

## **TMN-Gideon Lincecum Chapter Meeting**

**May 19, 2012**

**Winedale Historic Center-- *MEADOWS CONFERENCE ROOM***

**Winedale, TX**

Prior to the meeting we had a special guest speaker, Ranger Barbara Swanson, from Stephen F. Austin State Park. She told us of an opportunity to get great volunteer hours and also help grow the park. The park is almost 500 acres located about one hour out from Houston and about one and one quarter hours from La Grange. They have a growing interpretive program and hope to develop another building on the premises into a huge nature center. Currently they have a small classroom which holds about 20 people. Other Master Naturalists present said they love it as a great place to camp in wintertime and Barbara added that they also have cabins with AC for summer! Currently they have only one interpreter and often groups of several hundred school children coming in. MN volunteers would be working directly with the park's full time interpreter and receive a monthly calendar of programs highlighting where the park needs help. From school programs, weekend visitors, to star gazing there is a variety of opportunities for volunteers. You can pick a presentation on items you are interested in: flowers, reptiles, etc. and do what you feel comfortable with or specialize in. They have nice water areas, a captive snake and alligator for educational viewing, lots of birds are available onsite, plus materials such as pelts, skulls, etc. There are enormous options limited only by your imagination! They also will provide a t-shirt with Texas Master Naturalist and the park logo on it and you can wear your name tag on the shirt. Barbara brought handouts and a sign-up sheet for those interested. She also distributed sheets which she asked us to pass on which allow you to donate to Texas Parks and Wildlife when you register your vehicle. Cindy said that she was encouraged that the Head Ranger has offered an orientation to the park for those who are interested. She likes this sort of docent orientation so volunteers don't walk in cold for their volunteer time. Ranger Swanson, a new MN graduate from our last class, volunteered to chair a committee for this as a MN project.

Cindy Rodibaugh called meeting to order at 9:31

Acceptance of minutes from March 17:

Wes Davenport moved and Judy Deaton seconded that we receive the March minutes as distributed via email. The minutes were approved.

Executive Committee Reports

President –Cindy Rodibaugh reported that Dave Redden clarified that we are a 501 C3 independent of the State. She also reported that River Watch Network is approved as volunteer hours. They are looking for someone to test the Colorado in the Columbus area. See Cindy re this if you are interested. It would be once a month at a particular site and earns regular volunteer hours. Jennifer Prihoda has done this before and can give you information.

Judy Deaton and Bill Dudley were thanked for presenting a Master Naturalist information program to the Lions club this month. Carol Montgomery and Cindy Rodibaugh talked with the Cotton Gin

managers to clarify GLC-TMN responsibilities and segregate that particular area from the local maintenance group that works with the Cotton Gin. Carol Montgomery will be in charge of scheduling TMN work days at the site.

Lefty and LuAn Yarnold and Cindy Rodibaugh represented GLC-TMN on AG Day for the Brenham Middle School 4th graders. Approximately 400 students were welcomed into the greenhouse behind the Brenham High school. We introduced them to the young native grass plants (side oats grama and Indian Grass), showed them illustrations of the root structures of the native grasses, and explained how the rain water harvesting system worked and why conserving water was important. Each group of approximately 20 students spent 30 minutes with us. It was a fun challenge and an education for the TMNs.

Dave Redden has sent information about a Proscribed Burn workshop at Washington Fairgrounds on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Margaret Atkins, a recent 2012 GLC-TMN graduate, sent information about the Green Expo June 8-9 at Bastrop. Cindy was not sure how much this would relate to MN but they are trying to develop sustainable programs. [www.heartoftexasgreenexpo.org](http://www.heartoftexasgreenexpo.org) is the link for those interested.

From Michelle Haggerty, The Heartland TMN Chapter will be offering a program on Pollinators June 23 from 10 am - 1pm. For more info go to their website [www.heartwoodtmn.org/groups/naturelive-volunteers](http://www.heartwoodtmn.org/groups/naturelive-volunteers).

Vice President—Margaret Lamar felt that in the summer we often have down time so this might be a great time to get together with a social and informative time. We could show Green Fire at local library or other ideas were suggested. It is the year of the bat so that sounded fun too. Bat colonies of Texas known worldwide. Margaret suggested a field trip in June, to Austin and LBJ Wildflower Center and café. If we have 15 we can do a guided tour then have lunch and then have an afternoon off then take the Capitol Cruises on the lake for \$10 each and see the bats. There is a bat room there and the captain of the ship is an interpreter. This idea was well received and Margaret is going to co-ordinate this and put out info for possible dates.

Margaret also reported being energized by what our Master Naturalists chapter is doing in other areas such as the park. She felt many of these things will help with the disconnect between children who otherwise never get outside of walls and nature. She feels it will also combat prejudice against conservation. This is a serious issue at this time dwindling resources, budget cuts, and camps being closed. TMNs around the state are getting organized to help support these needs. Margaret encouraged everyone to be involved.

Wes Davenport commented that Texas Parks and Wildlife is a model for the rest of the country. What is happening now as a result of government cutbacks is a shame. Texas is the worst state in terms of amount of public land and without the park system people who don't own land have nowhere to go to experience nature. He felt that we need to make that known outside of our group by stressing in all we do how important the Texas park system is.

Treasurer—Carol Daniels reported a March 1<sup>st</sup> balance of \$ 12795.73. After deposits of dues for \$25 and withdrawals for expenses of \$2443.40 the May 16<sup>th</sup> balance was \$10377.33 The treasurer's report was received as presented.

### Committee Reports

Prairie Committee Belinda Weatherly sent a written report to the meeting. It noted that a truck load of sandy loam needs to be deposited to the greenhouse. Margaret Lamar thinks she has a possible contact for that. Larry Pierce said Blinn is rebuilding greenhouses damaged in recent storms and they are interested in seeds and wanted to know where we collected seeds because ours that were planted came up really well! Larry hopes we can eventually become a seed production spot for native grasses. Charlotte Von Rosenberg said plants were available outside our meeting room and to please take some home and see if you can get it to go to seed. Keeping the roots wet when they first get started is the key. She showed a picture of how mature roots of native grasses are as long as the man was tall. That picture is one of those which helps us to understand. All of the plants are in containers and the containers are to be washed and returned. LuAnn and Lefty Yarnold volunteered to do that and Jerry King has pots to donate.

Blue Bird Trail at Winedale Jim Weatherly wrote there are 2 bluebird nests with baby birds, 1 with bluebird nest with eggs and 1 nest with Carolina Chickadee eggs. Also, FYI, the vulture hatchlings have flown the coop.

Recruiting Judy Deaton reported that usually by this time of year we like to have 35-40 on our interested list and so far 35 have signed up so she felt we are on track for our next class.

Training Toni Platt reported that the new class has been concluded and Judy Deaton will have the picture roster out soon.

Membership Carol Daniels submitted a written report. The chapter reported 1315 volunteer hours for the first quarter which since that report has accrued to 1420.75 volunteer and 365.25 AT hours. Pins were handed out and it was reported that two persons have initially certified. We have officially added the LCRA project as code 609 for river monitoring in Columbus. Also we are now making Stephen F. Austin Park an official project. This is a nature site project so we don't need a letter for it, but the code is 211. Carol also reported that if you were in class before 2009, you have to have another background check. We have not done them for a while since classes and she needs to get that caught up. Larry Pierce will be sending letters re that to those members, who need it, please be on the lookout for them, fill out the paperwork and respond. The chapter will be doing those at a rolling basis due to cost. If you have another background check for something else then please provide that and save us \$10! Carol had a long conversation with Michelle Haggerty re: signing timesheets electronically. Carol felt she was lucky to get hours submitted! However because Texas Parks and Wildlife gets \$19 for each hour we donate from the federal government, reporting hours is very important for many reasons. We will have to do an audit of hours in the spring of 2013. Michelle is accepting our backup hours but now requires that we send her Xerox copies or on a CD all hour sheets for 2010, 11, and 12. Carol is working on 2010 and 11 and brought them along. All must be signed and dated to count. We probably have more hours but for the audit we need to have proof of all of them. If you are submitting by email, Excel is good but you must still have an electronic signature on an Excel spreadsheet and somewhere on the

form put: “Electronically signed by....your name, email address, date.” Change the date each time you submit new hours as the yearend summary needs the whole date and cannot accept if it is dated March, etc. So Carol reminded everyone to mail, or scan, etc. and be sure that on your last submission to remember the end of the year date as cumulative is very important! TX Parks and Wildlife get their money quarterly, but we run a Jan-Dec calendar year and need overall hours submitted for reporting. Most members now date to December 31<sup>st</sup> of the current year and start January 1<sup>st</sup> for the next year. Carol stressed that she prefers quarterly submissions!

Advanced Training Dave Redden was not present but sent word that online Webinars were getting mixed reports, most are done very well, but sometimes they are on topics we aren’t interested in, but several are good. He sent a June 1<sup>st</sup> Burn seminar handout with information that you do have to register to attend. Also there are separate requirements if you want pesticide applicators credit. Dave also reported that Texas Co-op Magazine has an article about Houston Toads.

Programs Debbie Copeland gave the program committee report. She reported that if you had attended all the chapter sponsored programs, you would have the 8 advanced training hours needed for certification. In addition to the Native Prairie programs, consider the Austin Butterfly Forum programs for advanced training credit.

Coming programs discussed:

September 15<sup>th</sup> program will be presented by Valarie Boug and Peg Wallace, both members of the Austin Butterfly forum.

Cindy Rodibaugh reported we will have a meeting but no program in November.

January—A program and speaker is yet to be determined

Newsletter Carol Paulson reported this is coming along fine. She has good material for the June edition but hopes to hear from you as can always use more material. There will be an ID plants section in the next one!

Prescribed Burning A class is planned and also field trips for fire protection.

Social It was reported that we went over budget by \$235 for graduation. Janet thanked everyone who helped.

Volunteer Service Projects Ed Koslosky encouraged anyone who might want to be chair of any project. There are lots of them available! He also reported that we had to cancel the last roadside trash project as water was in ditches and TXDOT still had not mowed. Mowing is going on now but our volunteers couldn’t go chest high in weeds nor do we want you to!

Greenhouse project Greenhouse Charlotte Von Rosenberg encouraged everyone to take plants home and that you don’t have to be real tender with them. They are fine, just get them in the ground and water them! Treat them like you would your other plants. Once they are established in gallon pots they can then go out into the prairie soil and will take off. But as young as they are now, she emphasized, they still need water and if you have harder gumbo dirt you need to grow them larger before they will take off!

Brenham Elementary Project Margaret Lamar reported that they are rounding out the year and had very successful days at the outdoor classroom. They are building a robust program with the younger children so that when they go to 5<sup>th</sup> grade and they have a big science test they are prepared already with K-4. Our piece right now is the vegetable garden and she reported we now have 7 teachers and 150 kids in first grade garden and it is really working. They are learning a lot and the garden perimeter keeps them in control and they can dig in, literally and figuratively and learn what teacher is teaching them. Plant life cycles are completed and teachers are becoming confident to harvest and what they do with what they harvest. They have been bridging outdoor and indoor learning with story books and there are many great gardening books. Margaret will be meeting with teachers re feedback and planning for next year. She has a little money left and would like to buy books to reinforce outdoor learning. She is working with the libraries who have a budget too and they are looking at a partnership to purchase books and build up a library for the teachers. Margaret says she will need help next year big time and asked for anyone who wants to be engaged in the vegetable project!

Blue Bird Program Susan Solari reported snakes are a problem for blue bird nest boxes. Scattered bird netting did not catch any snakes but it was thought they would not be able to get out of it. Armadillos can scratch through the netting. She has organized presentations for the Round Top Library for the summer months, one per month, beginning in June. The programs begin at 6:30 in the evening and will include TMN presenters. June 12 TMN Dave Redden will present: A New Perspective on Water Conservation; using your well water efficiently and how this may affect your neighbor. July 10 Will be a program on Tracks and Scat by TMN Cheryl Karr. August 14 is Texas Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation. Susie Rigler a permitted Wildlife Rehabilitator will be talking about raptors and will have one with her. The general public can attend. If these are well attended the library and Winedale would like to continue with it as a monthly project. Susan said this could be a great place to show your top 10 and very good for the community to see and learn from us. It puts us out there as a group and also puts info out there for the public. She is looking for someone who would like to take over this program as an ongoing thing, but Susan will continue if no one else comes forward. Sign-up sheets, a MN trifold, and introduction of speakers will not interrupt the program but still give us public exposure also. Not every speaker might be MN but for those who are it helps get the word out about our group.

A question was raised if these presentations would count as AT? It was thought that it should because we gave credit when such presenters presented here. So President Cindy Rodibaugh said yes it would count. Also you could earn volunteer time for those preparing and giving the program, AT for those attending.

Burton Indian Creek Nature Trail Carol Montgomery reported that the trail is in good shape now. June 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a workday starting at 8 o'clock—come get acquainted with area and see what the need is. Then you can go on your own for volunteer hours later. This is an easy and pleasant place to be. You can always add mulch, picking up limbs, trash on the trail; if you see poison ivy you can spray it, etc. We do have to keep it off the trail because of people who are sensitive. It was also suggested to bring cleaning rags for picnic tables. Help us maintain this project! A bluebird box is there too. Carol was hoping we could plant beauty berry on the hill, or trees, but because of past poison on the hill she is not sure if something will grow there. It was felt the dead tree for a snag was dangerous so they chopped it down. If you see something more major that needs to be done please let Carol or Cindy know so they can help out. The bridge on the old road has been condemned even for walking as the footings have

cracked. There is a sign on it now and it may be locked soon. The first weekend of each month is the Burton Farmer's Market weekend and that is fun to see too.

Cindy reports that the Cotton Gin day went very well because of the tractor pull. They had maybe 40 people and gave away hot house plants. Our volunteers talked to lots of folks and it was a long day but we did well. We do have a sign there and maybe need another saying because of snakes and ivy; children must be accompanied by an adult! It was decided that we will have a new warning sign next to our big sign.

Festival Hill Invasive Plant ID: Judy Deaton reports all is going well, signs printed and mounted ready for putting in the ground soon. We will have a workday announced.

There was some discussion with Margaret Lamar thinking about how all of our projects could involve families. They would both help take care of their kids and learn a lot at the same time. She felt it would take some promotion and asking maybe education foundations or partnerships to help us invite families and that might foster some stewardship and leadership. Cindy Rodibaugh said we might publicize workdays not just to us but to the community also. Come see us identify native species, etc.! She didn't know how it might work but felt it might work. The challenge though would be that we would have to have leaders who were in authority say identifying whatever is being identified, etc. Cindy felt that a big issue would be that parents and families know we're not responsible for them and that they take care of their kids. What is our insurance coverage was raised as a question? We are just our own, not under any MN plans, etc. The community is welcome to be there at our projects, but we're not responsible and in our society today we have to take that in account.

Wes Davenport reported that one of his wood duck boxes is occupied and has 19 eggs! He wondered under what circumstances two might share a box as this is almost certainly what is happening.

Lefty Yarnold moved to adjourn and Carol Hale seconded. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 11:03.

Respectfully submitted,

Lemae Higgs, Secretary