

# OBSERVATIONS

from the Tierra Grande Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist

FIRST QUARTER 2015

## UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**March 11-14** is Keep Alpine Beautiful's (KAB) biannual electronics recycling event. KAB needs volunteers throughout the event (Wed-Fri 9am-6pm and Sat 9am-3pm)...any number of hours is appreciated! Duties will include helping unload e-waste (computers, printers, stereos, etc.) from people's cars and then stacking them on pallets. The ability to lift up to 40 pounds is a plus!

**April 11** is the Don't Mess With Texas Trash-Off. TGMN will be cleaning up our stretch of Highway 118 north of Alpine.

QUARTERLY CHAPTER MEETING AND PROGRAM  
SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 12PM -1PM  
ON THE MIMM'S RANCH IN MARFA  
Please see the calendar for more details.

<http://txmn.org/tierra/calendar>



## CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME TO THE CLASS OF 2014!



Members of the Class of 2014 at Mount Livermore. Front row, left to right: Gwynne Jamieson, Toni Arnold class of 2013, current VP, Rosemary Dennis, and Marcos Paredes; second row, l to r: Gary Morris, Kathryn Busby, Becky Morris, and Dale Truitt; third row, l to r: John Miller, transfer in from El Paso, David Kowal, Barbara Curry, and Jim Lidgley; top row, l to r: Roy Saffel and Dave Taylor.  
Photo by Gary Nored.

### TGMN Pin Awards – 2014



Class of 2014 Initial Certified Members

Kathryn Busby, Rosemary Dennis, Gwynne Jamieson, Gary Morris, Becky Morris

2014 Re-certification Earners

Class of 2005 - Steve Elfring, Dave Mainz, D.J. Sanders, Patt Sims

Class of 2006 – Laura Belkin, Albert Bork, Pam Gaddis, Petei Guth, George Pitlik, Sandra Watson McAfee

Class of 2007 – Edy Elfring, Gary Freeman, Fonda Ghiardi, Ellen Weinacht, Megan Wilde

Class of 2008 – Martha Latta, Chris Pipes, Pam Pipes

Class of 2009 – Bob Martin, Gary Nored, Carol Slocomb

Class of 2010 – Anne Adkins, Linda Duncan, Mary Malmgren, Robert Steele

Class of 2011 – Dave Hedges, Linda Hedges, Beth Nobles, Susan Penny

Class of 2012 – Richard Gatchell, Barbara Hoffman, Victoria Lowe, Sandy Lynch, Jim McDonald, Robert Schmitt, Peggy Spruell, Phil Spruell, Jan Campbell-Unger, Paul Unger

Class of 2013 – Toni Arnold, Tom Dungan, Becky Haynie, Kate Mahoney, Diane Trevino, Wells Weatherall

Class of 2014 – John Miller

Other 2014 Awards

250 Volunteer Hours – Ken Sims, Pam Gaddis, Carol Slocomb, Linda Duncan, Victoria Lowe, Toni Arnold, Wells Weatherall

500 Volunteer Hours – DJ Sanders, George Pitlik, Cathy Rhudy, Fonda Ghiardi, Linda Duncan, Mary Malmgren, Monte Riggs, Jan Campbell-Unger, Toni Arnold, Wells Weatherall, John Miller

1000 Volunteer Hours – Monte Riggs

2500 Volunteer Hours – Patt Sims

4000 Volunteer Hours – Paul Unger

**HOW OUR CHAPTER GOT ITS**

**5000 Volunteer Hours - Edy Elfring, Gary Nored**  
**Congratulations!**

## NAME

Story by Jennifer Baur.

I found what I had written down in 2011 about the start up of Tierra Grande in my old Outlook Express Emails. Here it is. At the time of this start up I (Jennifer Baur) was the Education Coordinator of CDRI. I agreed to do all the legwork if the advisory committee would meet up with me now and then and do what was required.

Here is how it happened. Billy Tarrant, Texas Parks & Wildlife, who at that time was working out of Fort Davis, kept stopping by CDRI and asking us to start up a chapter. I never seemed to be around when he would stop by and in the beginning I felt we had too much on our plate to attack that, and really I didn't know much about the program. Then Cathy Hoyt, CDRI Director at the time, and I attempted to set up a Docents training program of our own that revolved around a series of lectures that Dr. Hoyt developed and then we printed out the lectures into a binder. It was a whole lot of work especially on Dr. Hoyt's part and after one year we really weren't satisfied with the content – too narrow. Then in comes Billy Tarrant again and this time I met with him, and decided I would take a look into TMN. So I went to the new chapters coordinators training at the Bamberger ranch and they passed out this big fat binder with the curriculum guide (It would have taken us years to develop that and I am sure it took TPWD and the Ag Extension years.) and I was hooked. It was a no brainer at that point. Also, they had pre-written the bylaws and so each chapter did not have to reinvent the wheel on bylaws. So step one was to form the Coordinating committee – very important here because these are the folks that really started it all. They were myself (Jennifer Baur); Billy Tarrant; Linda Hedges, Texas Parks & Wildlife at the time, now retired; Dr. Louis Harveson, Sul Ross Borderlands Research Institute, and Patt Sims, retired Presidio Environmental Science HS Teacher. They are the parents of the Tierra Grande Chapter. Now they serve on the Chapter Advisory Board.

Yes there was a lot of work at first but the main thing that I think is important was the way the classes were set up. It is unique I think to our group. I wanted to reach out to the entire ecological region – the Trans Pecos region so to speak. First because it is just that – our very own ecological region – the Chihuahuan Desert region in Texas... So that is why I set up the structure of the four weekends each in a different elevation range to represent and educate about our eco region...to

experience that in the field. Also just as importantly was that we are such a large area how in the world was anyone going to stick to weekly nightly class for ten weeks when some would have to drive 100 miles just to get there. So I consolidated the course into intense field and lecture classes over just four weeks.

Michelle Haggerty TMN state coordinator was very helpful and always available. I really love the concept of TMN – it is all about partnering with experts in your area and that is what has happened. We do have such a strong arsenal of extremely knowledgeable people who are willing to give their time to the chapter...truly amazing.

## **TIERRA GRANDE MASTER NATURALIST CALENDAR**

<http://txmn.org/tierra/calendar>

Here you can find the full calendar of volunteer and advanced training opportunities. When you click on an event, you can see all of the specific details about the event. Thank you Linda!

## CHINATI NATURE WALK



On April 27, 2014 there was a nature walk on the Chinati grounds and a discussion of Donald Judd's outdoor works in concrete co-presented by Monte Riggs, Tierra Grande Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist program, and Jenny Moore, Chinati Foundation Executive Director. Participants were introduced to examples of native grasses and provided with field guides, notebooks, and other tools for exploring the grounds and artworks. Close to 75 people attended the event. (Photos by Anne Adkins)



David Kowal (wearing the baseball cap) is looking at a grass seed head with a lens. He was so inspired by this event that he applied for the TGMN class of 2014 and graduated. Susan Penny (wearing the light blue jacket) is on David's left.



TGMN President Albert Bork (wearing a baseball cap)



## **CHINATI NATURE WALK**

Monte Riggs (with his glasses on his head) is talking with Jenny Moore, Executive Director of the Chinati Foundation, and Jim Glendinning (in the print shirt).

Follow us on Facebook!  
[www.facebook.com/TMNTG](https://www.facebook.com/TMNTG)

**TGMN TRASH PICKUP**



On Sunday, January 18, Anne Adkins, Albert Bork, Linda Hedges, David Kowal and Polly Ann Melton did the dirty work picking up trash on Highway 118 north of Alpine. (Photos by David Kowal.)





**TGMN  
TRASH  
PICKUP**



## SAVE THE DATE

THE NEXT HIGHWAY CLEANUP  
WILL BE ON TEXAS TRASH-OFF DAY  
APRIL 11

(Please check the calendar for more details.)



**My Trip to Balmorhea, Pinto Canyon, BBRSP, and BBNP**  
Story and photos by James Lidgley.



Left Austin Thursday morning headed for Balmorhea, where I would spend the night at the Eleven Inn. The Eleven Inn is a funky old place where I'm quite comfortable staying. It's clean and comfortable, and I like the owners. Over this past summer I've taken Master Naturalist training in the Trans Pecos.

Balmorhea has been a great jumping off point. The state park is there, also, a lake. If you bike or walk the county roads on the south side of town there are great views of the Davis Mountains. The lake provides similar views with the addition of king fishers, heron, and osprey. I went to bed early knowing I had a long day ahead.

Friday morning I was up and out before the sunrise. The stretch between Balmorhea and Marfa is now familiar and I was ready for new sights. By 8:00-8:30am I was on FM2810, heading south. The early morning sun enhances the grasslands. I stopped often, took a few pictures and drove slow. The north end of this road passes through the Marfa grasslands then drops down into a volcanic canyon and ends in the lower desert. The drive reinforced much of the master naturalist training I had received. The road all the way through was in good condition, easily done in a 2wd truck. Had a blast! Once back on pavement at Hwy 170 I headed to Big Bend Ranch State Park.



After gassing and icing up in Presidio, I stopped at Ft. Leaton, but it was closed. The first thing I noticed after turning on to the road to BBRSP was the ocotillo. They all appeared to be very stout, shorter and with thicker canes than I had seen before. After taking a ridiculous number of ocotillo pictures, I found tons of dodder to take pictures of. Dodder is a parasitic plant that can take over large areas. Dodder was common in some parts of the drive into the park, then nonexistent. After assuring myself I had enough dodder pictures, it was time to roll. Having been told about an archeological site, I was on high alert. This site is one that the park made accessible and has a small sign. Gary Nored has included this site in a new guide, so there is no secret about this spot. It's called Las Cuevas. It's easy to find, just look for the overhang.



I had just pulled over at the overhang and started to look around when John pulled over. John is a fellow Master Naturalist from El Paso who is an excellent archeological interpreter. After showing him the mortise holes I had found, he enhanced the experience by sharing his knowledge. We found much evidence of long usage, and rock art. Cool! Too soon it was time to finish this drive and get to BBRSP headquarters where I would spend the next two nights with the Master Naturalists.



Friday night Ranger Blane and Ranger Tim both gave excellent presentations that prepared us for the next couple of days' programs.

Saturday morning we piled into two state suburbans and went toward El Solitario. Along the way we discussed the flora and fauna, and Blane would periodically point out the geologic sites and their implications for human occupation. We did a short hike into the Left Hand Shut Up. There is some very bizarre geology in this area. Once in El Solitario we stopped at a spot where we found button cactus and living rock, both in bloom! At the same spot, while standing on volcanic rock, John found a limestone fossil, a fossilized heart urchin. How many places can you do that? All in all, a great day.





Sunday morning Tim took us on an archeological hike where we passed through an area with lots of flakes and fire impacted rock. All the while Tim and Blane are answering questions and filling in the story. Tim led us to a rock shelter, complete with rock art. I've been to the Chimneys and other well known rock art sites in the national park, and the art Tim showed us is the most vibrant I've seen. So there we are at the shelter when Tim said, "take a break here and wander around, see what you can find". We went in twelve directions. I went part way up a little hill. Just slightly on the backside of the hill I found a population of *Echeveria Strictaflora*, many in bloom. Now I've seen this plant before in the national park, but never so many, one really nice specimen completely exposed. Most of them were growing under shrubs. I knew that they were there because I saw the long narrow bloom spike with coral tubular flowers sticking out of a bush.

I called Blane up and he confirmed my identification and said that I had found a previously unrecorded population. Well I was so pumped I didn't take any pictures! After the archeological hike we went to Cinco Tinajas. I've wanted to do this hike for years. Cross that one off the bucket list! I got right next to the water, something about surface water in the desert. I could have spent a lot more time in this area. There is a canyon you can take back to park headquarters. The canyon kept drawing me up, and then Tim came looking for me. Time to go back.

Dave, Gwynne, John and I decided to stop at Las Cuevas on the way out. John was the first to get there and found more art by the time the rest of us got there. We spent an hour or so looking around before Dave and Gwynne left. John and I looked around some more and found much more to see. Then Bill stopped and shared some of his knowledge, more to see, what a great way to end our time in BBRSP.



## RAINWATER HARVESTING – FREE WATER

In September, Brad Lancaster, a drylands permaculture designer and educator, presented lectures and workshops in Alpine and Marfa. The Tierra Grande Chapter was one of the main sponsors of the event.

Brad is a passionate advocate for integrated landscape design and sustainable living. His presentation was loaded with information and humor. At home, in Tucson, Arizona, he and his brother harvest 100,000 gallons of rainwater a year on a 1/8-acre urban lot and the adjoining right-of-way. The rainwater provides enough water for their household use and a for food-bearing shade trees, a garden of edible and medicinal plants, and a habitat for wildlife. Brad also harvests the sun for heat, light, and power. In his presentation, he also talked about greywater harvesting and composting toilets. He has a great website <http://www.harvestingrainwater.com>

Volunteers at the hands-on workshop created a rainwater runoff capture system at the Alpine Public Library. Water from the library parking lot was directed through a series of canals that slow the water and allow it to infiltrate into the soil.



Becky Haynie helps haul materials for the rainwater harvest workshop at the Alpine Public Library. (Photo by Albert Bork.)



Just as the workshop finished, the rains came, and the new rainwater harvesting system was a success!

Run-off water from the parking lot was diverted to the library garden.  
(Photo by Albert Bork.)



### MOUNT LIVERMORE

Barbara Curry is looking up as the Class of 2014 heads down from the top of Mount Livermore. John Karges is on the far left.  
(Photo by Albert Bork.)

### 2015 Tierra Grande Chapter Officers, Advisors, and Committee Chairs

President: Albert G. Bork

Vice-President: Toni Arnold

Secretary: Sandy Lynch

Treasurer: Chris Pipes

Past-President: Pam Pipes

Advisors:

Billy Tarrant, TPWD

Louis Harveson, SRSU

Patt Sims

Jennifer Baur

Steve Elfring

TPWD, vacant (formerly Linda Hedges before she retired)

Committee Chairs:

Awards and Recognition: Rosemary Dennis

Calendar and Communications: Linda Hedges

Facebook subcommittee: Dave Taylor

Historian: vacant

Host: Carol Slocomb

Membership: Anne Adkins

Newsletter: Kate Mahoney

Outreach: Jill Goodwin

Programs: Mary Malmgren

TGTMN-DMSP Friends: Dave Mainz

## Volunteer Service Projects & Advanced Training: Linda Hedges

New, stories, photos, and ideas are welcome.

Please e-mail them to Kate Mahoney, [ka\\_mahoney@yahoo.com](mailto:ka_mahoney@yahoo.com)

