



# Gideon Lincecum Chapter Texas Master Naturalist™ *NEWS*

**February, 2012**

## **From the President:**

January has been an active and very interesting month for me. How about you?

I was very pleased to be able to kick off my 2012 Advanced Training credits by attending the Post-Fire Habitat Restoration Workshop at LCRA McKinney Roughs Nature Park on Jan 13, 2012. Several of our members have assisted in the efforts to help clean up the Bastrop and Luther Hill areas since the September wildfires. Among the topics included in the workshop were post-fire water quality, short and long-term re-vegetation, erosion control strategies, managing wildlife after the fire, and the future outlook for weather and fuels.



A week later, on Jan 21, our chapter meeting and program at Winedale were both very well attended. I was pleased to introduce to a full room, Mr. Joe Blanton from the Houston Arboretum and Dr. Eric Taylor, with Texas AgriLife. Mr. Blanton informed the audience the Houston Arboretum Nature Center had been declared un-defendable from wildfire. He then outlined plans being implemented to change and recover--- plans that include a wetland area. Dr. Taylor educated us on the effects of drought on trees, emphasizing the importance of managing forests and extended his lesson, with encouragement from his listeners, by presenting a diagram of how to properly water a tree.

On February 1, my yard was full of Robins and on February 2, I couldn't even see out the window because the fog was so thick. I stepped out on the porch to make sure that I was awake. I did not hear the official report but I'm pretty sure no ground hog in the southwest corner of Fayette County was able to see his shadow that morning.



I'd like to thank all members who participated in the orientation program for the new class and especially our Texas AgriLife sponsors, Larry, Kara, and Philip, for introducing themselves. Our new recruits got off to a great start. I'd like to thank our web-master, Madeline Johnson, for her attention to maintaining the website as a resource of information for all chapter members and encouraged our new members to continue to re-visit it.

Wishing to be inspired by Dr. Baron Rector again, I attended the first training class. I never cease to be amazed by his energy and wit. I confess, I was stirred by his passion for his subject. Like an excited preacher in the pulpit, *wanting to make sure no one could miss his point*, he got loud. It was my privilege to hear again his *common sense knowledge of the land*.

See you at Saturday's Pot Luck!

Cindy



**Come have some fun with us this Saturday:** The Top Ten Social is scheduled for Sat, Feb 18, beginning at 5:30 PM, at the Winedale Dining Hall. We will start with a pot luck supper. Water, coffee, plates, cups and eating utensils will be provided. Wine is permissible (BYOW) but no beer or other alcoholic beverages are allowed. **Please bring your favorite dish to share.**

We will have two presenters: Jerry Frazier will present ["My Top Ten Thoughts on the Drought"](#) and Kathy Cihlar will focus on ["The Top Ten Venemous Critters in Your Backyard"](#).



### **Butch Young and The Attwater Prairie Chicken**

*(In this article, Butch Young tells us about his experience at the Attwater Prairie Chicken Wildlife Refuge. Sounds like there is ample opportunity here for Volunteering).*

As a 2011 TMN graduate I needed a place to volunteer to get my forty hours. I had visited the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge the fall before and was intrigued with how they went from old rice paddies to pastures with native grasses.

I checked the website <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/attwater/index/html> to investigate volunteer opportunities and found the following “... *the refuge needs help with fence line/brush clearing, acclimation pen construction, removal, and storage; gathering baseline data for reptiles, amphibians, small animals, and birds; organizing slides, filing system, and catalog files, acid rain monitoring, radio telemetry tracking, developing display and programs for schools; and visitor services. Volunteers are most needed during the spring, summer, and fall.*” I sent an email to the refuge manager Terry Rossignol, who in turn put me in contact with John Magera the Assistant Refuge Manager. We scheduled a meeting and I began the volunteer process.

First, when working with the government, you will have documented training. To use an ATV/UTV requires online training and a practical evaluation to demonstrate proficiency. I have worn out two chainsaws living in hurricane country in Florida. Did not matter. They sent me to a four day course in Bastrop to learn the proper way to handle a saw and drop a tree. Yes I did have bad habits that had to be unlearned. Then I was sent to a one day American Red Cross First Aid Class so I could patch my partner if he had an accident. (We haven't yet). To use the tractors and dozers requires online training followed by a practical evaluation to demonstrate proficiency.

Now once trained life is good. It's like having your own expense free 13,000 acre ranch.

### ***What is there to do?***

**Manage invasives.** Chainsaw, weed eaters, clippers, ATVs with spray tanks, hand pump sprayers, and one 1000 gallon tractor pulled tank with remotely operated boom sprayer. Macartney Rose, Chinese Tallow, and yaupon are the common targets.

**Feed the birds.** When new birds are received from one of the breeding locations they are put into acclimation pens. They are fed and given fresh water twice a day for two weeks in the pen. After the two weeks, the pen doors are opened and the birds are allowed to leave. The feeding continues for four more weeks. This year, out of pen feeding was continued longer because forage was limited due to the drought.

**Mow the trails.** There are two at the present.

**Maintain fire breaks.** Fire breaks are routinely maintained throughout the year. The refuge tries to burn twenty-five percent of its land yearly.

**Install predator guards.** Nixalite is cut from 100' strip and attached to the wooden posts. T-posts get a hose clamp and wire.



**Clear fence lines.** We use loppers or weed eaters to cut the brush and stump spray with glycofosphate. Lesson learned, "Do not throw the cuttings into the fire break!"

**Participate in ant studies.** You go to five surveyed locations and lay out a pattern of hot dog pieces, one in the center, nine equally spaced in a circle twenty-seven steps from the center. We lay out five locations then go back to the first after thirty minutes to record the activity and what type ant we find. After the first five, you repeat on different locations.

**Participate in vegetation transects.** We take a gridded pegboard and camera to designated locations. We hold the board up in the vegetation and take a picture. The pictures are analyzed with a computer program to evaluate the amount of vegetation. We also take an insect net and collect insects. The collection is evaluated in the office.

**Drive a dump truck.** They are eliminating old railroads and roads. The beds are dug up with a backhoe and the material saved for later road maintenance. That's where the dump truck comes in, hauling the gravel to the storage piles. After the gravel is removed the area is leveled and reseeded. This was the only piece of equipment I got the keys to without any formal training!

*(Editor's Note The following is from an article published in the Eagle Lake Paper regarding Butch and Peggy Young's volunteer morning. They were assisted by fellow TMN's Toni and John Platt.)*

"Recently, a group of Master Naturalists from the Brenham, Texas area volunteered their morning to secure spikes to the top of over one mile of wooden fenceposts on the refuge. Installing predator guards on fenceposts or removing trees and brush is a great way for volunteers to help restore the prairie and contribute in a meaningful way to the recovery of Texas' most endangered bird. Through their efforts, hundreds of acres of prairie have been taken out of play for hawks and owls, making the area much safer for the prairie chickens that live there.

For more information about how you can help the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge

restore our native lands and wildlife, log onto [www.attwater.org](http://www.attwater.org) or call 979-234-3021. To learn more about becoming a Texas Master Naturalist, head to [www.txmn.org](http://www.txmn.org)”

## [Adopt a Highway Program is Under Way](#)

The **Gideon Lincecum Texas Master Naturalists** have Adopted a Highway. Fresh with TexDot enlightenment and draped with copious equipment, many members of our indefatigable Chapter confronted the elements early on the cool Saturday of January 28<sup>th</sup> to tidy the verge. Extending along SH 159 from Rutersville 2 miles, as the crow won't fly in the direction of LaGrange, our little strip of turf is quite manageable and will trumpet “our brand” for the duration of our commitment.



For those of you, who have not had the pleasure of picking up after much more than your pets and teenagers, draw up a chair. Some of us have been picking up for the Washington County Wildlife Society for a while now.



### **Paraphernalia provided by TexDot:**

- 1) Billowing White Bags –In the history of neither Glad nor Hefty has such a tough plastic been employed in refuse collection. The advice against dragging these blousy receptacles along the ground is wholly unnecessary and some of us under 6 feet may delight in flaunting the regulation, albeit we had better do as we are told.
- 2) Orangutan-orange diabolically designed Velcro-closing floppy jackets with gray reflector strips. Who has worked out how to put them on? Where are the arms?

### **Paraphernalia provided by volunteer:**

- 3) Gloves and Sensible Shoes – because if you don't bring waterproof gloves, you might as well go home and have a nice cup of cocoa. There are things out there...nasty. Green briar loves socks and attack ants love the damp under cardboard. You may choose to forget your gloves on grisly days.
- 4) A Small Wrench - to undo the bolt that holds up the large orangutan-orange triangular Men Working sign that looks small and white from the road. When you go to open it, give yourself extra time for tracking bolt bits through lush vegetation and bring bandaids in case you misjudge how swiftly it will deploy.
- 5) Water - because we need water to live, or at this time of year a nice cup of cocoa in a thermos.
- 6) Snacks - the kind that have paper on them so you don't need to take along hand sterilizer. One tends to lose concentration and heart after the first hour of picking up other people's thoughtless jetsam without sustenance.
- 7) An attitude - so you are not hounded out by beavies of dogs, startled at the toot of a hurtling truck, become offended when your neighbor mistakes you for an inmate, or slightly annoyed when another neighbor drops by to watch you saying they have always thought about helping, but just don't have the time. Above all be safe.

**Since safety is a key ingredient to making this opportunity fun, all volunteers must review the [Texas Department of Public Safety website](#) under [Community Programs](#) as listed on the [TMN-GLC website](#). There are certain things volunteers should not pick up, but should mark for TxDot personnel to be able to remove.**

### **Things that are just *wrong*:**

- 1) Dumped ashtrays: It takes a squillion years to clean up one thoughtless bombsite. Cigarette butts take two squillion years to decompose.
- 2) Tissue paper - ominous
- 3) Car parts: license plates, unidentified plastic chrome stuff, and tire scraps. Why don't they just pull over and pick up after the traumatic traffic event? OK, maybe not.
- 4) Agricultural Impedimenta: barbed wire, mystery metals and orangutan-orange nylon lashings that are partially absorbed in blobs of asphalt.
- 5) All Styrofoam because the foam part in Styrofoam Is Foam. One Slurpee cup can break up into clouds of feather light crumbs and shards, which seem to have an affinity for green briar and blackberry groves. Have you seen the state of a dog frolicking in packing?
- 6) Already scratched lottery tickets curling up in the crabgrass. If you are going to toss out a lottery ticket, leave it unscratched so we can get something out of this activity besides feeling that we have done a good day's work.

**BUT:**

**Don't sweat the small stuff! There is nothing to compare to magnificent sunny days out in the countryside with great friends and transforming a landfill into a meadow. Let's all get out there and someone find a good café where we can meet for afternoon tea!**



*Pictures by Elisa Henderson*

Because this was the first clean-up in this area we were only able to clean half of our area but we felt satisfied since we gathered over 30 bags. ***We'll let you know as soon as we've scheduled the next clean-up date.*** Please come join the fun - the more the merrier!

### **[Brenham ISD Outdoor Classrooms:](#)**

The Lake is rising and the Brenham ISD Outdoor Classrooms are coming! Outdoor classrooms are conducted under the auspices of Nancy Oertli from BISD and Joy Nutt, a Ranger with Texas Parks and Wildlife

BISD 5th grade will go to Birch Creek State Park (this is a change due to the drought) on the north side of Lake Somerville. We have instructors, but need helpers. Dates are:

- March 1
- March 6
- March 7
- March 8

BISD 6th graders will go to Birch Creek State Park for their Outdoor Classroom; we always need helpers so more kids have an adult to talk with and ask questions during their activities.

- April 30
- May 1
- May 2
- May 3

Elementary Outdoor Learning Center on March 27. The third grade sessions are short. Brenham ISD needs help walking them from station to station and assisting the kids with their activities.

If you feel you can help on any or all of these dates, please contact Margaret Lamar to sign up at gretalamar@gmail.com



**NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:** March 17, 2012 at Winedale from 9AM to 11AM  
 A program will follow starting at 12Noon. We are fortunate to have 3 speakers who will help us to be well-informed about "Habitat Restoration".

- Hannah Bailey of the Houston Zoo will speak on the *Attwater's Prairie Chicken Recovery*
- Gregory Green of Duck's Unlimited will educate us about *Building Prairie Wetlands for Wildlife*
- Katy Emde of the Native Plant Society will give us knowledge about *Moths and Their Importance in Habitat Restoration*

*Bluebonnets by Carol Paulson, April, 2011, her property*



**Hoping for more this year!**