicate adjustments to natural and manmade disturbances. This theory proposes that ecological systems are usually in a stable equilibrium (homeostasis), which is to say that a small change in some particular parameter (the size of a certain population, for example) will be corrected by some negative feedback that will bring the parameter back to its original "point of balance" with the rest of the system. Overpopulation of one species (man?), may for example, push the ecological envelope in one direction, only to be offset eventually by unexpected forces created in another (disease, famine, lack of water, climate change, etc.). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Aldo Leopold, pioneer in the development of modern environmental ethics and the movement for wilderness conservation, suggested a "living Earth" in his biocentric or holistic ethics regarding land.

But there are other ideas. The *Gaia Hypothesis* was posited by the chemist James Lovelock in the 1970's. It states that organisms co-evolve with their environment and that environment in turn influences organisms through the Darwinian process. It further suggests that certain aspects of organisms influence the environment (temperature and atmosphere). It states that the evolution of life and its environment may affect each other. As each species pursues its own self-interest, for example, their combined interactions may have counterbalancing effects on environmental change. In some forms of Gaia philosophy, all lifeforms are considered part of one single living planetary being called *Gaia*. In this view, the atmosphere, the seas and the terrestrial crust would be results of interventions carried out by Gaia through the co-evolving diversity of living organisms. Try printing that in a Texas high school textbook!

Wider research has proven the original *Gaia Hypothesis* wrong, in the sense that it is not life alone but the whole Earth system that does the regulating. Still, there's an even bigger problem: the Earth as a unit does not match the generally accepted biological criteria for life itself—there is no evidence that the Earth reproduces.

The literature is complicated and vast, but, in general, the consensus seems to be that the "balance of nature" has also, as a theory, been discredited by scientists. Newer research seems to support the idea that it is indeed possible for small changes to irreversibly alter our future. You've no doubt heard of the "Butterfly Effect"—the gentle flapping of a butterfly's wings on one end of the globe can change the course and direction of a hurricane on another. It's a metaphorical example, of course, but it provides the basis of modern "chaos theory." Chaos theory is a field of study in mathematics with applications in several disciplines. It studies the behavior of dynamic systems that are highly sensitive to initial conditions. As you might expect, there are flaws with this view, too. Chaos theory concerns itself with deterministic systems whose behavior, in principle, can be predicted. When meaningful predictions cannot be made, the system appears to be random. Damn. So with all of that, here we are again; stranded on another cross-bar of sand!

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# Meet Roxanne Hernandez

## by Larry Gfeller

It was a splendid day, with mild but abundant sunshine and that invigorating, minty-clean air you get only in northern mountains. Under a bleached dome of sky, huge and empty, the mountains were brushed with a bluish haze, the color of cigarette smoke. A 4x4 lurched around the corner sporting a Colorado State Parks insignia. Inside the patrol vehicle there was an uncomfortable silence—a female law enforcement officer behind the wheel with her prisoner slumped in the opposite seat like a sack of rice, strapped in and secured. As they bumped over the road on their way to jail, a bobcat bounded down from a cliff and vanished into a drainage. “Wow, did you see that!” she cried. The prisoner merely grunted. “Well . . .” Roxanne deadpanned, “I guess it’s more exciting if you’re not in handcuffs.”



Ranger Rox

If this doesn’t jibe with your impression of Roxanne Hernandez, then hang on; this should be an interesting ride. This petite, tightly-wrapped, Type-A pixie is equally comfortable “mushing” sled dogs across Nordic glaciers, setting fire to her own homestead for the sake of a renewed environment, or gazing into a nighttime sky thickly seeded with stars to speak to loved ones who’ve passed. Chances are good that if it’s wild, she likes it. With her grandmother hailing from the mountains of Prussia, is it any wonder that Roxanne loves the mountains of Colorado—the most memorable place she’s ever lived? She spent seventeen years there, working in the Colorado State Parks system, picking up a Masters in earth resources (and PhD coursework in sociology) from Colorado State University, and serving as Manager of Planning and Development for the Jefferson County Open Space program.



Roxanne and Elvis dog sledding in Norway

It was in Colorado, as a ranger for Golden Gate Canyon State Park, where Roxanne met a Cornell-educated, globe-trotting electrical engineer (Elvis) working as a park volunteer—and she was the volunteer coordinator! Yep, they eventually married at Panorama Point, overlooking the Continental Divide under a bleached blue sky. They got six years in those magnificent Rockies together. In 2004 Elvis received a “relocate or lose your job” notice from his employer. Where to go? The music scene drew the couple to Austin, but their love of outdoors called them to a home on 53 acres near McDade instead. Elvis worked from home while Roxanne commuted to Austin. The place was named Ranch el Zunzun (Hummingbird Ranch) by Elvis’ Cuban father, in recognition of the heavy hummingbird population that lived there. Roxanne and Elvis have been married 16 years.



Elvis and Roxanne Hernandez

In Texas Roxanne did a short stint at Texas Parks and Wildlife, but many of us met her as the Bastrop County administrator for the Lost Pines Habitat Conservation Plan, which ultimately sucked her into becoming the leader of the Lost Pines Recovery Team after the Bastrop County Complex fires of 2011. The former Colorado park ranger was suddenly thrust into the

(Continued on page 4)



# Roxanne, cont.

(Continued from page 3)

seventh semi-circle of hell. At the time of the fire, Roxanne received an excited call from Dr. Mike Forstner, asking, “Where’s the fire?”

“What fire?” she replied.

“What do you mean, what fire!”

“Mike, I’m in New York City . . . I have no idea what the hell you’re talking about!” Roxanne spent the rest of the night calling friends and colleagues, arranging evacuation of her animals and scouring the Internet for updates. She flew home the next day and in less than a week was up to her keister in managing all aspects of the environmental component of the disaster. Her service earned her the coveted Texas Lone Star Land Steward Award, a statewide honor for those who make significant contributions to revitalizing the land—it was the first time ever (or since) that a governmental employee was recognized in this way. Today, Roxanne serves as a Senior Regulatory Case Manager for LCRA, where she executes broad and complex responsibilities managing electric transmission line regulatory cases for the sprawling agency. Not bad for an independent-minded Midwestern girl who’s first job was punching a cash register at Wendy’s.

While working for Bastrop County, Roxanne joined our chapter with a thirst to learn more about the county she served. She graduated in 2010 and has accumulated over 500 volunteer hours. Today, she publishes our chapter newsletter and manages our blog and website. Roxanne is also an officer in both the Alum Creek and Bastrop-Caldwell County Wildlife Management Associations (for whom she wrote the applications for 501(c)(3) status) and is on the board of the South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Association. She also founded the Friends of Bastrop County Animal Shelter, another tax-exempt organization, run now by a talented and committed group of volunteers. “I am very, very proud of the work that they’ve done,” she says. “My affinity is to identify a need, jump in to address it, and then step back and allow others to carry it on.”

Roxanne was born in Highland, Indiana (almost a suburb of Chicago) and she earned her BA in sociology from Indiana University. She was the youngest of four children born to Stan and Marge Martin. Her dad, a former gunner from WWII, was an electrician who built and fixed sailboats in his spare time. He held that “If man made it, I can fix it.” Apparently, little Roxanne was listening. As soon as she could handle the tools, she was changing the oil and filters in the family cars. Dad also taught her to shoot a bow and, as the resident “tough guy,” to suck it up and push through the pain of minor wounds to finish the task at hand—a stubbornness she most assuredly inherited. Let’s just say the boys on the block didn’t mess with Roxanne! Amidst the clamor of being a combo mother/cub scout leader, Roxanne’s mother nursed a love for artistic expression. Today her mom is a talented artist, painting in watercolor and pastels. The woman has a high need for achievement, evident not just by birthing and raising four children, but also by rising (without a degree) to the head of human resources for a large Midwest firm—you see, mom started out in the secretarial pool! From her mother, Roxanne gets that signature drive and a natural eye for art.



The Martin clan

To envision beauty is one thing; to bring it to life is another. Roxanne’s an accomplished potter, complete with her own wheel and kiln. Having struggled to grow a natural barrier around exposed pool equipment at

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# Brooks on Books

## A Catalogue of Texas Guides

by Bill Brooks

I'd like to know who gave the people of Bastrop 3,000 free copies of Randy Fritz's book, "Hail of Fire," which were distributed by the Bastrop, Smithville, and Elgin Libraries. What a gift to the people who survived the most destructive fire in Texas history. I hope you got a copy and read it. If you didn't, buy a copy. Even if you are new to the area, this is a book well worth your time.

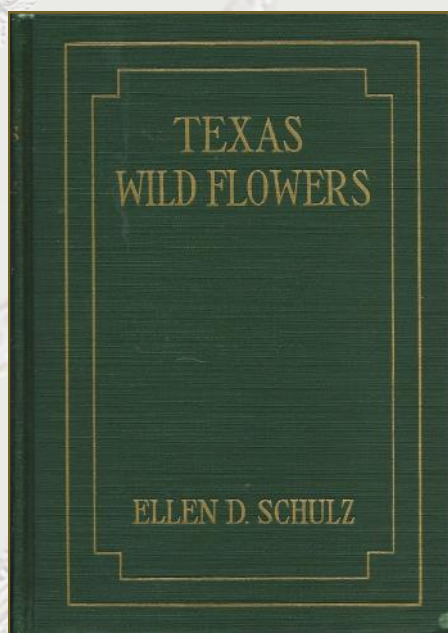
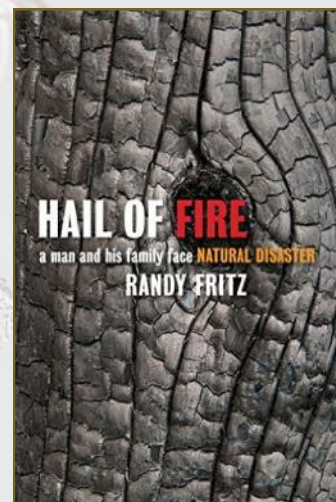
This book isn't all about rainbows and lollipops. It's also not even about the heroic efforts of the first responders who fought this fire. It is all about one man's struggle dealing with losing his home and the surrounding Lost Pines, which he dearly loved.

In the 2011 fire, I was one of the lucky ones. My land burned but an amazing neighbor saved my home. I went through much of the trauma (although to a lesser degree) that Randy did. You don't read this book just to rehash old wounds. It can be saved and used as a guide for surviving future disasters.

As with any good literature, we all take away different things from this book. One thing that was interesting to me was reading that Randy Fritz was the Bastrop County Judge who helped design and institute the revolutionary ideas behind the Houston Toad Habitat Conservation Plan.

On pages 39 & 40 Randy describes a trip to a Houston toad pond with a Texas Parks and Wildlife herpetologist. While I was getting my book signed at the Smithville library I asked Randy who took him on this hike. As I suspected, it was Dr. Andrew Price, who did Houston toad surveys long before Dr. Michael Forstner started his Houston toad studies.

Andy Price was a dear friend who passed away in January 2012 after a long battle with cancer. Before he passed he wrote (among other things) the "Venomous Snakes of Texas." This book was the evolution of the often revised and republished TPWD's Bulletin #3, "Poisonous Snakes of Texas," originally written by John E. Werler in 1950, Curator of Reptiles at the San Antonio Zoological Society and later the Director of the Houston Zoological Gardens. I have five different editions of Bulletin #31 in my library and I believe there are several more.



Andy's 2009 book, which finally corrected the term "poisonous snakes" to "venomous snakes," is part of a delightful series of "Texas Natural History Guides"™ published by the University of Texas Press.

This series of natural history guides now includes eleven titles. They cover everything from Texas reptiles, amphibians, water, dragonflies, damselflies, birds, and native plants. The book covers are designed in much the same way so they make a very attractive set and are a convenient 4.5" x 7", which is a great size for taking into the field.

The book "Texas Wildflowers" (2006) is a revision of the earlier classic Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller 1984 U.T. Press field guide. This is not to be confused with the treasure of a book called "Texas Wild Flowers" by Ellen D. Schulz, Director of the Witte Museum, published in 1928. The Schultz book is full of Native American uses for wildflowers. If you can find a copy it is a real asset to anyone interested in the historic uses of Texas native flowers.

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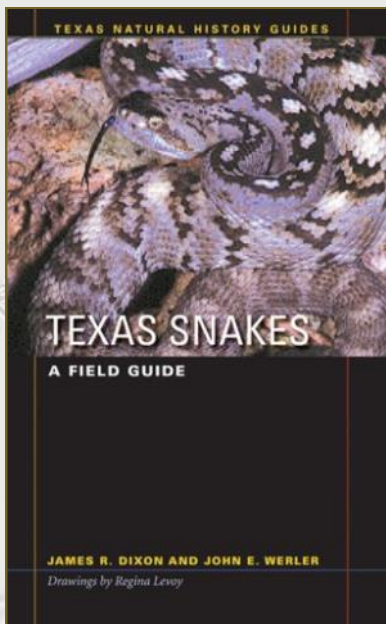
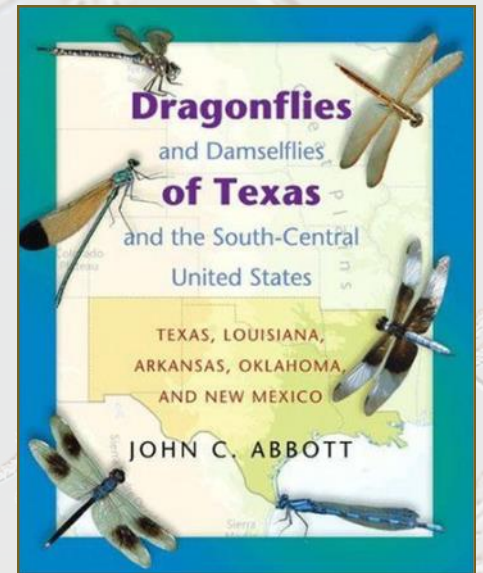
# Brooks, cont.

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The 2008 book “Water In Texas” is a good overview of Texas waters by Andrew Sansom, who is now Director of the River Systems Institute, a part of Texas State University in San Marcos (located at the old Aquarena Springs) and a past executive director of TPWD and Texas Nature Conservancy. If you ever get a chance to hear this man speak, don’t pass it up.

The guides titled “Dragonflies of Texas” (2015) and “Damselflies of Texas” (2011) are written by Austin’s own John C. Abbott. Abbott was the Curator of the Brackenridge Field Laboratory Insect Collection and a Research Associate at the Texas Memorial Museum (now the Texas Natural History Museum). He is currently director of the Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve in Austin. These two natural history guides split his original “Dragonflies and Damselflies of Texas” published in 2005. They are less technical versions and without the dichotomous keys in his original work.

The reptile and amphibian editions of the Texas Natural History Guides continued with the publication of “Texas Snakes” in 2000 by titans of Texas herpetology John Werler, Curator of Herpetology at the Houston Zoo who passed in 2004, and James Dixon, Professor of Herpetology at Texas A&M who we lost this year. (If you get a chance there is currently a lizard art exhibit from Dixon’s collection on the Texas A&M campus in College Station through Oct. 24, 2015.) This book is a smaller version of their 430-page classic “Texas Snakes, Identification, Distribution, and Natural History” published the same year but before the Natural History Guide.



A family of herpetologists, the Hibbits, and their friends picked up the mantle of authorship for the rest of the herpetology Natural History Guides. Father Terry and sons Troy and Toby Hibbits along with Bob L. Tipton and UT’s Texas Natural History Museum’s herpetologist Travis LaDuc put together “Texas Amphibians” in 2012. “Texas Lizards” was written by Troy and Toby Hibbits and published this year. “Texas Turtles and Crocodilians” by Troy and Toby Hibbits should be published around the end of this year. These four books are the latest and best guides in the field of Texas herps today.

“Basic Texas Birds” (2007) by Mark Lockwood does not attempt to include all the birds found in Texas, but it does a good job, including the most common species. There is one photograph per bird but, unfortunately, there aren’t any pictures of young or molting birds. Many of these guides are closely tied to TPWD. This guide is no exception – Mark Lockwood is a TPWD Conservation Biologist.

“Common Woody Plants and Cacti of South Texas” (2014) by Richard B. Taylor replaced the out of print TPWD publication, “A Field Guide to Common Texas Shrubs.” This new edition includes a simple identification

guide, historic and current plant uses, and a wildlife values and protein contents guide. This is a very valuable resource for Texas brush country ranchers and ecologists.

Any of these Texas Natural History Guides would make informative and useful additions to the bookshelf of any Texas Master Naturalist.

Read on and enjoy!



# What's Blooming?

by Liz Pullman

Incoming mail—Boing! Frequently my mailbox doubles as a flower container or, actually, images of flowers that are puzzles to their owners (sometimes to me as well) just beg to be identified. When the temperature has climbed into triple digits outside there is a definite advantage to identification by email. For instance, I recently opened a message from Jim Estes with an attachment showing a vine with **cordate** leaves and a greenish yellow **actinomorphic** flower (look 'em up). A close look at the seedpod eliminated a legume—it was grossly large and reminiscent of milkweeds but smooth. A trip through Asclepidaceae (now combined with and called *Apocynaceae* or Dogbane family) in “Shinners Flora of North Central Texas” yielded several vines, including a look-alike. Talayote (*Cynanchum racemosum unifarium*) matched well, and being armed with the scientific name, I typed it in for a search. Lots of images! Since the USDA Plants database is one of the top hits when searching and has range maps, a click took me there where I found Caldwell County was not



Talayote (*Cynanchum racemosum unifarium*)

highlighted so, new to the county! A botanical sojourn without a drop of sweat in spite of 101 degrees outside.



Meadow pink (*Sabatia campestre*)

My favorite plant ID requests are the ones identifiable at a glance. Kelly Alecci sent a Pigeonberry (*Rivina humulis*) showing blooms, leaves and berries and received an instant ID. The same was true for 5 or 6 people who sent images of the rose gentians (*Sabatia campestre*) that were so spectacular this spring. Having worked out the first ID regarding beautiful pink flowers, the next rose gentians were a piece of cake. The same has been true for multiple requests for Herbertia (*Herbertia lahue*), purple pleat-leaf (*Alophia*

*drummondii*), and scarlet pimpernel (*Lysimachia arvense*), all of which were abundant this year and so showy that even non-plant goobers noticed them and wanted a name.

Some very interesting pics have popped in from Dewberry Ranch (Sandra Schultz). The aquatic plants there are unusual and intriguing. My favorite is blue mud plantain (*Heteranthera limosa*), but also present are duck potato (*Sagittaria platyphylla*) and overcup oak (*Quercus lyrata*)—all of these dependent on the unusual abundance of water present on the property.



Blue mud plantain (*Heteranthera limosa*)

Another water comment. Recently Kathleen Gfeller and I were meandering around her yard searching for blooming flowers for the River Rally. We walked by her AC unit and I came to a screeching halt. Here was a mat of small shiny green leaves and little yellow flowers looking very out of place. As it turned out, she had a wetland

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## Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the next issue is October 23, 2015. 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. Submissions may be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling, and space requirements. Please send information to the editor at [Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com](mailto:Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com).



# Blooming, cont.

(Continued from page 7)

type plant which had found a home in the constant dampness of the condensation drip from the unit—Baby jump-up (*Mecardonia procumbens*). How did **that** end up in her dry and sandy yard?

Identifying by email is taking the cool way. Pics are always welcome.

## Latin 101.4 by Judy Turner

Of the ten plants Liz has listed, five contain the names of botanists most of us have never heard of. This may be because they never traveled to Texas—or even the US. But they still had plants that are native to our area (and elsewhere) named after them. The exception that all should recognize is *Alophia drummondii* (purple pleat-leaf) from the Iris family. *Alophia* or *allohpos* is defined as “without a crest.” Another Iris family member, *Herbertia lahue*, is named for William Herbert, a 19th century British bulb taxonomist. I could not find any definition for “lahue,” possibly another made up name. Other botanists or patrons of botany and their named plants are *Mecardonia procumbens*, named for Antonio de Meca y Cardona who was an 18th century Spanish patron of botany. *Procumbens* means “trailing, but not rooting.” It was in the Figwort family, but is now classified as being in the Plantain family. *Rivina humulis* is named for the 17th century professor of botany at Leipzig, August Quirinus Rivinus. *Humulis* refers to low growing or dwarf. This shrub that we call pigeonberry was in the Pokeweed family, but now has its own family of Petiver. Petiver, by the way, is James Petiver, who was an associate of the 17th century English naturalist John Ray. From Wikipedia: “John Ray was the first to give a biological definition of the term species.” The last botanist is Liberatus Sabbati from 18th century Italy. His plant *Sabatia campestre*, is “of the fields or open country,” which in our terms means pasture. It’s in the Gentian family. Another plant that is named after someone is the scarlet pimpernel, once called *Anagallis* (delighting) *arvensis* (of cultivated ground), is now *Lysimachia arvensis*. The name *Lysimachia* was for the Macedonian King of Thrace, whose name was King Lysimachus. The kingdom of Thrace was what is now parts of modern Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. I didn’t know one had to be an old world historian to understand plant names!



Pigeonweed (*Rivina humilis*)

The four remaining plants from above have the following translations:

*Cynanchum* (dog collar) *racemosum* (flowers in a type of elongated cluster) var. *unifarium* (identical or consistent)—Dogbane family

*Heteranthera* (variable flowered where one anther is different in shape from the others) *limosa* (marsh or mud)—Pickerel Weed family

*Quercus* (the classical name for the oak genus) *lyrata* (lyre-shaped leaves)—Beech family

*Sagittaria* (arrow-like leaves) *platyphylla* (broad-leaved)—Water Plantain family.

Can anyone imagine how long it took for modern botanists to come to any consensus for names of plants and their families? It sounds like a committee of committees and we all know what that means.

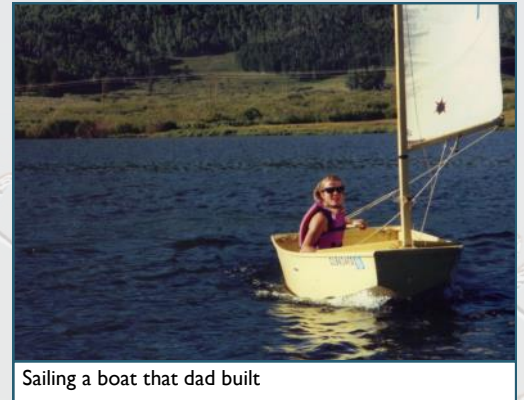


## Roxanne, cont.

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their Texas home, Roxanne designed and built a graceful adobe-style curved wall, complete with designer tiles and tasteful space for flowers—essentially without help in the middle of summer. When she and Elvis couldn't agree on new coffee and end tables, Roxanne built them—from scratch, with her own hands. She has continued woodworking and now sells to the public; it's her current passion. She craves power tools of all types (and carries the scars to prove it), drives a mean tractor, and delights at crashing through the woods in her ATV. Telling Roxanne something is impossible is like taunting a mountain lion with a sharp stick!

So how does this pugnacious, free-spirited sprite relax? On a couch, in front of the TV, “watching movies I've seen dozens of times.” Sound familiar? She also reads—mostly woodworking and cooking magazines—saving the juicy novels for when she can't sleep. The Hernandez's travel a lot, too; places like China, India, Costa Rica, France, England, Holland, Norway, Switzerland . . . well . . . they get around. But it's not like they need to travel for excitement. There's plenty of diversion at home—just search the LPMN blog under “Musings from the Back Porch.” Critters from rattlesnakes to bobcats frequent the Hummingbird Ranch and everyone gets in on the act. Charlie the dog (you won't find any cutesy pet names here) relishes fending off errant coyotes, digging for gophers or chasing crows away from the pecan trees. He's all dog. But a trio of felines (Chip—the grand daddy, Frankie-the portly & Ginga-the athlete) add elegance through a soothing snuggle, policing the kitchen floor of dropped food, or keeping the home free from all that crawls or flies. It takes a village, you know. Roxanne says, “Our family always had cats and dogs . . . the only time I've been without a pet in my life was my first year of college when I lived in a dorm.”



Sailing a boat that dad built

As I write this, I find it impossible not to think of the casual threads of accident on which we survive to face the next “if” that comes tomorrow. Roxanne says, “There is no ‘perfect day.’ Each is what it is. Sometimes that day brings joy, sometimes it brings sorrow, sometimes it's rather mundane.” For someone who credits her pursuit of happiness to “whatever moves me at the time,” mundane seems unlikely.

## Prairie, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

Would we be better off reversing the advancements of civilization, tearing down shopping malls, stripping away all foreign and exotic grasses, replanting the tallgrass prairies, quitting our jobs in the city and hunting buffalo again? Not likely. There is no doubt that man has advanced his knowledge, his understanding, his quality of life—even if aspects of our ecosystem have been degraded in the process. But it occurs to me that mankind may be the only species capable of unwittingly creating the conditions for its own extinction. It seems arrogant to believe our superior intelligence will somehow save us. If this is so, we'd better get cracking—because even if we learn to mutually coexist with our environment, we'll still need to find another place to live. Astrophysicists calculate that in a billion years (give or take) our sun will enter its death sequence. Would the last person standing please turn out the lights?





# A Message from Julia Akin, LPMN President

## LPMN 2015 Member of the Year

I hope this newsletter finds you all well. As I write this I'm watching a much needed rain shower here in Paige. Here's to more rain and cooler temperatures! I know, be careful what you wish for.

We're rolling out a new chapter award this year. The Member of the Year Award is given by other TMN chapters and our intention is to begin awarding the same annually. The purpose of the award is to recognize a member of our chapter who has contributed significantly to the chapter over the last year by participating in volunteer activities, fundraising, recruitment, serving on chapter committees, contributing to our newsletter and blog, and attending chapter meetings – basically, someone you consider to have gone “above and beyond.” If you have more than one nominee, all the better. Any active LPMN member is eligible to receive the award. I have the honor of presenting the award at our annual Holiday Party on Monday, December 7.



A full description of the award and the nominating process can be found on our website at <http://txmn.org/lostpines/members-area/forms-2/>. Also, attached for your convenience at the end of this newsletter is the two-page nomination form.

Audrey Ambrose's Membership Committee will act as the Awards Committee (referred to in the member of the year description). Please submit your nomination form(s) to Audrey via email at [kc1jc2@flash.net](mailto:kc1jc2@flash.net), or via USPS mail to 373 Porter Road, Bastrop, TX 78602.

**The deadline for nominations is October 1, 2015.**

Thank you in advance for your consideration in making this award meaningful. We have a tremendous opportunity here to recognize the people who are making a difference for our chapter. Let's take full advantage of it.

## Chapter Contacts

### OFFICERS

President, Julia Akin  
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Vice-President, Mike Barrett  
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Secretary, Joan Estes  
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Treasurer, Carroll Moore  
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### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Chapter History, Vacant



# Snippets

## FOFO SAVES LIZARD IN NEAR DROWNING INCIDENT

Contributed by Roxanne Hernandez

What would you do if you saw a spotted whiptail lizard jump into your pool, knowing that unattended it would surely drown? Well, if you're Fofu you fish the lizard from the pool and begin chest compressions. Yep, that's what she did. After several compressions water began to come from its mouth. Once its lungs were clear the little lizard was placed on a shaded, yet warm, rock. With a brief touch after several minutes of recuperation, the lizard ran like a shot. We hope it doesn't find its way back to the pool, just in case Fofu isn't on duty as lifeguard!



## LOBLOLLY PINE SEEDLINGS AVAILABLE FROM TFS

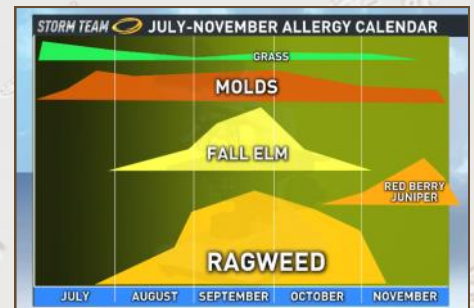
Contributed by Daniel Lewis

Arbogen nursery is growing loblolly pine seedlings for the Texas Forest Service (TFS) using a seed source originally collected from Bastrop loblolly pines. The TFS nursery in Magnolia used this seed for many years to produce a "drought hardy loblolly pine" that was sold for planting in challenging sites across the range of loblolly pine throughout the state. The seedlings will be sold for \$44/box of 333 seedlings, or 1000 seedlings for \$132. Seedlings will be delivered to Bastrop within the first few weeks of December. If you're interested in purchasing some seedlings, contact Daniel Lewis at 979-968-5555 or send him an email at [dlewis@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:dlewis@tfs.tamu.edu).

## FALL ALLERGY FORECAST

Contributed by Bill Brooks & Roxanne Hernandez

KVUE News recently aired the fall allergy forecast as presented by Albert Ramon, KVUE's Daybreak & Midday meteorologist. Ragweed is flourishing this year. A mechanical control is to shred in September, before the plants develop seed.



## TARANTULA HAWK WASP

Contributed by Bill Brooks

In the July edition of "Texas Parks and Wildlife" magazine there is an article on the shiny black 3" tarantula-hawk wasp. I got stung by one of those in my backyard last summer. About the sting the author wrote, "On the Schmidt sting pain index, tarantula-hawk wasps hold the infamous distinction of only 3 insects to obtain the highest possible rating of 4 or 'traumatically painful'." I didn't think it was that painful, but it did hurt like a scorpion sting . . . for 2 hours.



## HOUSE SPARROWS

Contributed by Bill Brooks

House Sparrows were released about 1851 into Central Park, Union Square Park, and Madison Square Park possibly to control canker worms infesting the trees (Lyacock 1966, Roots 1976). A good history of the House Sparrow in America compiled by E.A. Zimmerman can be found at: <http://www.sialis.org/hosphistory.htm>

(Continued on page 12)



# Snippets, cont.

(Continued from page 11)

## THINK AGAIN

Contributed by Bill Brooks

Found in the August 2015 “Texas Monthly” magazine, page 12:

“July 1: A texasmonthly.com post notes that Texas has not had an alligator-related fatality in 179 years.

July 2: A man shows up at Burkart’s Marina by Adams Bayou in Orange, ignores a woman’s warning of a dangerous alligator, yells, ‘F— that alligator,’ jumps in the water, and is promptly killed by the alligator.

July 3: Texasmonthly.com’s staff decides not to run an article noting that Austin has never been hit by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake.”

## TEXAS’S STATE FLOWER(S)

Contributed by Bill Brooks

In 1901 the Texas legislature made Bastrop County’s native Sandyland bluebonnet (*Lupinus subcarnosus*) the state flower of Texas. In 1971 the legislature made *all* species of bluebonnets the “official” state flowers, so Texas actually has five state flowers.

## Lost Pines Master Naturalist Monthly Business Meetings

The monthly business meeting, which occurs on the third Monday of each month, is an opportunity to hear first hand about volunteer and advanced training opportunities. The chapter’s project leaders update members on their work and recruit volunteers if needed. In addition, chapter administration issues are discussed: brief committee reports, financial decisions, and news from our state organizers. Stay tuned to [Meetup.com](http://Meetup.com) to learn more about upcoming meetings.

*One hour volunteer time is awarded for attendance at qualifying business meetings.*

## STATE PROGRAM CONTACTS

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

**State Coordinator:** Michelle Haggerty, 979-845-5777, [mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu)

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

## SPONSOR CONTACTS

**Caldwell County Extension Office:** Michael Haynes, 512-398-3122, [caldwell-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:caldwell-tx@tamu.edu)

**Bastrop County Extension Office:** Rachel Bauer, 512-581-7186, [bastrop-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:bastrop-tx@tamu.edu)

**Bastrop/Caldwell County TPWD Wildlife Biologist:** Robert Trudeau, 512-332-7280, [robert.trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:robert.trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov)





## **CHAPTER MEMBER OF THE YEAR NOMINATION FORM**

The Chapter Member of the Year award is given to any chapter member (non-chapter board member) who has been a member in good standing during the previous LPMN fiscal year. Chapter members cannot self-nominate for this award.

Nominee's Name:

- Title:
- Address:
- Phone:
- Chapter:
- LPMN Membership Years:

Nominator's Name:

- Title:
- Address:
- Phone:

Activities of Nominee:

1. Chapter Offices held:

2. Participation in Committee work:

3. Participation in Board work:

4. Participation in Chapter meetings, seminars or workshops:



5. Participation in Chapter programs:

6. Contributions in Chapter publications:

7. Participation in Chapter social projects:

8. Recruitment of new members:

9. Participation in Services to Chapter members:

10. Attendance at Chapter meetings: