

T E X A S

Master Naturalist™



HIGHLAND LAKES CHAPTER

Highland Lakes Steward



Volume 1, Issue 3

June 2010

MISSION

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas AgriLife Extension and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The mission of the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas

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Congratulations to our 2010 Award Winners!

Achieved
1,000
Hours

Pictured L to R
Ray Buchanan
Terry Bartoli
Jerry Stacy



L to R

Achieved
500
Hours

Pictured L to R
Phillip Wyde
Ed Myatt
Susan Evans

Not Pictured
Mike Harris
Billy Hutson



Congratulations to our 2010 Award Winners!

Achieved
250
Hours

Pictured L to R
Penny Nichols
Ed Myatt
Sondra Fox
Cynthia Castleberry
Sherry Bixler
David Payton



2010 Qualifying Texas Master Naturalists (Wood Duck Pins)

Connie Barron
Judy Bloomquist
Mike Childers
Susan Evans
Mike Harris
Bill Luedecke
Hollis Neier
Jerry Stacy

Susan Bartoli
Marvin Bloomquist
Sammye Childers
Sondra Fox
Billy Hutson
John McClintock
Penny Nichols
Jerry Stone
Philip Wyde

Terry Bartoli
Betsy Bouchard
Lyn Davis
Fredri Franki
Mike Kersey
Bonnie Mikels
David Payton
Joan Stone
Ray Zender

Sherry Bixler
Margaret Butler
Sharon Drake
Billie Gunther
Sue Kersey
Joan Mukherjee
Helen Smith
Shirley Winslow

2009 Qualifying Texas Master Naturalist (Salamander Pin) Julia Miller (not pictured)

Congratulations to our 2010 Class!



2010 Master Naturalist Class Graduates

Jeff Anderson
 Margaret Butler
 Laurie Connally
 Marjorie Dearmont
 Charles Dillon
 Duke Dillon

Deborah Douglas (np)
 Romelia Favrot (np)
 Cindy Fronk
 Harris Greenwood
 Rebecca Jernigan
 Jared Maxwell (np)

Philip Mitchell
 Hollis Neier
 Judy Parker (np)
 Cindy Sterling
 Earlene Thorne (np)

Vernon Turner
 Pam Walt (np)
 Janice Warren
 John Watson
 Ray Zender

Wade Hibler at their feet

np - not pictured

Newly Qualifying Texas Master Naturalists

Pictured L to R
 Margaret Butler-2010 class
 Ralph Hurter - 2009 class
 Hollis Neier - 2010 class
 Ray Zender - 2010 class



Flanked by Phil Wyde and Sue Kersey

In memory of Jean Evans

Shirley Winslow



Recognition is seldom, if ever, the motivation for volunteering one's time to educate others, and this certainly applies to Jean Evans. But, once the plans for the Blanco State Park Project were underway, I thought it would be an ideal opportunity to recognize her for her contributions to the park and community by having a plaque on the Wildlife Viewing Station. Joanne Fischer, a longtime friend of Jean's, agreed to the completion of the application for approval by the state committee, and we finally received the approval shortly before completion of the project. Due to Jean's health, we were unable to have the ceremony to surprise her at the park as planned, but Joanne and Ann Cook, another longtime friend, visited her in her home to

surprise her with the plaque that has subsequently been secured inside the structure. Needless to say, she was quite thrilled with her spirits lifted as she continued to cope with a chronic illness. However, last week she was admitted to the hospital, and she then died peacefully on Wednesday, June 9th. Before her death, she also saw Joanne's article about her in the June 3rd Blanco newspaper that reads in part as follows:

"Jean is an avid birder and authored 'Birds of Blanco State Park - A Field Checklist', a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department publication. The checklist was the result of a five-year study conducted by Ms. Evans from May 1988 to May 1993. During this time, Jean spent at least a day per week observing and recording, by species and number, all birds seen in (or flying over) the park. The checklist not only itemizes all the species observed, but indicates if the species is a permanent resident, a summer resident, a winter resident or a migrant. It also denotes whether the species is common, fairly common, uncommon, rare, or accidental. This checklist is a timeless and invaluable tool for birders and visitors to Blanco State Park, and copies are available at the park office. Jean has been an active member of the Audubon Society most of her adult life and has travelled the world in search of new birds.



Jean was also a contributor to the Blanco County News for many years, penning a regular article about birds and wildlife in the Blanco area. She is known to many as the 'local expert' regarding not only birds, but all native wildlife, including flora and fauna. For many years Jean led annual wildflower identification sessions referred to as 'a walk in the park', conducted on the grounds of the 'old' Bindseil Park and Blanco State Park."

Jean would certainly have been a part of the Texas Master Naturalist program had it been available in our area at the time she was an active volunteer. She was also a close friend of Margaret Bamberger's, and they conducted many of the educational opportunities together at the park. I'm sure you will agree that Jean was a most deserving candidate for this recognition!

June Program

Mike Childers

Our June meeting went well at the Kingsland library with an excellent presentation from Paul Yura who is the "warning coordination meteorologist" for the National Weather Service. He provided an overview of the complexity of weather elements relating to our US and Texas weather events.

There will be no meeting in July. Information on the August meeting will be in the July Newsletter.

Paul Yura receiving appreciation gift from Phil Wyde.
John McClintock at right.
Photo by Jerry Stone



Field Trip: Colorado Bend/Gorman Falls

Billy Hutson

It was a long ride to Bend Park but it started out cool and the chapter members were eager. The tour was broken into three segments: A hike to the spring with flora and some geology along the way, a trip to the falls with more flora and geology, and finally a plunge into 400 yards of an 1100 yard long bat cave for some very interesting geology as seen from underground.

Part one was very interesting and easy. We hiked a level 3/4 mile each way to the headwaters spring that eventually flowed down to and over Gorman falls into the Colorado river. Lots of plant identification and some fauna (fish, birds and amphibians) experiences as well. There were lots of questions, so I am sure much was learned. If only I could remember!!!

Part two wore out a few members as it warmed up on the trip UP from the falls. The falls change regularly as the water flow adjusts during the season, but we were lucky to see a good amount going over the edge dripping through the moss and ferns along the walls.

At the climax of part two approximately half the chapter members went home as the temp had risen into an uncomfortable range.

The hardy souls went on and experienced a very interesting final segment in the cave. I had expected a brief casual walk into the mouth of a cave to see numerous bats hanging from the ceiling. What we got was a true spelunker experience with crawling, sliding, head banging (with



Gorman Falls

Photo by Mike Childers



Trail to the springs was flat with several shallow water crossings. Photo by Mike Childers



The Headwaters Spring. Photo by Mike Childers



Going to the Falls Photo by Mike Childers

helmets), sliding, more crawling, water slogging and did I mention sliding for 400 yards into pitch blackness. The formations were incredible and we could see how narrow bands of chert formed layers of chocolate infused strips into the limestone grotto structure and we didn't have to walk in guano because the wet season floods had washed it all out. Luckily it was after a several week dry spell. We did see how the oil from the bats feet had left years of scunge on the ceilings.

It was interesting how nature had formed a meandering course through the cavern just like in a true unmolested riparian area above ground - deeper and more eroded on the outside of the bends and shallower on the inside curves.



Down to the Falls Photo by Mike Childers



Lunch at the Falls Photo by Mike Childers



Photo by Mike Childers



The Mighty Spelunkers

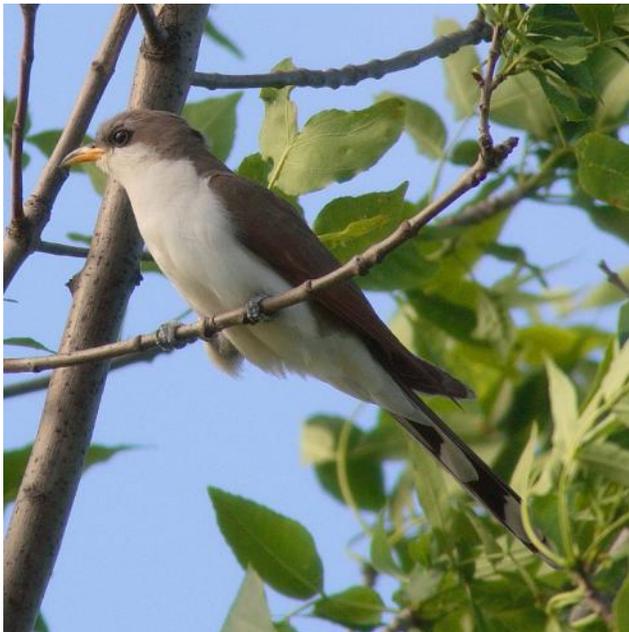
Photo by Jerry Stacy

The water was crystal clear and we saw a phenomenon that I had never heard of before. Some of the detritus (in this case minerals) that floated on the water actually formed a layer that started to solidify and form a hard crust like an ice layer, only of minerals. We were told that this process formed some of the overhanging ledges that we were seeing with water under them.

We also saw how mineral rich evaporating water built up dams as it left mineral deposits on its receding surface thus building up after each drying period.

It was a true geological experience and well worth the effort.

The day was long and all went home tired and satisfied to experience the wonder of such a pristine area. Now for the hardy, I'm working on a return trip to float the Colorado from Bend to the state park and pick up trash along the river with guide Kevin for some very interesting volunteer hours next spring, so keep tuned.



Wikipedia

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS

Sherry Bixler

Four of the six cuculidae species occur in Texas although the black-billed cuckoo migrates only through the eastern half of the state and the groove-billed ani is found only in the southern tip of the state. The greater roadrunner is found in the hill country but seems so unlike the other cuculidae that most people do not realize it is a cuckoo.

The mangrove cuckoo and the smooth-billed ani are found only in south Florida but the yellow-billed cuckoo summers in the hill country and is the bird most people think of when cuckoos are mentioned. Its numbers have dropped in recent years but seem to be rebounding.

DESCRIPTION: The yellow-billed cuckoo's size, relatively long tail, rust underwing patches and curved bill help identify it, but its furtive behavior and tendency to call only in cloudy or rainy weather can make it hard to spot. In some areas where both black-

billed and yellow-billed cuckoos occur, field marks for the black-billed cuckoo include its bill color, lack of rust under the wings and a dull gray-and-white undertail pattern. Both cuckoos are 12 inches long with prominently curved bills; the yellow-billed cuckoo's lower bill is yellow and it has clear black-and-white barring on the undertail.

HABITS AND CALL: Cuckoos skulk through foliage in riparian areas and open woods, searching for their favorite caterpillars but also consuming frogs, lizards, berries, fruit and bird eggs.

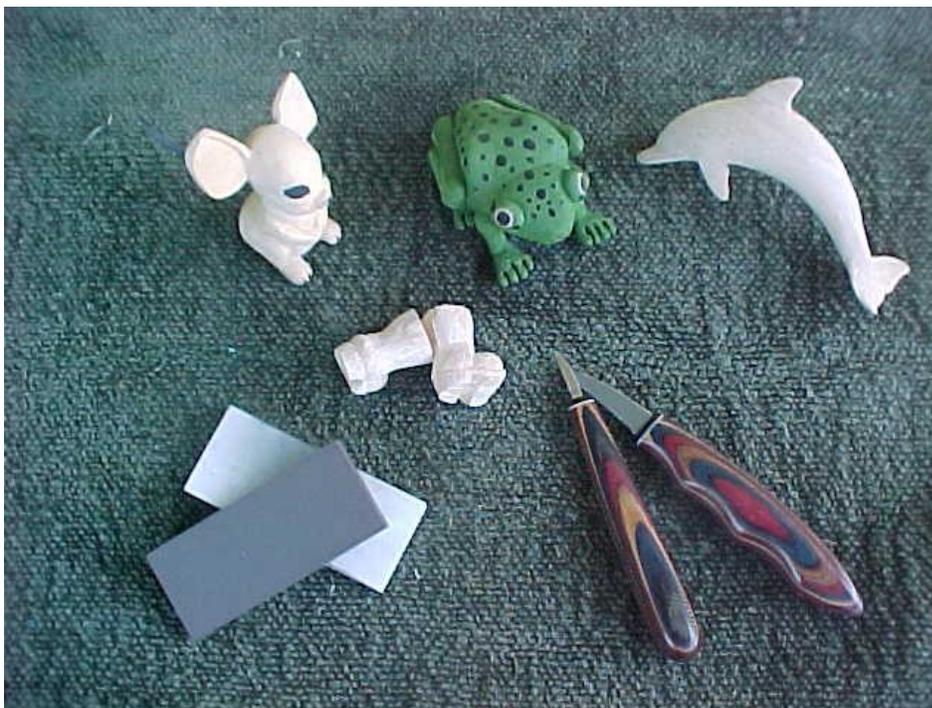
Nick-named the rain crow, its strange call is part rattle and part a gulping, dove-like coo.

NESTING: Yellow-billed cuckoos generally have one brood per year with four eggs although birds in the southern states may have two broods. Fledge time is especially short: cuckoo babies can climb around near the nest when they are just a week old.

BAD REPUTATION: Only about 40 per cent of the cuckoo species worldwide are brood parasites, laying their eggs in other birds' nests as the cowbirds do. New world cuckoos rarely parasitize but were assumed to by early settlers who were familiar only with the parasitic European cuckoo. This mistaken idea persist even now. Brood parasitism is found in only about one per cent of all bird species, including certain ducks, weavers, cowbirds and cuckoos. (When parasitism does occur in yellow-billed cuckoos, they often choose the nest of a black-billed cuckoo.) As a rule, they build their own rough nest.

Cuckoos are beautiful birds that certainly make our summer bird-watching more interesting.

Artist among Us - Sherry Bixler



I began carving about three years ago when a close friend asked me to apprentice. Betty Pearson of New Mexico is a master carver and works with both wood and stone. Her home is filled with carvings done over a sixty-year period and her latest work is a pair of life-size otters carved in alabaster, so I felt very fortunate to be her student.

Wood carving is easy to learn but quite slow and I do not sell my carvings although I carve specific items for family members who request them. It also requires few tools; we all remember old-timers who

'whittled' objects with only a pocket knife. I use Helvie knives from Smoky Mountain Woodcarvers and Arkansas stones for sharpening.

Other useful tools are chisels, a Dremel, needle files and a band or scroll saw to rough out shapes.

Beginning carvers usually start with basswood as it is soft enough to carve easily but retain its shape. It does not have visible grain and harder woods are more attractive.

I have carved in walnut, burl, redwood, oak, pine and spalted pine. Spalted wood is formed when a particular fungus attacks a tree that is dying but still standing. The fungus streaks the wood, usually in gray tones. I also prefer staining or waxing the carved pieces although my first carving, a frog, was painted green at a grandson's request.

Items in the picture include the green frog, an alien mouse (since I was in Roswell when I carved it), a miniature pair of workboots not quite finished, a dolphin and my Helvie knives and stones. The process of moving to Texas limited my time for carving but I am beginning to change that. Although I am a birder, I prefer carving animals, perhaps because bird carvings are usually painted.

The 2010 Wood Duck nesting season at Inks Lake.

Jerry Stacy

This year's season started quite differently than the 2009 season. By March 29, we already had two hens incubating eggs. Last year, the first two sitting hens were not observed until April 21.

Our total hatchings this year were 38 out of 74 eggs laid, compared to 37 out of 69 last year. This is far from the 66 out of 116 during the 2008 season, although the percentages of eggs hatched to eggs laid is relatively close.



One new experience for me this year was seeing this Great Horned Owl's nest near one of the duck nest boxes at the fish hatchery. Marc Jackson said the owls have been using it for years.

One of the big disappointments this year was finding this newly hatched duckling without the hen in sight. I took a quick picture and got the heck out of there hoping the nest wasn't abandoned.



Unfortunately, this is what I found the next week.



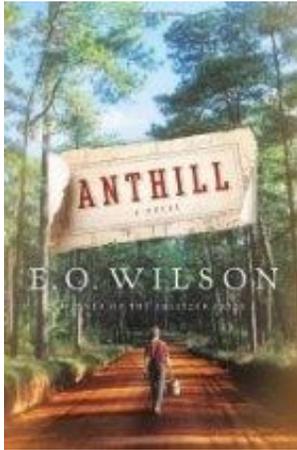
There are eighteen more eggs piled in this box. Why was it abandoned just as the first duckling hatched? Was it an "egg dump" nest that overwhelmed the sitting hen? I wish I knew the answer.



To end on a more cheerful note, the picture on the left is one I've tried to get for three nesting seasons. For the first time, I was able to photograph a Wood Duck female with her babies outside the nest box. I count fourteen ducklings in the picture, so I believe she is from Box 2, which had seventeen eggs and three were unhatched.

Recommended Reading

Ray Buchanon



Wilson, Edward O., *Anthill: A Novel* (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2010)

The superior capabilities of the Trailheader Colony Hoplite warriors could not prevent their utter defeat by the Streamsider Colony. In battle these giants from both colonies – two times

the size of an ordinary worker ant – made up the superior defenses at the front line with their thick, tough, and pitted (shield-like) exoskeletons and their pair of spines which extended backward from the midsection of the body to protect the waist and their pair of spikes that extended forward from the midsection to protect the neck. Their sharp-toothed jaws reached out from their helmet-shaped heads to crush any and all: “they were the iron, the physical power, the instinctual viciousness of the colony,” says Wilson.

Yet, the success of these female warriors in battle depended on the numerically superior support they would receive from the most suicidally aggressive defenders of the colony – the older female workers, as Wilson noted: “where humans send their young to war, ants send their old ladies.” And they also depended on the swiftness and agility of the ordinary workers who could bite, sting, or spray their enemy with poison while holding them down, spread-eagled. But the death of the Queen after 20 + years, which crippled the Trailheader Colony’s ability to maintain superior numbers, resulted in its ultimate doom – every member of the colony became enslaved or a rich meal for the victorious Streamsider Colony. Following the specialized tastes and smells laid down by its members, the Streamsidiers used their antennae to move through every Trailheader tunnel. They followed the commands of their leaders, communicated by the “thunderous ... pheremonal chatter” that guided their victorious descent into the blackened chambers of their enemy. But then came the Supercolony of ants who, because of a mutation, produced millions of workers and thousands of queens and

defeated all the other colonies.

This Colony ferociously occupied the Dead Owl Cove of Lake Nokobee, a pristine hardwood tract of longleaf pine savanna, which provides the setting in Nokobee County Alabama for the novel. In the “Anthill Chronicles” section of the novel, Wilson identifies, through his account of the Supercolony, his environmental concerns for humanity. The Supercolony brings peace, a new system of governance, and a new quality of life. They “mastered the environment”, they “subdued their rivals and enemies”, they “increased their space”, and they “drew down new sources of energy” so they could “raise the production of ant flesh to record levels.” And by doing so Wilson points out, they “traded sustainability of the home for wider dominance”, they “overconsumed” and became out of balance with their habitat: so “it resembled the great human anthill above” – Wilson’s most pointed charge against the advances of civilization. Soon, the “moving-tree gods”, local Nokobee County citizens, brought poison and destroyed all the ants and all the other creatures in the immediate area.

As a world-renown biologist and naturalist, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner for his scientific books, Edward O. Wilson chose the novel format (for the first time) to share his views about preserving a balance between humans and nature with a more general public. And, while the “Anthill Chronicles”, section of the novel captures the immediate attention of the reader with its gripping and detailed analysis of the ant colonies living around Lake Nokobee, the story about humans makes his major point, but with less drama.

The young boy, Raff Semmes Cody, falls in love with the natural area around the Lake. His rich grandfather sends him to college and to Harvard Law School where he becomes a well-trained environmentalist. In return for this major boost in his prospects, Raff goes to work for his grandfather, Drake Sunderland at his company, Sunderland Associates; and, thus, asserts Wilson, he “became the legal arm of one of the most rapacious land developers in South Alabama.” This sets up the dramatic conflict between the environmentalist and the developer about the wilderness tract at Nokobee.

Once as a boy in a confrontation with the “Frogman”, who kept a giant alligator, and then

again as an adult faced with gunmen from a radical religious sect, Wilson achieves an exciting level of tension in his story telling.

But, confronted with the environmental demands to protect the species of salamanders, a bird, and a turtle listed as vulnerable along with endemic plants in the pitcher-plant bog as well as the impossibility (according to the authorities) of cutting the old growth longleaf pine, Raff offers the “rapacious land developer” a simple solution. That is, put those habitats and species on the profit side of the financial ledger and build around the wild with access to the Lake and the wilderness area as the main drawing-card asset, leaving the remainder of the Nokobee tract in its natural state. Sunderland accepts the argument, which Raff skillfully garnished with the idea that the governor could there to celebrate the opening day and that the state might declare a botanical site and provide tax deductions. The key arguments appear in brief conversations, but the developers are too gullible and the resolution is too quick and too simple.

All the key words Wilson identifies with the inherent driving forces of the developers are there – larger per-acre profits, public relations potential, tours for the residents, for example – but this confrontation stands at the heart of the matter and it would seem worthy of a much more substantial part of the story. Too easy as the final resolution, yet it clearly indicates Wilson’s theme of how to achieve a balance between human advances and critical natural habitats. Those parts of this drama that Wilson knows best – the examples of the ants and their culture and civilization – are fascinating. And the key elements of the land-use resolution are clever. So, this novel offers much for the naturalist reader.

Denny Ranch Bird Sighting

Deborah Douglas



Above is a photo of a pair of Dickcissels taken by Thomas Fisher, M.D. at Denney Ranch 2. Note the nesting material in the female's beak. The first e-bird report of a Dickcissel in Burnet County this year was made by John Good on May 19, 2010 at Denney Ranch 2.

Name the Newsletter!

Our newsletter still needs a proper name. We have a few more ideas. Please send suggestions to chili865@gmail.com for consideration by the board and HLMN. Those referencing dragonflies have been eliminated (already used). It is hoped that a selection can be made soon, so put your thinking caps on! Names submitted thus far:

- Naturally
- News Naturally
- Naturally, News

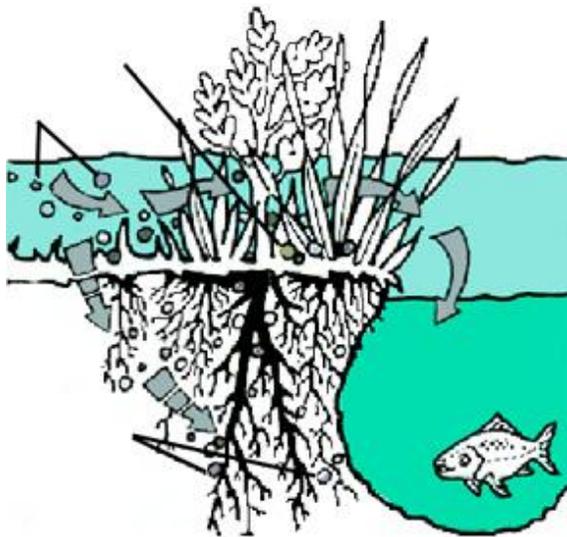
Mike Childers

- The Highland Lakes Guardian
- The Highland Lakes Advisor
- The Highland Lakes Steward
- The Kingfisher
- The Highland Lakes Naturally
- Highland Lakes Natural Master
- Chapter Chatter
- The Natural Flow

Riparian Areas: Function and Purpose

Sammye Childers

Water flowing through the landscape on its way to the sea moves in three dimensions linking: (1) flood plains and riparian zones and (2) stream channels to surface waters and storage. Dense vegetative growth catches eroded sediment upstream to downstream, (2) stream channels to flood plains and riparian zones and (3) surface waters and storage. Vigorous healthy plants capture excess nutrients to ground waters. Waters move across the landscape as either runoff, which moves across the surface, or as subsurface ground water, which is absorbed into the soil. Both movements absorb nutrients and contaminants. Runoff waters also transport eroded soil particles. Nature developed a filtering and storage system, known as the riparian zone, for both types of moving water.



The riparian zone contains a combination of wet and dry soil zones that facilitate a variety of biological and chemical reactions. These reactions reduce the availability of some nutrients and decrease the toxicity of some contaminants. The presence of slowly decomposing plant material in wet soils further facilitates water purification. Some organic matter particles have a high ability to chemically capture and hold contaminants while others serve as sources of food and energy for organisms involved in contaminant detoxifications. Chemicals in soil minerals and organic matter present in the soils capture or facilitate biological detoxification of contaminants. To understand that riparian areas are highly complex in nature and in need of great diversity to be healthy and functioning could go a long way to help guide land management practices that protect the riparian area and thus the water quality and quantity.

The riparian zone may occupy a small percentage of the area of the landscape but they are a critical component of the overall function. Rather than thinking of the riparian area as part of the watershed system, one should develop the mind set that the riparian area is a **water catchment system**. While watershed indicates the direction water will flow across the landscape, the healthy riparian area will function as a sponge to collect water and slowly release it into the stream or water table. This sponge optimally contains thick growths of diverse vegetation, plant residues covering the soil's surface allow them to be porous, non-compacted soils. Wide stream corridors with high water tables provide the water storage capacity.

The purpose of a healthy riparian area is to efficiently capture, store and slowly release flood and runoff waters while, at the same time, capturing sediments, excess nutrients and possibly toxins.

Article reviewed for accuracy by Steve Nelle, area biologist, NCRS Texas

Northeast Honeybee Status

submitted by Mike Harris

CLARKSBURG, W.Va. — West Virginia's honeybee population fell drastically this year, and beekeepers blame the weather.

Beekeepers statewide lost an average of 50 percent to 60 percent of their population this winter, said David Rectenwald, vice president of the West Virginia Beekeepers Association.

The mortality rate for wild bees was worse. West Virginia's wild bee population fell nearly 100 percent, said Paul Poling, apiary specialist with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture.

North Central Beekeepers Association President Steve Hamrick attributed the declines to weather. He said rain late last spring washed nectar off many plants. The nectar then dried up during the hot, dry summer that followed. That reduced the supply of the bees' food source, honey.

Below-freezing temperatures in January and February worsened the problem. Worker bees that were starving couldn't keep queens and broods alive, Hamrick said. A national survey released yesterday revealed one-third of commercial beekeepers' colonies died over the winter, the fourth consecutive year with similar losses.

Researchers warn the rate of bee deaths is becoming unsustainable, and continued losses could impact the cost and availability of food. "These numbers are all indicators that a crisis is coming," said Dennis van Engelsdorp of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. "It will reach a perfect storm the way the credit crisis did."

Honeybees, a species from Europe, became the pollinators of choice in American agriculture because they are easy to manage and were plentiful. A single colony can contain 20,000 workers, while bumblebee colonies might have only 200.

Nearly 34 percent of the country's managed honeybee colonies were lost last winter, according to the survey of 4,331 beekeepers conducted by the Apiary Inspectors of America and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Honey Bee Lab in Beltsville, Md. That compares to losses of 29 percent in 2008-09, 35.8 percent in 2007-08 and 31.8 percent in 2006-07.

In the past year, Dave Hackenberg of Lewisburg, Pennsylvania's largest beekeeper, lost 62 percent of

his colonies. "The problem's not going away. The losses will continue into the future," said Hackenberg.

Honeybees pollinate staples such as nuts, fruits and vegetables, adding \$15 billion each year to agricultural output in the United States, according to the Agriculture Department.

Agriculture is Pennsylvania's No. 1 industry; the state has nearly 8 million acres of farmland. Crops include grains such as wheat, oats, rye and barley, as well as potatoes, apples, cherries, peaches and grapes. Diminished numbers of bees could lead to more expensive food and less availability of some flowering crops, van Engelsdorp said. "We would have to go to less-intensive agriculture, decreased production of apples, almonds, squash and many other things. You would not have the acres and acres of apples in Adams County without pollination," van Engelsdorp said.

Crops in need of pollination also could be at risk if cash-strapped migratory beekeepers leave the business, as some have suggested. The stress on bees from shipping hives long distances to pollinate crops is one suspected contributor to colony collapse disorder, a syndrome identified three years ago that is characterized by the death of an entire colony. Bees also are under great threat from a variety of mites and viruses and from poor nutrition.

Researchers, environmental groups and beekeepers increasingly are scrutinizing pesticides as a reason for the honeybee die-offs. Italy, France, Germany and Slovenia restrict the use of some pesticides, and watchdog groups have asked the Environmental Protection Agency to do the same.

During recent almond pollination in California, demand for bees dramatically outstripped availability. "There was a scramble for bees at the end of almond pollination," said Joe Traynor, a bee broker in that state's San Joaquin Valley, where almond growers use more than 1 million bee colonies each February to pollinate vast crops. Bee colonies a decade ago rented for \$60 and cost as much as \$170 this February in California.

"The growers insisted they would not pay more than \$100 per colony. Many paid a lot more than that," said Hackenberg.

From the Pittsburg Tribune Review

Blueweed (*Echium Vulgare*) Control Update

Mike Childers

Progress is being made in controlling the Blueweed at the location in Burnet County. Many of the plants have been removed and burned. All of the flower heads were removed and burned. The plants with flower heads removed put on new flower stalks within a week. Our 12 person work party for Wed. June 16, spot applied roundup to all plants we saw in a methodical sweep of the site. Thanks to Kathryn Avery, Karen Bugnoli, Bill Carr, Mike and Sammye Childers, Marjorie Dearmont, Billie Gunther, Wade Hibler, Billy Hutson, Sue and Ed Lilley, Jeff McSpadden, Phillip Mitchell, Chuck Sexton, Marsha Spinner Jerry Stacy, Gayle Waldrip, and Fred Zagst.



Spot Spraying Day - Bill Carr - Texas Nature Conservancy Botanist , Chuck Sexton, Ph.D., Wildlife Biologist, Balcones Canyonlands NWR , Billie Gunther, Marjorie Dearmont



Sue Lilley chopping and pulling



Blueweed Roseate

Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery Activities

Cindy Fronk

During the month of May, area master naturalists helped 5th graders from RJ Richey Elementary, Colt Elementary and Marbles Falls Elementary enjoy interactive activities at Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery.

Naturalists Jennifer Daniels, Phil Wyde, Phillip Mitchell, Sherry Bixler, Ed Myatt, Billy Hutson, Mike Harris, Jerry Stacy, Betsy Bouchard, Hollis Neier, Ray Zender, Penny Nichols, Jan Warren, Judy Bloomquist, Billie Gunther, Judy Parker, and Fredi Franki volunteered over 337 man hours during May to make each day a success.



Blanco Third-Graders Enjoy a “Day in the Park”

Connie Barron, Photos by Stan Barron



On Friday, May 7th the entire Blanco I.S.D. third grade spent the day at Blanco State Park. The bus arrived at 9 AM, bringing 72 excited kids along with their teachers and parent volunteers to begin a full day of fun and learning. Teachers had already divided the students into groups with animal names like “bats” and “foxes” to set the stage for wildlife exploration. Interpretive ranger, Mary Alice Partain enthusiastically welcomed the group and set the tone for the day’s activities.

The Highland Lakes and Hays County Master Naturalists came out in force to man the teaching stations set up around the park. Nyta Brown from Texas Parks and Wildlife’s Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area shared her expertise on bats, and local herpetologist Dr. Jeff Holmes gave the entire group a fascinating program on reptiles.

The group of hungry volunteers and teachers were treated to a tasty, welcomed lunch courtesy of Blanco’s SUBWAY. Nothing works up an appetite like a day outdoors! The children got to learn about how much a bat eats in a day, how to tell a carnivore by its teeth, how an aquifer works, how to identify local birds and fish and much more. They also got to see up close, but not too close, a huge snapping turtle and a handful (literally) of local snakes. They played a habitat survival game and went on a scavenger hunt. It was a full day of fun for both the volunteers and the children.

Before leaving, each child received a fun activity packet to reinforce all the great things they learned throughout the day.

Blanco State Park would like to thank Blanco ISD administration, teachers and parents for making such a wonderful learning experience possible.



Volunteer Opportunities and Event Calendar

Mike Childers

JUNE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES		JULY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES	
Electric Boat Jaunts	19th	Fishing with a Ranger	10th
Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm	Inks Lake Park	8:30-10am
Devel Waterhole Canoe Clinic and Tour	19th	Electric Boat Jaunts	10th
Inks Lake Park	9am-12 noon	Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm
Geology Rocks Hike	20th	Electric Boat Jaunts	15th
Inks Lake Park	10am to noon	Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm
Help YCC Enrollees w/bird habitat	21st-25th	Electric Boat Excursions(Sunset Cruises)	16th
Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery	all day	Inks Lake Park	7:30-9:30pm
Volunteer Opportunity	24th	Canoeing Skills/Tours	17th
Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery	9:30am -	Inks Lake Park	9-noon
Devel Waterhole Canoe Clinic and Tour	24th	Stumpy Hollow Hike	17th
Inks Lake Park	9am-12 noon	Inks Lake Park	9:30-10:30am
Electric Boat Jaunts	25th	Electric Boat Jaunts	17th
Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm	Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm
Twilight Paddle	25th	Canoeing Skills/Tours	22nd
Inks Lake Park	7:30-9:30pm	Inks Lake Park	9-noon
Fishing with a Ranger	26th	Electric Boat Jaunts	23rd
Inks Lake Park	8:30-10am	Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm
Full Moon Hike and Owl Prowl	26th	Fishing with a Ranger	24th
Inks Lake Park	8-9pm	Inks Lake Park	8:30-10am
Geology Rocks Hike	27th	Electric Boat Jaunts	24th
Inks Lake Park	10am to noon	Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm
General Tour of Hatchery Tour Guide	29th	Electric Boat Jaunts	29th
Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery	10-11:30am	Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm
Construct solar dippers/wildlife habitat	28th-1st July	Twilight Paddle (Adults only)	30th
Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery	all day	Inks Lake Park	7:30-9:30pm
JULY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES		Canoeing Skills/Tours	31st
Electric Boat Jaunts	1st	Inks Lake Park	0900-1202
Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm	Stumpy Hollow Hike	31st
Young Naturalists - First Friday	2nd	Inks Lake Park	09:30-10:30
Inks Lake Park	10-11:30am	Electric Boat Jaunts	31st
Electric Boat Excursions(Sunset Cruises)	2nd	Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm
Inks Lake Park	7:30-9:30pm	Full Moon Hike and Owl Prowl	31st
Electric Boat Jaunts	3rd	Inks Lake Park	8-9pm
Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm	JUNE EVENTS	
Stumpy Hollow Hike	3rd	Concert - City Avenue band	19th
Inks Lake Park	09:30-10:30	Inks Lake State Park	7-9pm
Happy Birthday USA Bicycle Parade	3rd	Geology Field Trip	19th
Inks Lake Park	11am	Contact - Marvin Bloomquist	8:30am
Canoeing Skills/Tours	8th	Land Owners Workshop Series	22nd-24th
Inks Lake Park	0900-1200	Burnet County Fair Barn	6pm
Electric Boat Jaunts	9th	JULY EVENTS	
Inks Lake Park	2 and 4 pm	Explore Preserve at night	10th
		Barton Creek Preserve	8:15-10:30pm

Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, etc. to chili865@gmail.com. Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions to each months newsletter is the 10th of the month and publication will be by the 15th.