



# OBSERVATIONS

Master  
Naturalist



OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST  
TIERRA GRANDE CHAPTER



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## Letter from the President

*I have asked for the privilege of being your president for another term. The camaraderie, laughter, brainstorming, finagling, joy, and wonder we have shared has made 2010 a most rewarding year. Thanks to every one of you.*

*—Ellen*

## Our Mission is...

To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural area within our community.

## Grand Soirée to follow...

## Tierra Grande Unveils DVD of Mount Livermore Hike by Class of 2010 Trainees



The DVD is done.

Final edits have been made.

The Class of 2010 has previewed it, and we are ready to show it off!

What better way to do that than at a party?

You and a guest are invited to the **Worldwide International Premier** and grand unveiling of The 2010 Class Project. This cocktail buffet event also celebrates the Tierra Grande Chapter's Fifth Anniversary and the

guest teachers and instructors of the past five years who made it all possible. The evening's entertainment will feature the world premier of "Hiking Mt. Livermore: A Virtual Tour" produced

*Continued on page 12*



## Class of 2010 Graduates!



**Tierra Grande Claims First Horned Lizard Graduate Among Its Ranks!**

**It all began with a long trek** up Livermore with our less than triumphant moments being documented on chip for all the world to see! Those who survived went on to brave a lightning storm and to create the very earth we walk upon. The third trial by fire was close encounters with what appeared to be piranha-infested waters at Balmorhea State Park. Finally, a 37-mile drive down a long dirt

## A toast to the memories – Photo Collage on page 3!

road in the desert brought us to our ultimate destiny — Big Bend Ranch State Park and graduation as this year's newest crop of Texas

*Continued on page 10*

## Your Hours Keep Us Funded

Many thanks to everyone for all your volunteer and advanced training hours. This is the lifeblood of Texas Master Naturalists. Your reported hours help enable grant money from the federal and state level to pay for all of the Texas Master Naturalist programs.

Every year, all advanced training and volunteer service hours must be submitted in writing and receive approval before the hours are accumulated. Programs and projects presented by chapter sponsors and partners are automatically approved provided they meet the criteria of the

*Continued on page 12*

## On the Trail with Tierra Grande

### UPCOMING EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

#### JANUARY

**22** Fifth Anniversary Party of Tierra Grande and Class of 2010 DVD Project Presentation at the Granada Theater in Alpine at 6:30 PM. \$15 per person. RSVP Required.

#### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

Rainwater Harvesting Garden—Being developed NOW in Marfa! Agrilife Extension is looking for help in designing, installing and maintaining this garden. Native plants will be featured. Contact Laura Belkin at lbelkin (at) sbcglobal (dot) net or phone 432.729.3063.

#### MARCH

**TBA** CDRI Cactus & Succulent Festival (*Date TBA*)

#### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

The School Health Advisory Council at Alpine Middle School has undertaken a vegetable garden. This will start as a small area, maybe 20' x 20'. The gardening process and the vegetables will be used to teach the

#### APRIL

**TBA** CDRI Native Plant Sale (*Date TBA*)

middle school students science lessons such as recycling and better nutrition. Presently, the students have a project to compost cafeteria scraps.

#### JULY

**29-31** Tierra Grande Training at Davis Mountain Preserve (*Tentative*)



An Advisory Committee has been formed to help the students with this project. We plan to start soil prep in January. If you are interested in helping, contact Mary at mary (dot) malmgren (at) gmail (dot) com.

#### AUGUST

**21** Tierra Grande Training at Davis Mountains State Park and Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center (*Tentative*)

#### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

Tierra Grande Garden at Balmorhea State Park. Contact Albert Bork at albertgbork (at) sbcglobal (dot) net for details. For any of the other gardens, contact Jeanne DeFriesse at jdefriesse1 (at) austin (dot) rr (dot) com. She reports that any assistance pulling bermuda grass or picking out litter would be greatly appreciated!

#### SEPTEMBER

**24** Tierra Grande Training at Balmorhea State Park (*Tentative*)

Additional ideas from Jeanne on project hours include regular observation and documentation of butterflies and/or birds in the gardens. Since the installation of the gardens, the population of small butterflies has skyrocketed. Additionally, birds nest in the big circle; for example, a curve-billed thrasher nested three consecutive years in the big cholla; and an occasional pack rat sets up "housekeeping" in the area. These are just several possibilities tangentially related to the gardens that might be of interest to Tierra Grande members.

**TBA** CDRI BBQ & Benefit Auction (*Date TBA*)

#### OCTOBER

**28-30** Tierra Grande Training at Big Bend Ranch State Park (*Tentative*)

#### NOVEMBER

**TBA** CDRI Thanksgiving Open House (*Date TBA*)

Please check online for the most up to date calendar of upcoming events. Just visit: <http://txmn.org/tierra/calendar/>







# GREETINGS FROM THE BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK

BY GARY NORED

*P*leiades is rising in the Eastern sky, the hot weather is definitely over and the "Fifth Season" is now just a pleasant memory. "What is this about a Fifth Season?" you ask. Sadly, I cannot lay claim to the invention of this phrase, but you'll see it used often enough to describe the rainy season. The season usually runs from mid- to late-summer and is responsible for the lion's share of the rain we get out here. Folks might just as well call it the "green season" because it is the time when the Chihuahuan Desert is at its greenest and prettiest. Summer rains make for heavy, shrubby vegetation that so characterizes this place, and it is the shrubs that make the green color in these photos. Below left is a photo that was taken at the head of Rancheria Canyon during this year's Fifth Season. Many visitors hike up to a pour-off near here, but few approach it from this angle. You can see how green the countryside is.

What you can't really make out in a photo is the fact that practically everything that grows out here is covered in nasty thorns, spines, claws, or other thoroughly nasty defenses. And lately, it is all these spines that have given meaning to my existence

because most of my volunteer work lies with clearing brush from roads and trails. It's hard work, but the trails are so much nicer when they're not choked with flesh-eating shrubs!

Many of these unassuming shrubs can become extremely attractive plants. Probably my favorite is the Guayacán. Guayacán is in the same family as the



creosote bush. Here at the ranch it is typically a small shrub but it can grow to a height of 15 feet or so. The thing I like the most about it is that it usually looks like a Bonsai plant without the pot. The leaves grow very close to the stems, so they almost look like they were pasted on by a passerby. Guayacán sports delightfully fragrant

purple blossoms in the spring. Guayacán is pretty in the fall, too, for then it becomes covered with bright red berries that make an attractive display against the evergreen foliage. Guayacán takes extraordinary care with its seeds. When the fruits start growing in the summer, they are protected by a tough, papery shell. But when the bright red fruit approaches maturity, it bursts free of the shell, creating an enticing treat for birds. Each fruit contains



one seed. The next time you see one of these plants, pick one of the berries and squeeze it between your fingers. You'll find the dark purple seed inside.

There are few flowers in the fall. Common Broomweed, Slenderleaf Goldeneye, and Tarbush provide spots of color in the drying landscape. My

*Continued page 5*



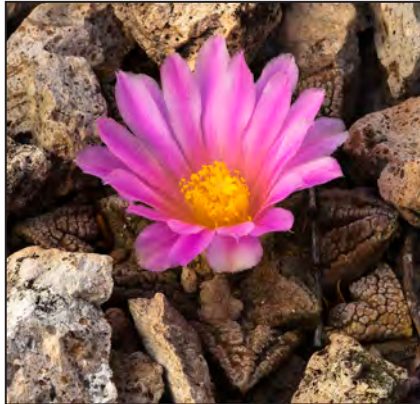
*At the Head of Rancheria Canyon*





favorite fall bloomer is the the Living Rock Cactus (below). The blossom is quite showy and is almost as big as the plant itself. Fall hikers in limestone areas are the most likely to see this splendid plant. Perhaps the best thing about fall at the Big Bend Ranch is Fall hiking. Cooler temperatures and bright clear days seem to invite exploration, and the ranch is full of exciting out-of-the-way places. Below is a scene from Bofecillos Canyon.

This area is rugged and without trails, but full of surprises. The picture of Bofecillos looks past a tinaja to the many dikes that characterize this canyon.



Though not the largest canyon in the park, Fresno Canyon is certainly one of the most beautiful. Running all the way from the Solitario to Highway 170, Fresno Canyon forms a beautiful natural corridor lined with cottonwoods, springs, archaeological

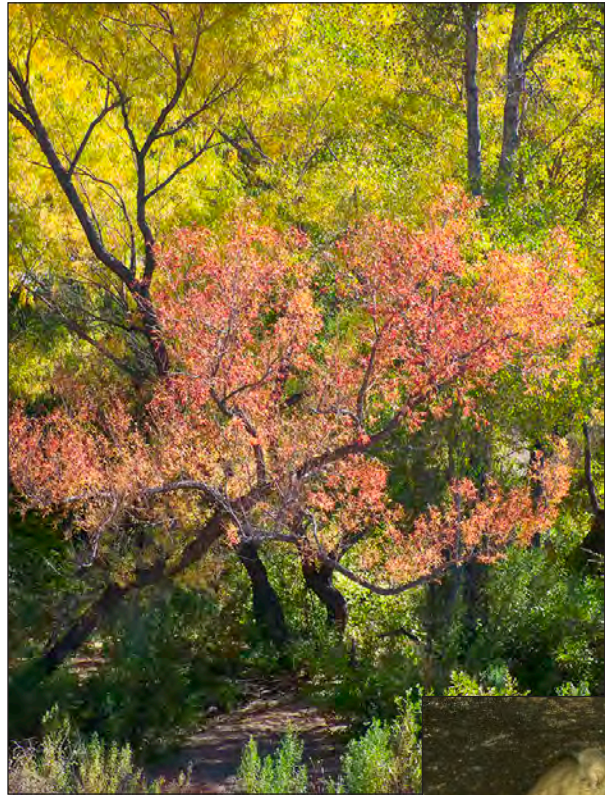


*Bofecillos Canyon*

sites, and majestic views. Even the rocks in this canyon capture your attention as they often look almost like gigantic colored Easter eggs.

Wildlife thrives in the canyon and the surrounding areas. Poke around the rocks and you may find tiny critters such as the little mouse, pictured above left, comfortably nestled in a nest of Clematis seeds.

Springs tend to occur in canyons, and they provide most of the “fall color” for the park. Cottonwoods create masses of yellows, but other trees offer glimpses of alternative colors. Here’s a view taken at Horsetrap Springs.



*Fall at Horsetrap Springs*



All in all, the Big Bend Ranch State Park is a paradise for natural-

ists of all sorts, and Fall is one of its finest seasons. Cool, sunny days make visiting a pleasure; there’s plenty of room to camp,



*Fresno Canyon “Easter Eggs”*

and crowds simply don’t exist. Sorry this blog wasn’t funny – the muse abandoned me a month or so ago and she hasn’t come back. But I hope you can enjoy some of what I’m enjoying right now.

My Best to All,  
Gary Nored

[www.flickr.com/photos/AnEyeForTexas](http://www.flickr.com/photos/AnEyeForTexas)



# A Raven's Tale...

by Anne Adkins

*Birds of mystery, pranksters,  
or man's best friend?*

*Closely linked to human culture  
through arts, literature, and  
mythology, what is it about  
the Common Raven that draws  
and compels us?*

*Are we so arrogant to think  
that we can train the bird, or is  
it rather that the bird is clever  
and adaptable enough to shape  
its own environment?*

Some interesting experiments are being conducted at Ravensperch these days on the nut and berry behavior of our friend, the Common Raven. Well, not so nut and berry exactly...

Ravens are, of course, resourceful creatures and have no hesitation claiming a free meal. In fact, it's touted by one source that they are proponents of Happy Meals, passing up the plain wrapper paper bag for the one sporting the Golden Arches.

In this case, the menu has been eggs and legs — chicken, that is. Apparently, spring is the best time to begin the training process, while they are bearing and raising their young. However, the late summer months seemed to fit the raven's bill just fine.

Technically speaking, the raven is a

member of the Crow family — Corvidae — of which there are 41 species. The Corvid family belongs to a group of birds called Passeriformes, an evolutionary branch of songbirds, and several direct cousins include such colorful members as jays, nutcrackers and magpies.

In the Trans Pecos Region, the Common Raven, known as *C. corax*, is a year round resident. Less common but also present is *C. cryptoleucus*, the Chihuahuan Raven, a close relative who resides throughout the southwestern desert and can be distinguished from the Common Raven by his higher pitched call and white neck feathers, visible only when ruffled.

The Common Raven ranges in size, depending on its habitat, but can typically be recognized in this area as a bird of approximately 21 inches in length sporting iridescent black plumage, sometimes scruffy under the neck, sturdy black bill, a wedge-shaped tail and relatively short black legs for a bird its size; not to be confused with a crow which is typically smaller and has a squared-off tail by contrast. Males may be a bit larger than females but otherwise tend to be identical in appearance.

Ravens are monogamous and typically mate for life, although the death of a spouse may occasion a reparing. And, similar to human society, there are scurrilous reports of single males swooping in on a female at egg-laying time, quickly dispersing upon the return of her angry mate.



Reprinted with permission.

A common site in the Davis Mountains is a raven soaring across the sky with several small birds — typically Western Kingbirds — in hot pursuit. No surprise, really, as ravens are notorious for stealing eggs and even the young from other birds' nests. Besides feeding on carrion, insects, seeds, and fruits, those living in closer conjunction with man have found the dumpster a good place to secure the next meal. No doubt this is where they established their brand identification with Big Mac.

On this particular morning, two chicken legs awaited our Corvid friends. Not long after placing the bait, a raucous chorus of cawing was to be heard, and then a good looking bird plopped to the ground, inspected the offering, then took wing, once again caw-caw-cawing at the top of his lungs. Had the meal been shunned and rejected, or were others being alerted to the presence of food?

The curious thing about Raven behavior is that they seem unique among solitary



Photo by Anne Adkins

### **A Raven's Tale, continued from page 6**

creatures in the animal kingdom in the aspect of sharing a food find. Food can be a scarce resource, and common sense dictates that such a treasure trove would be hoarded for personal use. This seems not to be the case, however. There in fact is evidence of symbiotic relationships with both predators and competitive consumers of carrion. Single ravens seem compelled to share with other singletons, partly explained as a favor now will earn a return favor later, and partly a factor of safety in numbers. Think about it. If a predator approaches during a feast, one raven in a group has a lot better odds than a single raven standing. Ravens approach a find with caution, jumping straight up in the air as though their toes had been pinched, ever wary of a trap. Yet, they also partner with predators, leading the latter to potential prey, no doubt with the hope that they, the ravens, will share in the ultimate feast.

Within five minutes of the food offering, Mom, Pop, and Junior Raven arrived with a Clunk 1, 2, and 3 upon our metal roof.

It was Junior, in fact, who had discovered the treasure trove. Junior was now yelling at full tilt, indicating his hunger and expecting to be fed. Dad (or Mom?) kept scolding him to maintain his silence. In short order, two birds hit the ground, one approaching the offering, then bringing it back and placing it before Noisy Bird. Mom joined the feast and actually appeared to be assisting Junior in his consumption by holding the chicken leg firmly in place.



Photo by Anne Adkins

It soon became clear that the rationale for the parental SHHHH! was that loud cawing tends to alert nearby vultures of potential food, which in this case it certainly had. One, then two, vultures swooped in, with a raven trying desperately to shoo them off but eventually resigning itself to the horde of five that arrived. Then it appeared that the clever ravens actually used the vultures to

their advantage, allowing the vultures to tear at the meat to enable the ravens to spy and snatch a juicy bit. Teamwork at its best.

At subsequent feedings, a large nest was constructed to hold what might be perceived by a raven as the bonanza find for all egg-stealers. A couple of organic eggs were positioned therein and, with the bait in place, the naturalist-observers retired to their indoor blind for clandestine study. Within a few hours, the loud caws indicating a find were heard, and it was only another ten or fifteen minutes before the raven family arrived to examine the nest.

On this occasion it appeared that Mom and Pop were bent on continuing Junior's upbringing — and weaning — by suggesting he learn to fend for himself. Mom and Pop helped themselves to an egg, leaving Junior unfed and in full throttle vocal. Miffed by his exclusion, Junior finally sauntered over to the nest, eyed the remaining egg, and, with a surreptitious

look over his shoulder, went into full raven leap, grab and go. When Pop realized what was going on, he flew off in hot pursuit, right behind Junior. Both birds



Photo by Anne Adkins



## Training 2011

By Carol Edwards

The Education Committee has established tentative dates for TGMN Training for 2011. The tentative dates are as follows:

*Davis Mountains Preserve — 29-31 July, 2011 (Friday – Sunday)*

*CDRI (and possibly Davis Mountains State Park) — 21 August, 2011 (Sunday)*

*Balmorhea State Park — 24 September, 2011 (Saturday)*

*Big Bend Ranch State Park — 28-30 October, 2011 (Friday – Sunday)*

We will begin taking applications for the 2011 Class in late spring, with exact application dates to be announced later.

**An expanded Education Committee is needed for 2011.** We have several members who have served on the committee for a number of years, and we want and need additional input and help from a larger mix of members. We also need additional volunteers who will attend and coordinate one of the weekend training events. These duties will be more clearly outlined in a future meeting of the expanded Education Committee. If you are interested in volunteering, please email Carol at bbbirder (at) sbcglobal (dot) net.

### A Raven's Tale, continued from previous page

and egg dropped into the distant weeds where a heated scuffle ensued.

Being city folk who have seen only a few crows, we were unprepared for these much larger birds with their intelligence, sense of humor, penchant for pulling pranks on other animals (it has been documented that they will dive down to steal hot dogs right out of the mouths of neighborhood foxes!), and advanced communication systems. The two ravens in charge of our ten acres have taken us under their wing, so to speak, and seem satisfied to continue our lessons on how to supply them with gourmand offerings. It appears they've just about got us trained.

Much of the information reported here is sourced from Bernd Heinrich's two books, *Mind of the Raven* and *Ravens in Winter*, and an article on the Common Raven adapted by John L. Tveten from *The Birds of Texas*.

## Thanks!

Volunteers who participated in the Adopt-A-Highway Clean Up on December 11th included: Ellen Weinacht, Fonda Ghiardi, Dave Mainz, Clare Freeman, George Pitlik, Janet Stewart, Laura Belkin, Donna Greene, Becky Hart, Robert Flanders, Mary Malmgren, Robert Steele, Kay Wilde, Surrena Rub, Lawrence Smith, Martha Latta, and Anne Adkins. Thanks for keeping the Tierra Grande two-mile stretch clean and green!



## Awards

Pins awarded to those present at the Tierra Grande December 11th Annual Meeting include the following:

Certification Pins to Surrena Rub and Lawrence Smith; 2009 Recertification Pins to Petei Guth and Fonda Ghiardi; 2010 Recertification Pins to Dave Mainz, Albert Bork, Fonda Ghiardi, Petei Guth, Lou Weinacht, Ellen Weinacht, George Pitlik, Donna Greene, Laura Belkin; 250 Hour Milestone Pin to Laura Belkin; and 1000 Hour Milestone Pin to Dave Mainz.



Albert Bork Pins Laura Belkin!

*Is George having fun or what? Be sure to join us on our next outing!*





# Bird Notes: Quail Sighting

by Kay Charter

Throughout our birding career, a handful of species have either been very hard to find, or have proven to be entirely elusive. Jimmy and I unsuccessfully chased short-eared owls for years until one showed up during migration on Charter Sanctuary. The same was true of yellow-billed cuckoo. We worked for years to find that bird without luck. Three years after we bought Charter Sanctuary, a pair nested on our property. We were not so lucky with the elegant trogon. In spite of numerous trips to Patagonia Lake in southern Arizona to get a glimpse of a trogon that took up residence near the lake, we have yet to lay eyes on that beautiful creature.

And then there is the Montezuma quail.

Roughly a hundred miles north of the great curve in the Rio Grande River that forms the southern boundary of Big Bend National Park (as well as the border between the U.S. and Mexico), rests a mountain range that looks from a distance as if it had been plopped in the middle of the Chihuahuan Desert. Formed by volcanic action millions of years ago, the Davis Mountains are one of three so-called "sky islands" in west Texas.

These mountains are home to the historic town of Fort Davis, the fort itself, a state park, McDonald Observatory (an outer space-focused research arm of the University of Texas), the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, and a variety of unique plants and animals. Lower slopes, typically grasslands with about 30% shrub/tree cover, are perfect for Montezuma quail. They are not uncommon, but they are very tough to find, not least of which because you practically have to step on them before they flush. According to our friend Dave Mainz (who generously offered us the use of his RV while on our weeklong visit), these smallest members of North America's quail family can disappear behind a sparse stand of prairie bunch grass.

Jimmy and I have visited this part of Texas many times – both to bird and to see friends like Dave and Dot Mainz, and ranchers Don and Ellen Weinacht. Because of our connections there, and the uncommon access it has afforded us, we have scored great bird sightings. We saw our one and only short-eared owl on Weinacht's ranch, tucked into the ruin of the family homestead. Don had discovered it and drove us out to see it.

During our many visits to west Texas, we always searched for Montezuma quail. Many times, we have traveled to the state park and waited on the benches near a feeding station set up for them, where – it is said – they have visited

virtually every afternoon for years. There we waited. And waited. And waited. All for naught; the birds never showed up when we were waiting.

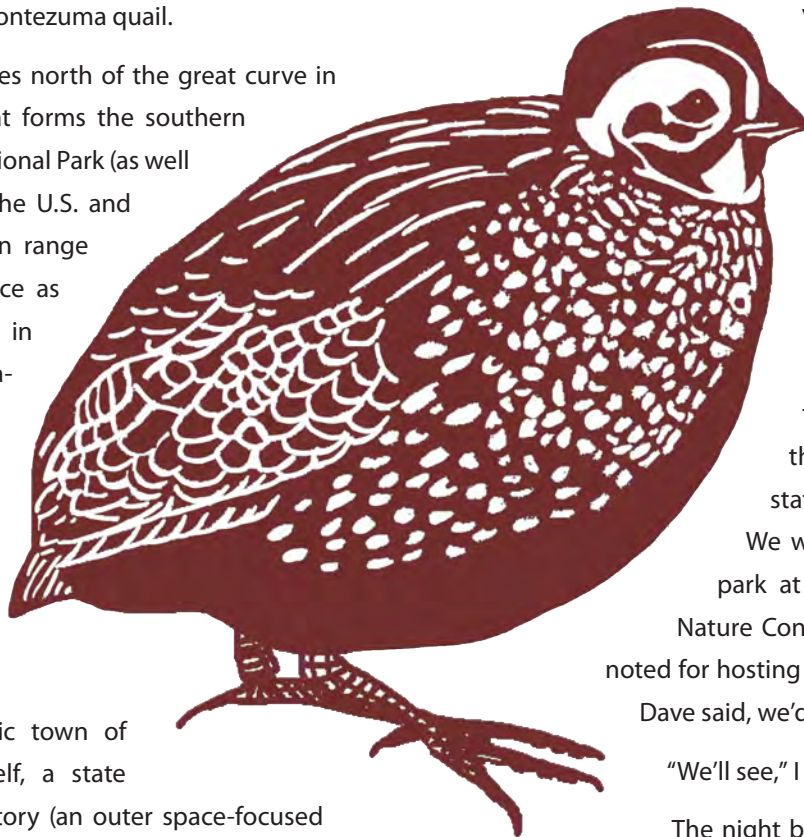
This year, Dave and Jimmy and I left Alpine (where the Mainzes live) and headed past the Research Institute, through the town and past the fort, the state park and the observatory. We were on our way to a roadside park at the foot of Mt. Livermore, a Nature Conservancy Preserve. The park is noted for hosting large numbers of birds. Maybe, Dave said, we'd find the quail.

"We'll see," I thought doubtfully.

The night before had been cold, the wind was from the north and it had a bite. We left the RV park about nine. I was driving. It took about an hour to reach the roadside park; just before we did, I rounded a corner and there, in a patch of sunlight in the middle of the road, were seven round little lumps of mud. But something about these little lumps didn't quite look like mud. I stopped.

"Quail!"

Montezuma quail are little balls of birds, with short tails and small, round, harlequin patterned heads. The birds in the road



### Quail Sighting, continued from page 9

were warming themselves on the black asphalt, and had pulled their heads down until they were beyond identification.

Aware of our presence, they raised their heads just enough to allow positive ID. They moved every so slightly toward the opposite side of the road. Then they stopped for a long minute before moving again. And then, heads still tucked in and bodies bent down so that their bellies dragged the pavement, they inched across the road in short spurts and long stops.

It took minutes for them to cross. We kept an eye for traffic in both lanes; miraculously, there were no vehicles. Immediately upon reaching the other side, they vanished into bunch grasses where it was impossible to see any part of any of them. It was an incredible sighting of an incredible behavior of a bird we have sought for many years. It was well worth the wait.

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Kay Charter is Executive Director of Saving Birds Thru Habitat which was established in 2001 to help stem the decline of our migratory songbird population by teaching people of all ages how to protect, enhance and restore habitat for North American birds. See <http://www.savingbirds.org/> for more info. This article is reproduced here with permission from Kay Charter.

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### Class of 2010, continued from page 1

Master Naturalists for the Tierra Grande Chapter! An enormous debt of thanks goes to this year's organizers who went above and beyond to make this the training experience of a lifetime! A special thanks to – **DRUMROLL!** – Ellen Weinacht, Carol Edwards, Dave Mainz, Steve Elfring, Melanie Croy, Fonda Ghiardi, Lou Weinacht, Albert Bork, and Laura Belkin, and to all the Tierra Grande Master Naturalists who brought food and sustenance and 4-wheel drives and provided a pat on the back. We couldn't have done it without you!

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## Minnow Rules!

If you didn't catch it in the email, check out the article on the Texas Parks and Wildlife site at

<http://www.tpwmagazine.com/archive/2010/dec/scout5/>.

It's by our very own Megan Wilde! Megan reports that the Rio Grande silvery minnow is on the rebound.

See more of Megan's work at:

[www.wildewildeweb.com/journalist.html](http://www.wildewildeweb.com/journalist.html)

[www.wildewildeweb.com/blog](http://www.wildewildeweb.com/blog)



Montezuma Quail, Davis Mountains State Park, Texas.

Reproduced with permission. April 2005 © Peter LaTourrette.

See North American Bird Photography Gallery:

<http://birdphotography.com/> and <http://www.stanford.edu/~petelat1/>

### ~Our Volunteer Partners~

- Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute: Help with events, visiting school groups, maintain trails and grounds, and other activities. ([www.cdri.org](http://www.cdri.org))
- Nature Conservancy Davis Mountains Preserve: Participate in trail building and maintenance, fire line preparations, and other activities. ([www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org))
- Texas Parks and Wildlife: Help with a variety of projects at Balmorhea State Park, Davis Mountains State Park, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Elephant Mountain WMA and other area parks. ([www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us))
- Big Bend National Park: Help with a variety of projects. ([www.nps.gov/bibe/](http://www.nps.gov/bibe/))
- Sul Ross State University: Volunteers are currently working on the Hancock Mountain hike and bike trail and regularly help with other campus activities. ([www.sulross.edu](http://www.sulross.edu))
- Native Plant Society of Texas – Big Bend Chapter: Help the society implement a native landscaping project at the Sunshine House, a senior community center in Alpine.



# Project: Horned Lizard Surveys

Everyone loves “horny toads,” but for many Texans, the fierce-looking yet amiable reptile is only a fond childhood memory. Now, through participation in Texas Horned Lizard Watch, you can take part in an effort to better understand why our official state reptile is doing well in some locations and what factors may have contributed to its decline in other areas.

Once common throughout most of the state, the “horny toad” (or Texas horned lizard) has disappeared from many parts of its former range over the past 30 years. Its disappearance has been blamed on many factors, including collection for the pet trade, spread of the red imported fire ant, changes in land use, and environmental contaminants. For the most part, however, the decline of the Texas horned lizard has remained a mystery with little understanding of the management actions that could be taken to restore it.

As a participant in Texas Horned Lizard Watch, you will be “on the ground”—collecting data and observations about populations of horned lizards in your area, their food sources, their potential predators or competitors and their habitat characteristics. From young to old, Ph.D. to hobbyist, there’s a way for everyone to participate!

Texas Horned LizardWatch offers a monitoring packet with instructions and data sheets for conducting surveys for horned lizards. Whether you visit potential habitat on a daily basis, just happen to see a horned lizard, or would like to set up a transect to do quantitative monitoring of horned lizards and their habitat, there’s a way for you to participate. Sites can be on your own property, on public land, or on someone else’s property with their permission. Data from all sites is valuable, even if no horned lizards are found, because it helps us to understand habitat characteristics. It’s also a great activity for families, classrooms, and scout groups!

For more info, [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hornedlizards/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hornedlizards/)



**Teeny Toad:** It’s a good sign when you see babies like this. Adult Texas horned lizards may be harder to find right now because they’re in hibernation. The young ones take longer to go into hibernation because they have to accumulate enough fat stores to last the winter and at the same time meet the demands of growth. This one was photographed on a Thursday morning in mid-October. [As reported by Clare, Oct. 15, 2010]

### The Case of the Disappearing Horny Toads

Everyone loves horny toads, but for many Texans, the fierce-looking yet amiable reptile is only a fond childhood memory. Now, through participation in Texas Horned Lizard Watch, you can take part in an effort to better understand why our official state reptile is doing well in some locations and what factors may have contributed to its decline in other areas.

### HOW CAN I HELP?

#### Conduct Horned Lizard Surveys

Texas Horned Lizard Watch offers a complete packet with instructions and data sheets to help you conduct surveys for horned lizards. Whether you visit potential habitat on a daily basis, just happen to see a horned lizard, or would like to set up a transect to do quantitative monitoring of horned lizards and their habitat, there’s a way for you to participate.

#### Manage Horned Lizard Habitat

If you would like to increase the horned lizard population in your property or perhaps on a public land, there are several things you can do. First, it’s important to know what factors are most important to horned lizards: open, grassy areas with scattered shrubs and trees, and a variety of ground cover. Landowners can help create these conditions by removing invasive species, restoring ground cover, and creating a mosaic of habitats. Second, it’s important to know what factors are most important to horned lizards: open, grassy areas with scattered shrubs and trees, and a variety of ground cover. Landowners can help create these conditions by removing invasive species, restoring ground cover, and creating a mosaic of habitats.

#### Join Conservation Efforts

The Horned Lizard Conservation Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation and recovery of horned lizards. They fund research and conservation efforts and provide several field trips and seminars each year. [www.hornedlizards.org](http://www.hornedlizards.org)

### HORNED LIZARD IDENTIFICATION

There are three species of horned lizards in Texas. All three are listed as “sensitive” species on the Texas Natural Resources Code. They are all found in the same areas: the Central and South Texas Plains and the Big Bend Country. They are all found in the same areas: the Central and South Texas Plains and the Big Bend Country.

Species	Color	Size	Weight
Short-horned lizard	Brown	2-3 inches	0.5-1.0 oz
Spiny-tailed lizard	Brown	3-4 inches	1.0-1.5 oz
Spiny-tailed lizard (NOT a horned lizard)	Brown	3-4 inches	1.0-1.5 oz

## Project Plan

**Tierra Grande will pick three locations and monitor one day a month at each location. The three locations are: Davis Mountains Preserve; the Mims Ranch; and Balmorhea.**

**The first report was turned in on October 31, 2010.**


**To get involved, Contact:**  
**Ellen [at] Rionet [dot] coop**

## Next Up?

# Amphibian Watch!

## Hours, continued from page 1

Tierra Grande Chapter. The annual requirement is 40 hours for volunteer service and 8 for advanced training. To get a reporting form, email Albert Bork, Volunteer Coordinator, at albertgbork at sbcglobal dot net. Fill in the event date and information and indicate the hours worked. Note that the new form has a signature line. Just type in <<your name/s>> on the signature line, and this will indicate that you have signed the form electronically. That's all you have to do. Then email it back to both Becky at BeckyHart19 at gmail dot com and Albert at albertgbork at sbcglobal dot net. If you have any questions with the process, just email Albert!



**Texas Master Naturalist  
Tierra Grande Chapter  
Advanced Training/Volunteer Service**

All advanced training and volunteer service must be submitted in writing and receive approval before hours are accumulated. Programs and projects presented by chapter sponsors and partners are automatically approved provided they meet the criteria of the Tierra Grande Chapter. The annual hourly requirement is 40 hours for volunteer service and 8 hours for advanced training.

TMN name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Event Date	Event	Location	Sponsoring Organization	Advanced Training	Volunteer Service
<b>Total Hours</b>					

TG-TMN member signature: \_\_\_\_\_ /s/[if submitting electronically]

Submit monthly via e-mail to: Becky Hart, <BeckyHart19@gmail.com>, or mail to:  
Tierra Grande Chapter  
Texas Master Naturalist  
PO Box 133  
Alpine, Texas 79831-0133

*This is the form for reporting your volunteer and advanced training hours.*

### ***It's As Easy as 1-2-3, and Just As Important!***

Texas Master Naturalists reminds you to report your volunteer hours. Just follow the simple steps above and help your Chapter thrive!

***This is YOUR Newsletter – Please Contribute!  
Email [anne@hadkins.com](mailto:anne@hadkins.com)***

## ***Officers and Executive Committee***

*Serving January 2010–December 2010*

<i>Office Held</i>	<i>Officer</i>	<i>Contact Info</i>
PRESIDENT	Ellen Weinacht	432.375.2325 Ellen (at) rionet (dot) coop
PAST PRESIDENT	David Mainz	dlmainz (at) sbcglobal (dot) net
VICE PRESIDENT	Carol Edward	bbbirdr (at) sbcglobal (dot) net
SECRETARY	Melanie Croy	ma.croy (at) att (dot) net
TREASURER	Fonda Ghiardi	432.426.2363 fondag (at) sbcglobal (dot) net
MEMBERSHIP	Becky Hart	hart_rebecca (at) sbcglobal (dot) net
HOST	Lou Weinacht	leweinacht (at) yahoo (dot) com
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR	Albert Bork	432.837.2882 albertgbork (at) sbcglobal (dot) net
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR	Anne Adkins	432.426.3961 anne (at) hadkins (dot) com

Tierra Grande Master Naturalist Chapter

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is coordinated by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. Texas Master Naturalist programs serve all people without regard to socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

## ***DVD, continued from page 1***

by the Class of 2010. Ticket price, including the buffet, is only \$15 per person! A cash bar will be provided. This gala event will be catered by the renowned Food Shark of Marfa, Texas. Invitations will be mailed to you, and your check will serve as your reservation; please reply to Steve Elfiring, Tierra Grande secretary by January 15th. His address is HC65, Box 20T, Alpine, TX, 79830.

This venture was a cooperative effort on the part of The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Preserve and members of the Tierra Grande Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, and would not have been possible without the efforts of Adam Bork, Krista Steinhauer, and Rachel Neel who donated their time and talent to video and audiotape and edit this production. In addition, tour guides included John Karges, Texas Nature Conservancy Statewide biologist; Jackie Poole, Texas Parks & Wildlife State Office botanist; Linda Hedges, Texas Parks & Wildlife Trans-Pecos Regional Interpreter; and Nature Conservancy Christopher Pipes, Davis Mountains Preserve Project Director.

The Dinner/DVD Unveiling event is organized for members of Tierra Grande Master Naturalists but we will extend invitations to our colleagues at Davis Mountains Preserve, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and CDRI. We encourage members to bring guests, especially local area residents who may be interested in joining our chapter. Guest sponsorships to help defray the cost are encouraged!