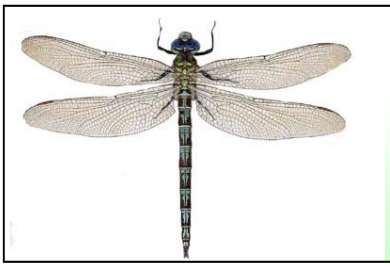
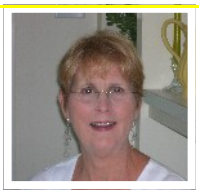
SUMMER 2007 Volume 1, Issue 3



Texas Master Naturalist the Cyrano

The Newsletter of the Brazos Valley Chapter

President's Corner *by Jo Anne Bates*

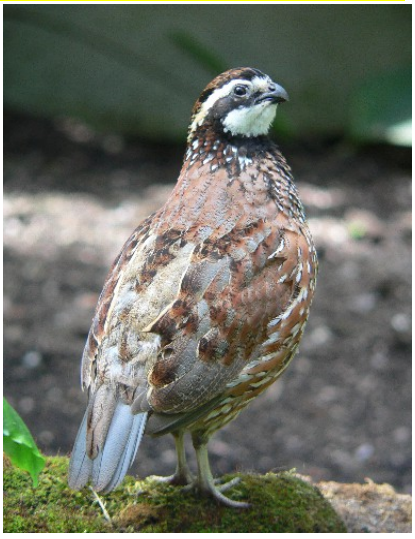


Jo Anne Bates

Welcome incoming 2007 class of the Texas Master Naturalists of the Brazos Valley. Our chapter started in 2004 with a small group of like-minded souls who wanted to celebrate our local land, plants, and animals by learning more about how they interact with each other and with the larger natural system surrounding us. Since then, we have graduated a 2005 class of 19 and a group of 24 in 2006. Each member has brought to the group a unique enthusiasm and interest that has given us all a bigger view of our natural world. So join in and find an activity that appeals to you. You can choose from joining a Naturalist Book Club, a bird nesting-box network, an Amphibian Watch project, improving a nature trail, volunteering to help at one of the annual events like Bio Blitz or Plane Earth Celebration, or giving a hand at the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection. Whatever you choose, you'll be in good company! Welcome and we look forward to meeting each of you.

The Bobwhite Returns *by Jean Paul*

When we relocated to rural Eastern Brazos County in late summer 1984, I could stroll out in the late afternoon on our 3.5 acre "country estate" and scare up at least one covey of bobwhite quail. Then, in a couple of years, there were no more bobwhite in our rural subdivision. Neighbors offered varying theories: coyotes were getting them, raccoons, marauding feral cats, even fire ants. Whatever the reasons, the bobwhites had vanished. A few weeks ago, while I was fussing with an uncooperative lawnmower, I heard the distinctive "who-who-wheet" over and over. I had to be hearing things. I surmised that it was a male mockingird testing out a new pirated tune to attract the ladies. I e-mailed my nearly-neighbor and TMN colleague, Jim Anding, who ruled out the mockingbird notion by reporting bobwhite sightings on his acreage, but no calls had yet been heard. Two weeks ago in late June, my wife and I both heard the "who-who-wheet" while toiling in the weed bed ("garden"). There perched upon the roof peak of our greenhouse was a huge cock bobwhite singing his heart out. Elvella (Sisi) hastened to fetch her digital camera -- I had removed the chip from mine for some reason. She took several photographs while Mr. Bob White led her on a short walk about our back yard, then bade us adieu. We hope he will return and bring a lady with him. Maybe next Spring?



Bobwhite Quail
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Inside this issue:

Birds of Taveuni, Fiji *by Kate Kelly*

A few days after settling in at Nakia Resort and Dive, my brother and sister-in-law's resort on the Fijian island of Taveuni, I began to think about getting up into the bush to see what we could find in the way of avian life. After making a phone call or two, my sister Joyce and I set out at 5 am on a quiet and cool June morning to look for forest birds. Our birdwatching guide, Logi, knows the forests above his native village of Qeleni, so we headed first for the village and then up a steep, 3-mile rocky path with an experienced bush driver as the sun was beginning to appear over the mountains. The land we entered is owned by the village, and was once a large coconut plantation--back when copra was the major cash crop for the islands. This large mountainous area is filled with rivers and scattered homesites, many belonging to villagers growing patches of dalo on the hillsides. Dalo (a dry-land type of Taro) is Fiji's new cash crop, an edible tuberous root that many Fijians grow on cleared hillsides to provide an income for the coming year. Halfway up the bumpy road, Logi told our driver to stop as we spotted a pair of Masked (aka Musk) Shining Parrots flying across the canopy. We climbed further and left the van at a high spot with lots of low-growing vines, grasses, and shrubs, and clusters of Rain Tree, Coconut Palm, Flame Tree, Acacia, Hibiscus, and Breadfruit.

Most of the birds we spotted have multiple names in both English and Fijian. Where I could, I took the names from Dick Watling's *Guide to the Birds of Fiji and Western Polynesia*, a recognized standard, but not readily available.

The author's sister, Joyce, and their birdwatching guide, Logi, in Qeleni, Taveuini, Fiji. *Photo by the author.*

A Barking Pigeon in Queleni, Taveuni, Fiji. *Photo by the author.*

Logi used an older edition of Fergus Clunie, *Birds of the Fiji Bush*. Many of the birds we saw are forest birds that have been identified as threatened or endangered by Vilikesa T. Masibalavu and Guy Dutson in *Important Birds Areas in Fiji*. We heard and got a good look at a Barking Pigeon (whose call could also be mistaken for an owl), Polynesian Triller, Lesser Shrikebill, Spotted Fantail, Golden Whistler, Vanikoro Broadbill, Ogea Flycatcher, Wattled Honeyeater, Red Junglefowl, White-collared Kingfisher, Polynesian Starling, a pair of Lorikeets (brief glimpse), Pacific Harrier, Yellow (orange-)breasted Honeyeater, and many White-rumped Swiftlets darting for insects. As we walked back down the trail, the mountains were full of bird calls, the sun had risen over the ocean, and the air was still cool with a touch of fog approaching from the north.

Over the next two weeks of my stay on Taveuni, I watched Fruit Bats fly over the Somosomo Strait from south to north every evening, and learned to listen for the resort's magpies chortling high up in the palms. At the island's more agriculturally developed southern end, I saw an Orange-Breasted Myzomela, more parrots (probably Red Shining parrot), Brown Quail (with chicks), Collared Lory, either a Fiji White-Eye or Silvereye, and several sea birds. The Fijian government recognizes that these birds are a treasure. It has been encouraging Fijians

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Birds of Fiji (from page 2)

to preserve bird habitat, but that habitat is also the source of many Fijians' income for the year. Deforestation and bush clearing for planting dalo are endangering many of these birds, including the Silktail, which many birders hope to see when they visit. While I didn't get a glimpse of either the Silktail or the spectacular Orange Dove, a must-see for many visitors, it was awesome to view and hear these beautiful birds living easily and in close proximity to human dwellings. Like so many eco-tourist destinations today, Fiji is trying to convince its people to sacrifice income from a cash crop (dalo) to protect the future of its most vulnerable and unique natural resources. I left the island hoping that the work and warnings of dedicated researchers and enthusiasts, together with the income from ecotourism, will create the will to celebrate, protect, and extend the future of these beautiful native birds.

Unique Adaptation *by Jim Waldson*

In my line of work, I am outdoors most of the time and, fortunately, in the country. This summer, I observed a killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) in the exact same spot on the side the road day after day. My curiosity got the best of me one day and I stopped to check it out. Sure enough, she had built a nest in the gravel on the shoulder of the road. Her eggs looked unbelievably like the gravel. As I approached her, she did the broken wing feint and tried to lure me away. I took some pictures and left. Fortunately, she had nested on a new construction project, where there was not much traffic. Her eggs hatched about 2 weeks later. The chicks made it out unscathed. I didn't see them hatch, but I have seen them in the area since.

A killdeer nesting on gravel. Note the speckled eggs blending with the gravel. *Photographed at Oak Alley Plantation, Louisiana, by Leo Lombardini.*

The Brazos Day-Tripper: In Search of the Red Cockaded Woodpecker

by Jimmie Killingsworth

I leave College Station a little after six a.m. on a midsummer morning, heading southeast with a full moon setting fast in the rear view mirror. I'm headed for W. G. Jones State Forest off Texas 1488 between Magnolia and The Woodlands, just west of I-45. I've studied the field guides and learned to watch for the white cheek mark and not to expect to see the tiny red "cockade" over the ear of the male. It is "rarely seen in the field." I learn to distinguish the bird from the smaller downy and the larger red-bellied woodpeckers. Forty minutes of driving and the first pines appear, just in time for the sun to break through misty limbs. Forty minutes more and I pull out of the headed-to-Houston workday traffic and into the parking lot of the state forest. I am on the trail by eight a.m.

I start down a two-track dirt road that seems promising, arrive at a footpath with a sign pointing to a picnic area, and go that way. The Jones State Forest is definitely not the deep pine habitat I associate with the legendarily shy woodpecker. A busy state highway lines the north border, and the main "improved" dirt road that runs along the west border abuts a middle-income housing development. The picnic tables around the little pond near the entrance are littered, the garbage cans overflowing with trash from highway refugees, people stopping for a quick shady lunch or teenagers seeking privacy.

On the path, though, I see a little buck deer, and my spirits rise as I hear woodpeckers in the trees. Soon I come to signs posted by the Forest Service announcing protected habitat for the endangered bird. A simple line drawing in profile highlights the white cheek and ladder-striped back. The red cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), the signs say, lives only in mature pine forests, preferring long-leaf pines, where it nests in openings it bores in living trees. It drills little holes around the nest to let the yellowish sap run down the trunk. The sap apron may protect against predators like the agile Texas rat snake. In the absence of long-leaf pines, the birds will settle for loblollies, the species found here.

Arriving at the picnic spot—less trashed out than the roadside park—I find picnic tables arranged around a small pond directly across a two-track road from an opening in the forest with signs that say "viewing area." On trees painted with green bands, I see the nesting sites, almost perfectly round holes crusty with sap, some of them reinforced with wire mesh below the hole and

Female Red-cockaded Woodpecker
This image is in the public domain because it contains materials that originally came from the United States Marine Corps. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image is in the public domain.

metal plates that reinforce the opening—placed, I assume, by rangers. The underbrush has been cleared to mimic the conditions of the park-like openness of a long-leaf pine forest—an effect of fire in wild conditions. I scan the area with the binoculars, but before long, I begin to think that these nests have been abandoned. All the other woodpeckers in the forest are active—I've seen red-bellied and pileated—so why would the red cockades be the only ones to sleep in on a working day?

Continued on page 5

Woodpecker (from page 4)

The pond draws my attention when I hear splashing. With the glasses, I follow the movements of a mud turtle as it watches me warily from the surface of the water, submerging at my slightest movement. When I first see it, its profile is so flat that I think it's a snake. I admire how a big cypress tree by the pond spreads its limbs and "knees" in every direction as if relaxing by the dependable water source. I turn back and glass the trees again. Nothing.

Reluctantly I decide that these carefully managed nests hold no life. So I move on, following the puddled two-track drive that leads out of the picnic area westward. It takes me to the west border road. A few minutes of walking brings me to another "viewing area." I see the big trees with the green painted bands, but the sun has mounted to a height that makes it hard for me to look in that direction, so I tramp across the pine litter and what remains of the cleared underbrush to improve the angle. I'm wary of each step. This kind of debris says "copperhead" to my inward ear. But I see only a darkly striped chocolate brown skink and a colorful milk snake. Except for a few scolding blue jays, I see no birds. The nesting sites here look a bit fresher. More of the yellowish sap drips below some of the holes. No woodpeckers, though. Back to Plan B, just walking for exercise. I'm dripping with sweat as the sun rises higher.

The border road leads me to a side road heading east into the denser forest. A sign pointing that way says "Horse Pen." I take the road, noticing only a few signs of equestrian activity, nothing fresh. Mostly the road seems unused. The underbrush of yaupon, cat briar, loblolly seedlings, and grape vine has its way in this part of the forest and reaches out to claim the road as well. Near the clearing where I see some rusty old machinery that might have been used for exploratory drilling on an oil lease, I take a footpath that opens to the south. Soon I'm engulfed by pine woods. Bright orange mushrooms sprout in the wet ground. A few hints of the enchanted darkness that I've always associated with pine forests gradually emerge. But I can still hear traffic on every side, muffled only slightly by the trees. Even the heavens roar with the steady traffic of big jets winging down to the Bush International Airport. Heavy development—some of the fastest growth in the region—moves in on all sides. I'm only a few miles from the closest Starbucks Coffee. From the ground alone do I feel the characteristic quiet of the pine forest. The soft black sandy earth spread with the bronze needles going gray in the dampness cushions the steps of my big boots.

The trail ends in about a half mile, bringing me to another east-west two-track that parallels the "Horse Pen" road. I turn right, westward, heading back to the boundary road. Just walking now. Remembering to breathe. By my estimate, I am centered in the deepest part of the State Forest, farthest from any of the big paved roads on every side.

I'm walking, breathing, eyes straight ahead, when I hear the tisk-tisk sound of a little bird, sort of like the warning of a chickadee, but more clipped. I turn almost casually and catch sight of a small woodpecker going up the side of a big pine across a small clearing about fifty feet to my left. I bring the binoculars up in time to get a good view. The prominent white cheek patch tells me it's the red cockade. It was as if he called me out of mourning for his loss to announce his living presence. Now he cuts a bird-book pose on the side of the loblolly. I say "he" because I'm almost certain the light is good enough for me to glimpse the tiny red ear patch, the red cockade itself. Then he flies, too fast to follow with the glasses. I watch with unaided eye as he flits from tree to tree, then disappears into the pines.

Only then do I notice a single green-banded tree to the right of the trunk where I'd first seen the bird. About halfway up the tall pine is a perfect example of a nesting site, the round hole bedecked with streams of flowing sap that reach several feet down the trunk. Later I read that the woodpecker only selects trees that have a fungus called red-heart disease. The fungus favors trees over seventy years old, so old growth is required for the bird's survival. Since in most places, even in state and national parks, the pines are harvested on a 60-80 year rotation at best, the trees are usually cut before the fungus sets in—for obvious economic reasons. Red-cockaded woodpeckers and the red-heart fungus may have a symbiotic relationship. The bird's practice of "flaking" bark during feeding makes the trees more susceptible to the fungus while the disease enables easier excavation of the nesting sites. The birds may take a year or more to drill a new site. Their time, as the Bible says of God's time, is not our time.

But this midsummer day in the Jones Forest, I'm in tune with the little bird. Deeper in the clearing beyond the green-banded tree is another nest in an unmarked tree. I like to think that is the latest home of the woodpecker that called me out of my reverie and made me see what I would otherwise have missed—a nesting site in the deepest point of the forest that the bird has refused to abandon.

Texas Amphibian Watch *by Mary Ann Cusimano*

We have proudly joined the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) Amphibian Watch program. The area around Wolf Pen Creek near Raintree Park has been adopted as our TMN-BV monitoring area. If you have been out and about in the evenings, you most surely have heard the trill of the Gray tree frogs, the musical peeps of the Rio Grande Chirping frog, or the angry buzzzzz of the Eastern Narrowmouth toad. You can hear these mating calls and many more in our area during the warm spring and early summer months.

Lee Ann Linam, Texas Amphibian Watch Coordinator for TPWD, started us off in March with a very informative Train the Trainers workshop. In late June, we held a workshop attended by TMN members and Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History science camp instructors. Workshops will be offered biannually, in early Spring and Summer. The purpose of the workshops is to teach interested members of our community about local frogs and how to collect meaningful data. Lee Ann is compiling this data and working in conjunction with Frogwatch USA and the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program to establish a baseline for frog populations in Texas.

So why the interest in amphibian populations specifically? Because amphibians breathe through their permeable skin, they are extremely sensitive to the environment. They are considered an indicator species, indicating the health of the ecosystem. The health of amphibian communities is influenced by a combination of many factors. As reported on the TPWD website, loss of habitat, introduction of chemical such as pesticides, increased ultraviolet radiation and global warming are some of the reasons behind decrease in populations. Since we have yet to establish a baseline for amphibian populations, we cannot document the health of our local communities.

Amphibian Watch needs as many volunteers as possible. Please join us for a workshop in Spring or Summer 2008. It is extremely enjoyable to walk in the moonlight and be part of the nocturnal revelry. Feel free to email me for additional information: Mary Ann Cusimano, macbaxter@msn.com or look up one of the websites listed below.

References:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/texas_nature_trackers/amphibian_watch/

http://www.nwf.org/frogwatchusa/

http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/naamp/

Available at the TCWC and the Blinn Aquatic Center: Flash Guide No. 3: Amphibians of the Brazos Valley, by Toby Hibbitts, Terry Hibbitts, and Heather L. Prestridge

The winner of this issue's *Cyrano* award will receive a personalized walking stick carved and fitted by Jim Anding. We are changing our system of deciding awards to involve the entire membership. We want you to decide which story is the winner of the Summer *Cyrano*. Remember that editors are disqualified (Leo, Kate, Manuelita, and Jimmy). Our original criteria for the award appeared in the Spring 2007 issue: "The Cyrano encourages stories from the membership that carry within them a sense of the writer's interest in our mission." Please send your vote within 2 weeks of publication to Kate Kelly, editor of the Fall issue: katherinekel@gmail.com, or kate-kelly@tamu.edu.

The Editors

The Demonstration Gardens at TCWC Get Bigger and Better *by M. Ureta*

We had two more work days at TCWC this summer. On the first one, we installed a bog. On the second day, a big crowd of volunteers showed up, enough to build a pond, edge several beds with a handsome off-white brick, pull weeds from all beds, and spread what must have been a ton of stone around the bog and pond. The weather cooperated and the whole affair was great fun, especially the cold watermelon we ate afterwards. Heather reports that all the new plantings are thriving, the crinum lilies and swamp mallow have bloomed, and an assortment of butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, frogs and fish have found a home. The two pictures on the next page don't do justice to the site. If you find yourself in the neighborhood, drop by and enjoy it.

Visit us on the web at:
http://grovesite.com/tmn/bv

Neighborhood Beautification Project *by Jo Anne Bates*

With an eye to the future and a plan in our heads, my new neighbor, Coryn Norlander and I approached the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Bryan. We first talked to him in the fall of 2006 and by the spring of 2007 we had approval to plan and plant a flowerbed in Camelot Park. Because Coryn is a crazed gardener like myself, we were very ambitious with our plans. The first phase was completed in early spring and with the spring rains and our wonderful wet summer, everything is thriving. This is the first of several "pocket beds" for the park. The Parks Department supplied the labor, soil, mulch, and several large shrubs to begin the project. We planted, watered, and selected mostly native plants to fill our new bed. The Texas A&M Horticultural Gardens on Hensel Dr. donated several large clumps of ornamental grasses. Madge Luquette willingly contributed her planting expertise to this big project. The Maximilian Sunflowers, donated by Jean Paul, are a wonderful backdrop. Since this is in a public park, we hope to inspire our neighbors to plant native plants that can thrive on their own. If a non-native plant can survive in those hot conditions, it is allowed to stay. There is a walking trail close to the bed and many of our neighbors are checking to see the latest blooms.

Demonstration Gardens at TCWC. ***Photos by Manuelita Ureta.***

A Long Weekend in the Rio Grande Valley *by Manuelita Ureta*

I am so grateful that on my first summer ever spent entirely in the Brazos Valley the weather was lovely. Our mild and wet summer made gardening a real pleasure. Having no weather-related excuse to leave town, the start of the school year looming large in the horizon provided one. I made a hotel reservation for three nights in McAllen, packed my camera gear and binoculars and, risking a close encounter with hurricane Dean, left before dawn one Friday for the Valley.

On a map, the Valley looks to be far away, but I pulled up to Pepe's Mexican Restaurant in Harlingen shortly after noon. From Harlingen I drove east to Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. On a short hike of the grounds around the park headquarters I encountered the first of many "life" birds for me that weekend: the fabulous, almost gaudy green jay. Another first was an alligator, snoozing placidly in the Laguna Madre not 30 feet off the shore from the wooden lookout. Dragonflies swarmed everywhere, and during the scenic drive I had to watch out for turtles and roadrunners who clearly think the road belongs to them.

Plain Chachalacas. *Photo by the author.*

Tired from the long drive and hike, I headed for McAllen and a long shower. Later I enjoyed another excellent Mexican meal at Costa Messa. After one day in the Valley, it became clear that it is easier to get around in Spanish than English!

Early Saturday morning I headed to Bentsen State Park, headquarters of the new World Birding Center, a collection of wildlife centers that span the entire Valley. The new buildings are handsome and the staff is highly qualified. You can sign up for assorted guided tours on most weekend days. The vast park held several firsts for me: great kiskadees were everywhere, I saw many western kingbirds, and was intrigued by a night-blooming cactus, *Acanthocereus tetragonus*. Most startling was the sudden appearance of a boy, who looked to be about ten years old, on a short trail detour with a good view of the Rio Grande. He looked afraid and tired. He spoke to me in Spanish. He was from El Salvador, on his way to join his parents in Houston. The previous night the "migra" spotted and arrested the group he was traveling with, including his brother, but he had managed to escape. He spent the night wandering in the park, and he was hungry and thirsty. Weighted down with a heavy camera and binoculars I didn't even have a bottle of water for him. When I explained we were in a park, he asked "But where are all the people?" As we walked back to the park's entrance, the tram came around and the driver gave the kid a ride. Later, as I was leaving to go visit the newest addition to the World Birding Center, Estero Llano Grande State Park, I saw the white SUV of the Border Patrol pulling up to headquarters.

This time of year birders and hikers are nowhere to be found in the Valley. Birds are not migrating and it is hot and humid. Still, it is a wonderful time to visit. The next morning I had all 2200 acres of Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge to myself. It was awe-inspiring and humbling to have the Old Cemetery, the Sabal palms, the Texas Ebony, the plain Chachalacas (*Ortalis vetula*), the gnats, mosquitoes and chiggers, all for me. A few days later, I fought the urge to feel sorry for myself while in a fit of scratching by thinking that the Salvadoran boy must be scratching even more, and in far worse accommodations.

Later on Sunday, I drove farther east to the Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary. Again, I was the only visitor. It is uniquely beautiful and well worth a visit. The wading birds---egrets, wood storks, stilts---can be spied on at close range in a blind so exquisitely built that it feels as if it is air-conditioned. I lingered there for a long while, grateful for the cool breeze rushing through it.

In the evening, I headed to Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, a short drive from McAllen. Headquarters were closed, but it didn't matter. The demonstration gardens were in full bloom. Queens were literally swarming everywhere. I couldn't decide where to plant the camera tripod to best capture images of those graceful butterflies. The dragonflies in Edinburg are unlike the rest of them in the Valley: they like having their picture taken and will pose,

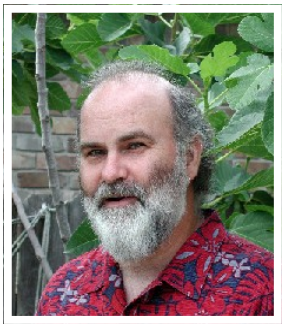
Continued on page 9

A long weekend (from page 8)

well, perch for long periods. I never saw them perching elsewhere. Another big treat in Edinburg were the four buff-bellied hummingbirds so busy fighting over a vast expanse of turk's cap they paid me no attention. I managed to get my first ever pictures of hummingbirds.

I left early on Monday morning, grateful that Dean was slow moving over the Caribbean. On highway 281 an interminable line of empty school buses---Dallas ISD, Schertz-Cibolo ISD, Northside, Eastside, Westside ISD---tour buses and military vehicles of incongruous colors and shapes worked their way south. I figured no one would pay attention to the north bound traffic and sped happily along on my way to San Marcos for a little shopping on the way home. But a highway patrol on the outskirts of Seguin thought otherwise, so I am bracing myself for yet another Saturday of traffic school...

TMN Members' Spotlight



Jimmie Killingsworth

I first remember being deeply aware of nature when my family moved from our native South Carolina to spend two years in Oregon while my Dad was in the Air Force. I was six years old, and the experience of driving across the country and seeing all the different landscapes—the desert, the Rocky Mountains, and the redwood forest—awakened in me a sense of the power of place. I lived near Crater Lake and Mt. Shasta and other astoundingly beautiful sites. I got to go hunting in the marshes and fishing in mountain streams. These experiences prepared me to become a birdwatcher and general nature lover after our return to the hills and beaches of the Carolinas, where I followed my interest in nature into Boy Scouts and summer camps. After my time in college at the University of Tennessee (in Knoxville, the "Gateway to the Great Smokey Mountains"), I spent time in the desert of New Mexico and the high plains of west Texas, finally settling in the river country of the Brazos Valley, where I teach and study nature writing and environmental rhetoric as Professor and Head of the English Department at Texas A&M. This October I'll be bringing out a Texas A&M University Press book on our local environment, called *Reflections of the Brazos Valley*, which features photographs by my colleague Gentry Steele, the anthropologist. The book's text, like my time in Texas Master Naturalists, bears witness to my appreciation of the charm and diversity everywhere evident in our local land.

Lourdes Benalcazar Hasson

I come from Ecuador. I used to live in Quito, its capital, located at over eight thousand feet above sea level, surrounded by volcanoes, with a temperature ranging between 15 and 24 °C, flowers blooming year around, and no mosquitoes. I belonged to a mountain climbing club where, in addition to climbing, I learned to respect and appreciate nature. After I got married, I spent eight months on San Cristobal in the Galapagos Islands where Ken was building a natural history museum. We then moved to the Coastal area of Ecuador, which has a hot and humid climate, much like College Station, but with a cool ocean breeze making it more tolerable. There, I enjoyed the ocean and smog-free air.

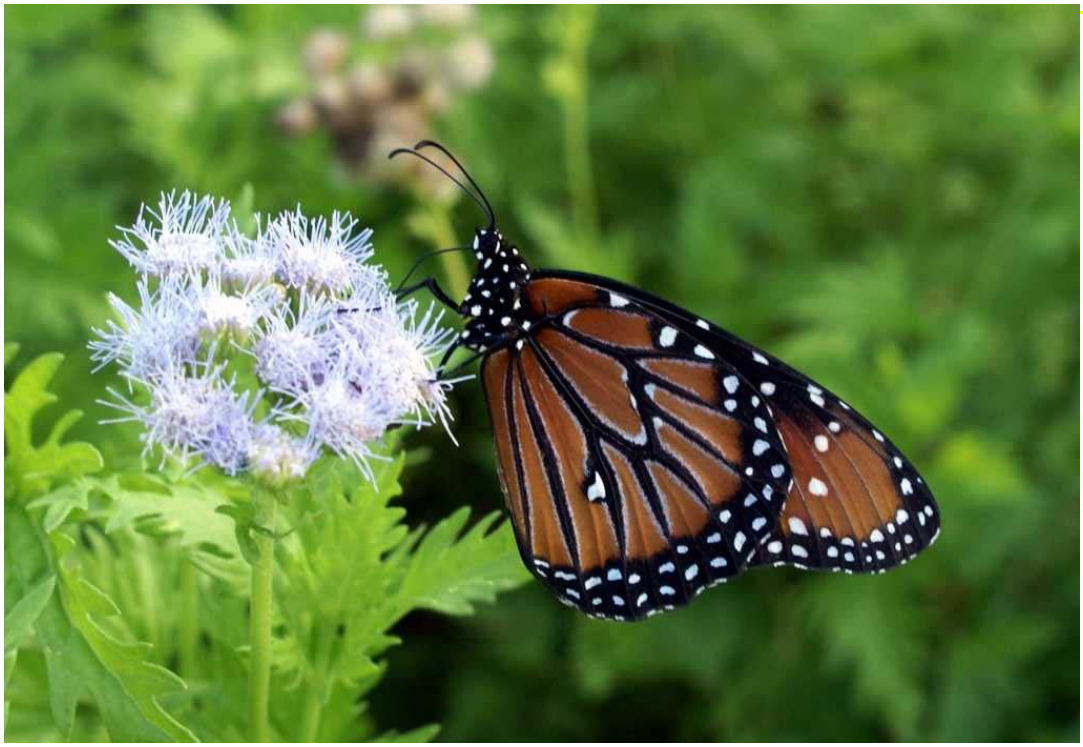
We came to the States 18 years ago and lived in five states before coming to Texas. We arrived here on a typical summer day with 97° F heat and high humidity. Getting used to the weather and to Texas has been a challenge. I love spring time, especially when the bluebonnets and Indian paintbrushes are blooming.

Presently, I work for the Bryan School District and I am taking a computer class at Blinn.

I joined the Texas Master Naturalists in order to learn about nature here in Texas and to make new friends. So far, I have made some friends, but I still have a lot to learn about the natural wonders of Texas.

Visit us on the web at:
http://grovesite.com/tmn/bv

Our Final Thoughts



Check out the differences and similarities between a Queen (*Danaus gilippus*, above; photo by Manuelita Ureta) and a Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*, right; photo by Jim Waldson).

If you would like to have one of your photos featured in one of the next issues of the Cyrano, you can do so, by submitting it electronically to Leo Lombardini

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Mark your calendar!

2007 Texas Master Naturalist Statewide Annual Meeting & Advanced Training - San Antonio, October 12-14, Hilton San Antonio Airport. For reservation call 1-888-728-3031or online at www.sanantonioairport.hilton.com. Group Code: TPWD. Room rates guaranteed with reservations made by September 14, 2007