

Gideon Lincecum Chapter Texas Master Naturalist™ NEWS

June/July, 2013

From the President:

Congratulations to the GLC-TMN Class of 2013 Graduates!

Kudos to the Training Committee, the Social Committee and all the good cooks for creating the festive ambiance and fabulous buffet to celebrate your milestone. It was a privilege to introduce to you

Michelle Haggerty, the TMN Program State Coordinator, as your commencement

speaker. I hope you will find a niche within the chapter activities that will encourage you to continue your participation and grow our contribution to the management and maintenance of the natural resources in our five county areas.

This year commemorates my third year participating at the Cotton Gin Festival. In addition to touting the Indian Creek Nature Trail, the highlight of our booth this year was the success of our greenhouse plantings of native seeds and the sale of those infant plants to individuals interested in land stewardship.

Our table displays presented the importance of native plants versus the problem of invasive plants for wildlife and land stewardship.

Thanks to all chapter members who were able to participate sharing their knowledge of our naturalist program with the Burton visitors and community.

On May 21 I responded to a letter sent to our GLC-TMN website address from Reagan Kuck. Reagan has been a member of the La Grange 4-H Club for the past 5 years. Reagan is in the seventh grade; is



14 years old; his main interests are Wildlife and Fisheries; his main activity is the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program, through which he attended the State Contest for four years, winning first place team and individual two years ago. He received the Area award from the Soil and Water Conservation Districts for his conservation essay this year. He has been accepted as a member of the Texas Buckskin Brigades. His reason for writing us was to ask for financial assistance towards tuition for the South Texas Buckskin Brigade Leadership Camp this summer. (To learn more visit their website: <http://www.texasbrigades.org/>).



The mission of the Texas Brigades is "*to educate and empower youths with leadership skills and knowledge in wildlife, fisheries, and land stewardship to become conservation ambassadors for a sustained natural resource legacy.*" After verifying Reagan's participation with the La Grange County AgriLife Services, I reviewed Reagan's request with the GLC-TMN Board members recommending approval of \$200 toward Reagan's tuition. The Board unanimously approved to assist Reagan and I notified him via email. Reagan has offered to present a program to the chapter on his return from camp. Reagan is the second 4-H member our chapter has had the privilege to assist. I look forward to meeting Reagan in person. Thank you GLC Board members for your responsiveness.

Cindy

The Awesome Life of Blossom the Opossum

Contributed by Stephanie Lubianski, Education Director, Lone Star Wildlife Rescue and GLC TMN



This is Blossom, our educational ambassador opossum. A native Texan marsupial (the only in North America), she has an amazing life. As you may know, marsupials carry their young in a pouch. The closest relatives of opossums are kangaroos or koalas, which are found in Australia. Blossom's life began after a short 14 day gestation; she had no back legs and was about the size of a bumblebee. When you have only front legs to crawl with, it is a long trek to the pouch! Once inside the pouch, she finds a nipple. The nipple swells up inside her mouth and

keeps her attached to her mother. After approximately 2 months in the pouch, she crawls out and rides on her mother's back. After four months she begins to forage on her own, making way for the next litter.

Opossums have many amazing adaptations; the pouch is just one of them. The pouch is a muscle controlled by the mother opossum. She can open and close it and make it airtight when in water.

However, her tail is pretty amazing too. Opossums are equipped with a prehensile tail (similar to a monkey). This amazing appendage acts as a fifth limb. Young opossums are capable of hanging by their tails, but as their body mass increases they use it more for balance and to carry around nesting material. Opossums also have an opposable toe on the back foot. This “moveable” toe helps them to be great tree climbers.

All these things make Blossom pretty amazing, but the biggest question I get is how are opossums beneficial to me? Let me begin with their diet. Blossom is best described as an opportunistic omnivorous scavenger. Being nocturnal, they come out at night, put their nose to the ground and gobble up whatever they might come across. If they are living around your house this might consist of mice, roaches, spiders, scorpions, even snakes! Opossums have a natural resistance to venom; therefore they can consume small venomous snakes without any worry. They are not efficient hunters and will eat whatever “easy” meal they come across. Being omnivores, berries and fruit are favorites. Don’t worry about your fruit trees or vines, they prefer soft, overripe fruit which has already fallen on the ground.

Although they have a short life span of 2 -3 years, they have a great life strategy. When threatened with danger they will first fall over, open their mouth (showing all 50 teeth!), discharge their scent glands, and drool. The predator will think that the opossum is sick and hopefully move on. I receive numerous calls during these encounters stating that the opossum has rabies. However, opossums have a very different metabolism and body temperature than placental mammals; therefore, it is extremely rare for an opossum to carry rabies. This stinky, drooling, tooth baring is a sign of a very scared opossum. If the predator still shows interest in the opossum, it will “play dead”. This is an innate response, similar to humans fainting. They cannot control it and it can last 5 to 30 minutes. Hopefully, the predator will think the opossum was so sick that it just died and move on to find something else to eat. This strategy has worked for them for millions of years, as they have remained almost unchanged since the time of the dinosaurs.

Next time you see this wonderful marsupial wandering across your lawn, give it a little space and a little thanks for the job it is doing to keep all those pests off your lawn. Sit back and enjoy the Awesomeness of Opossums!

[*Trail Enhancement Project at Monument Hill*](#)

Contributed by Karen Mahoney

A great time was had by all at Monument Hill on May 29. We identified a lot of plants/trees. The focus was mainly on invasives, but we could not help but be intrigued by the variety of natives we will mark for trail enhancement. There were some mystery species that we are researching. A special thanks to Daniel Lewis and Dave Redden!



We have set-up the next piece: To assist park staff in removing the invasives on **Thursday June 20 at 8:30 a.m.** (Rain date June 21 – I'm an optimist).

Please come – the more, the merrier (not to mention easier!). Please call Karen Woods (281.682.2810) or Cindy Hobbs (706.244.4790) if you need follow-up information.

Congratulations to GLC TMN Charlotte von Rosenberg!

Congratulations to Charlotte von Rosenberg for becoming runner-up Wildlife Conservationist for Area III



Charlotte von Rosenberg, owner of Quebe Farm, is the runner-up for Area III Wildlife Conservationist of the Year from the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Brenham science teacher Nancy Oertli was named Area III Conservation Teacher of the Year. Awards were presented at a banquet May 7 in Victoria, Texas.

FESTIVAL HILL WORKDAY – THE FIRST FOR SPRING 2013

Contributed by Judith Deaton

On May 14, 2013 six Gideon Lincecum TMNs joined Henry Flowers, Director of Gardens at Festival Hill, to clear invasives in the woods just north of the Menke House Garden. The Chapter has offered to keep the woodlands of the 200+ acre grounds clear of invasive plants. This workday had been planned for May 3rd, but windy weather in the morning shook the area, so we postponed. The day dawned foggy, but the sun came out and the temperature remained perfect that morning for working. After a hiccup or two with identification, we got to work on a virtual forest of ligustrum that is choking out Carolina buckeyes and even yaupon along the rambling trails. We all learned a great deal from Henry about identification of the garden plants and those in the woodland areas.



Debra Healy, a newly qualified TMN, worked with Donna Cooley in clearing a little wooden bridge of invasives while Bill Deaton, Tom Yates and David Butler wielded the chain saw, big loppers and hand saws in bringing down some sizable trees in a grove of ligustrum. Elisa Henderson and Judy Deaton cleared brush and painted stumps with a Remedy mixture. We used a 25% solution of Remedy in old cooking oil with blue dye, which seemed somewhat less noxious than diesel. Hardly anyone went home without blue stained fingers and clothes. Our only worry was the abundance of poison ivy. It was very obvious to us as we were looking around how invasive ligustrum can be and, although the Festival Hill area is not quite as bad as that around Indian Creek, this is going to be an ongoing project. There is now a little glade where the young Carolina buckeyes can thrive.



Henry found a trifoliar orange towards the end of the day and, although it can spread, it was so lovely that we are leaving it for the visitors. Just as we gathered to have a picnic, we found three large chinaberries (we took down one) and there was much discussion about another small plant of similar habit that we couldn't identify. It can be very difficult to make a positive identification of chinaberry when it is just coming up. Many thanks to all those who said they would come on the 3rd and couldn't make it on the 14th. We plan another workday soon, before the heat arrives in late June.

[A Master Naturalist Looks at Nature's Remedies](#)

Contributed by Kathy Cihlar

Ahhh....[Roses!](#)

The exotic beauty and alluring scent of roses has infatuated humans for thousands of years. Roses have been found entombed with the ancient Egyptians and they were highly prized by the Greeks and Romans. The Chinese began cultivating roses around 5,000 years ago and Josephine, Napoleons' wife, adored them so much that she tried to grow every known species in her garden.

The entire plant offers a wide range of medicinal uses and the flower and hips are high in a multitude of nutrients. Roses are the greatest at "cooling" and "soothing," especially on muscle pain, wounds, sunburn, bug bites, and sore throats. They are also used for love, broken heart, hot flashes, gum health, cramps, and intestinal problems. Properties include anti-inflammatory, anti-infective, anti-oxidant, astringent, as well as being used as an aphrodisiac, nervine, and mood elevator.



Fresh rose petals can be made into jams, wines, honeys, vinegars, sprinkled on salads, put in sugar or creamed into butter, on desserts, as well as freezing them into ice cubes for drinks. They also are added to creams, facial scrubs, teas, tinctures, first aid creams, and elixirs.

Recipes: (Use a 1 pint jar)

Rose petal infused honey: fill jar $\frac{1}{2}$ full with petals, pour honey over and cap. Ready to use in 2 wks. Use for sore throat or just eat—yummy.

Rose petal elixir: fill jar, to the top with petals, pour honey $\frac{1}{4}$ of jar over petals, then pour vodka or brandy to fill jar $\frac{3}{4}$. Cap with a plastic lid – roses will eat metal. Let it sit for 3-6wks. Strain or just pour off. Use externally for burns, etc. and internally for what ails ya.

Rose petals in witch hazel: fill jar $\frac{1}{2}$ with petals, add witch hazel. Cover, shake. Let it sit for 2wks, strain. Mist yourself on hot days.

Rose petals in apple cider vinegar: Fill a jar $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ full of petals, add vinegar. Cap and shake. Let it sit for 3-6wks. Strain. Dilute 1:4 parts water. Use on sunburn, or gargle. Use full strength on salad.

I just found a recipe for Rose Petal Mead----ummmm. It will take a year, so we'll see.

Have fun!

KC out

[Introducing Prescribed Burning to Youth](#)

Contributed by Dave Redden

I was recently invited to participate in an outdoor learning program at Stephen F. Austin State Park for the 7th grade students from McDonald Jr. High in the Katy ISD. The program was organized by Lisa Reznicek, park interpreter at SFA. There were two days of demonstrations and learning exercises with four stations, each lasting 30 minutes with 15 minutes move time between stations. My station was to relate to why we want to do prescribed burning and how it can be done safely. For adults, this would usually be a 1-hr PowerPoint presentation. I did not think that a slide presentation would appeal to the students, so we experimented with a new idea.





First I just talked to them to explain that fire was a natural part of the ecology until we suppressed it. As a result of suppression, we have changed the ecosystem, and now we are finding that may not be as desirable as we once thought. For economic, environmental, and safety reasons, we are now trying to get fire back into the system. The problem is that fire is frightening for most people, and therefore you need to understand how to use it safely. That requires training, experience, equipment, and people.

We discussed the fire triangle (oxygen, fuel, heat) and how those elements were used or removed to create or suppress fire. We discussed the importance of knowing the weather (wind speed, RH, temperature) and emphasized that understanding fire behavior required understanding some chemistry and physics. We showed the Kestrel weather station and let the recognized most scientific student in the group be responsible for taking the readings. We addressed the need for verbal and written communication skills with the radios and being able to prepare a written plan. We mentioned the need for organization, teamwork, and leadership skills.

Then we made it exciting with a small-scale burn. At the suggestion of the park staff, we used their sandbox, which was about 8 ft x 8 ft. I brought a square bale of old hay that was very well dried out and spread hay over the sandbox about 1-2 inches deep. We raked the edges in about 6-inches for our



firebreak of mineral soil. I think it would also work to use any bare ground where it was safe, or you could use one or two sheets of plywood cut into 2 ft x 4 ft sections and laid together with playsand (available in bag from most hardware stores with lumber) spread over it to keep the plywood from catching on fire if you had to use a lawn or parking lot. I had 6 swatters and handed those out to students who did not get a radio or the Kestrel. We showed all how to use it and the backpack sprayer and discussed which part of the fire triangle those tools addressed. We discussed the process of lighting the downwind side for the backburn, then the flanks, and what the purpose was (to remove the fuel to stop the headfire). We

discussed the difference between controlled burn and prescribed burn. A prescribed burn cannot be turned off until it runs out of fuel. Your brain is the most important tool to make it do what you want it to do. A controlled burn (brush pile, trash can, etc.) should be able to be suppressed by water, turning off the fuel or oxygen supply, or other means if it is truly controlled.

The two days that we did the demonstration, there was little to no wind. So I used a leaf blower for an artificial wind. If you were close enough to electrical power, a fan would also work.

It all went well and the students seem to get the message that fire was good when used correctly, and they needed to study and learn everything they could at school so they could be able to do things requiring an understanding of science and communication skills.

We spoke to about 300 students over the two days. Even the teachers said they learned something from it. We stressed “*do not try this at home.*”

The pictures attached show the ignition sequence. (Note that I blurred the faces of all the students.) Roxanne Hernandez did the demo and pointed out afterwards that one of the pictures showed her with the drip torch resting on her leg. There may be other safety details that are apparent in the pictures, but I thought it went well for our first time. You might find this a good way to introduce prescribed burning to newcomers to the practice since it can be done in almost any setting.

[Quebe Farm Field Day](#)

Contributed by Charlotte von Rosenberg



On Saturday, April 20, Master Naturalists and members of the 2013 Graduating Class met at Quebe Farm for a Field Day. Minette Marr from Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin joined us. We walked the Riparian Restoration Project at the Quebe home place. NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) helped on this project. We saw the first stage of work - and the biggest, most dramatic. Carl Brockman and his forestry mulcher tackled literally dozens of medium and large Bois d'Arc trees and impenetrable greenvine in December 2012. What we saw was 5 months in to the next phase: identifying what grows back and killing invaders. Resprouting of yaupon holly will be accomplished during the summer using the cut and spray the stump method. This prevents the chemical from going into the air as with foliar spraying.

This was quite a hike -- but it was the most beautiful day of the whole year -Remember? - cool, dry, breezy, so we hiked onward to Quebe Prairie. The prairie rewarded us with botanical and spiritual moments. We were smelling the fragrant soil (unlike any other) and crawling around in the grass. Some of us paid the price with chigger bites. This fragile prairie remnant has bravely faced drought and invasion by Johnson grass. But thanks to Individual Plant Treatment of Johnsongrass, and well-timed rains this spring, the grasses look very healthy, strong and green. A grand time was had by all that day.

Please note: the Seed Collection Workshop date has changed. It will be held at Quebe Farm on Saturday, October 26 (earlier than planned).

[Visit to Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park](#)

Contributed by Bill Deaton

On 7 June a group of GLTMN volunteers joined Scott McMahon, TPWD Park Ranger Interpreter at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park, for a trail walk and initial facilities survey. Our group included Leann Bennett, Bill Deaton, Judy Deaton, Allen Ginnard, Karen Ginnard, Carol Paulson, Dave

Redden, Cindy Rodibaugh, Charlotte von Rosenberg and Tom Yates.



The park has extensive walking paths, a pond and great birding opportunities, but at present, it only provides historic tours. In discussions with Judy Deaton over the last several months, Scott indicated that our group could help the park expand its usual programs by providing trail interpretation with an initial focus on introducing 4th grade and 7th grade students to the natural plant and wildlife diversity of the park. Students from local and not so local schools visit the park frequently and Scott would like to offer to them organized trail walks, led by Master

Naturalists, on a regular basis.

During our walk with Scott we identified a wide range of plant species including quite a number of native grasses, some entertaining birds (a pair of red-headed woodpeckers greeted us at the start of the walk!) and we encountered absolutely NO snakes (but nevertheless snake stories abounded amongst this impressively knowledgeable group).

Near the pond, quite low at present due to ongoing drought, we were able to find a good location for a waterfowl blind in anticipation of the return of the rains and the ducks, herons, egrets, turtles, but not the gar – it never left and is just waiting for the return of the food supply. We may also be asked to provide wood duck nest boxes so James Schulenburg may have more work than just the blind to do.

All of our anticipated activities will be consistent with the need to encourage wildlife in the park. We may also be able to help in removing invasive plants (bastard cabbage seems to really like the pond area; too bad the gar are carnivores), giving a small scale demonstration of the principals of fire behavior and the benefit to desirable plants and wildlife by prescribed burning which Dave Redden, president of the Texas South Central Prescribed Burn Association, has successfully provided in other venues and possible assistance in a prescribed burn in a heavily wooded and overgrown area that Scott has identified.



It was clear that the park welcomes GLTMN participation in these expanded park programs and that Ranger Scott was impressed with this group's capabilities and enthusiasm. A very natural reaction.

[Deterring Snakes at Blue Bird Boxes](#)

Contributed by
Leann Bennett

On my property, I have attached bluebird nest boxes to T posts. At Master Naturalist Betsy Harwood's suggestion, I wrapped garden netting up the base to deter snakes from climbing up the post. It was very effective! We were alerted to the dead snake by the buzzards flying around. It appeared to have only made it up the post 1 - 2 inches before it was stopped.



[Every Day is Like Sunday on the Farm](#)

(Or....sometimes what people think is new has been tried before)

Contributed by James Schulenberg

Hope y'a ll can bear with me. I am a bit rusty, kind of like a squeaky bottom hinge going in a chicken pen. I have not been published for many moons. Since there are probably not many readers around that have seen this article, unless they read a previous Ag weekly publication, I will explain where the title "Every Day is Like Sunday on the Farm" came from.

Well, many, many, moons ago, my father, William, and his brother, Walter, found themselves at the young ages of 12 and 9 without a mother (she had died suddenly) and with a father that thought all housework and farm chores was beneath him . So, they learned that no matter when they thought they were caught up with chores on the farm--something broken needed fixing, or planting, or harvesting *even* on Sundays. And that was after church, because, Grandpa played the organ there.

Then some people don't understand that saying. Like their younger brother Robert. He was kind of “sickly growing up,” Walter would say. He blamed everything on farm life and could not wait to leave such an unhealthy place. As soon as he could, he got a job in the big city of Brenham and married a city girl. Back then they told everyone that the place to live was a new town east of Houston called Pasadena. It had a few companies coming and was going to have plenty of jobs (something to do with gas for cars). Well, later, Uncle Bob (he said that was his big city name instead of Robert), came back and tried to buy some of the farmland. But it had gotten a little more expensive than his house in Pasadena was worth. During that time, thank God, Dad stayed and did a little farming and to help had a radio and TV repair shop. Walter (who liked to fish) ended up around Freeport loading big ships for some Dow-type companies (but kept his hand in some gardening).

Then several moons later, I went to help Mr. Charlie out with some of his work on the farm. The year was 1964. This guy was not “changing with the times.” He let his fences grow up and never used anything to spray them. He told me, he thought it was good for rabbits and birds to nest in. I always loved to listen to those birds. He used manure from the barn for his regular garden, his oranges and lemons, and he watered with rainwater from his cistern. He rotated all his small pastures for the cows to graze. He planted vegetables in the fall then plowed them under in the spring before he planted his corn. Also, he taught me a few signs to watch for outside that gave you a pretty good guess when the next rain was coming. So my completion of the TMN (Texas Master Naturalist) course this spring got me thinking: “*Are all the organic gardening and water collection systems truly new?*”



Mr. Charlie would be happy to know that he taught me something that I can put to good use every day that is like Sunday on the farm.

I will get y'all into weather predicting later if y'all ask me back.

From the Native Prairie Committee:

Contributed by LuAn and Lefty Yarnold

Now is a good time to be collecting seeds for Indian Blanket, Black-eyed Susan, Mexican Hat, Coreopsis, Antelope Horn Milkweed

Highway Clean-up Committee

Contributed by Elisa Henderson

It was a beautiful morning with a very joyful and vigorous group of 11 participants. They were meeting in Ruttersville to clean the highway adopted by the Texas Master Naturalists. Along their two miles, over 27 bags of all kinds of trash were collected despite the grass growing very high. Along the

way one could observe a great deal of discussion and admiration for some beautiful and mysterious wild- flowers encountered.

Missing from the picture are Judith Deaton and Elisa Henderson - Allen Burns, Tom Yates, Chris Morrison, Tom Atkins, Billie Burns, Leanne Bennett, Donna Cooley, Donna Mueller and Lorri Sanchez. Are pictured. Thank you all for helping so early in the day.



Reminder: Don't Let Those Hours Go To Waste

Carol Daniels needs your hours for the second quarter with either your signature and the date (if you mail your hours or your electronic signature and the date (if you e-mail). Please send them no later than July 7. Remember, unreported hours are unpaid hours.



CALENDAR FOR THE NEXT MONTH OR 2?

Make sure you mark all of these on your calendar. Each opportunity here will increase your knowledge as a Master Naturalist. (The camaraderie is a big bonus too!) These are in date order:

Thursday, June 20 – Monument Hill Workday

8:30 AM. Purpose – To assist park rangers in removing invasives. Please call Karen Woods (281.682.2810) or Cindy Hobbs (706.244.4790) if you need follow-up information.

Saturday, June 29 – TMN Field Day in the Park

Stephen F. Austin State Park, 9AM-2PM, bring your own lunch and drinks \$10 fee This is in lieu of our monthly meeting and will include Advanced Training opportunities. See flyer sent by Cindy R. Registration begins at 8:30 AM in the Dining Hall.

Saturday, July 13 – Bird Walk

James Parker's property at 1016 County Rd. 110, Giddings. This is a TPWD sponsored walk in partnership with the Lee County Wildlife Assoc. and Texas Agrilife Extension Service. Call 979-540-2744 or go to tpwbiologist@bluebon.net for more information.

Saturday, July 20 – TMN Regional Meeting

Hosted by the TMNHeartwood Chapter, Spring Creek Greenway Nature Center. For more information, call 281-34- 4225 or go to teri.macarthur@mctx.org

Friday, July 26 – Prairie Restoration Roundup

Texas City Prairie Preserve, 9:00AM to 3:00 PM. \$25 fee. Another Advanced Training opportunity. Registration required: <http://prairiepartner.org/page/heartland-series-1>

Some of our Recent Activities

Edited by Carol Paulson

