



HIGHLAND LAKES CHAPTER



# Highland Lakes Steward

## 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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## SPRINGTIME!

By Fredi Franki

It is spring and time to plant! Recent rains are encouraging, however long-term forecasts say the drought will continue. I will practice restraint this spring and think carefully about water needs and heat tolerance when choosing a new plant. Until several years ago I grew zinnias, roses, iris, and daylilies. I switched to Earth-kind Roses and my yard is full of sages, salvias, and cacti. I love gardening and trying different selections! I am not a purist when it comes to native plants, but I have certainly learned their value. Several of us have talked about which plants best survived the grueling summer of 2011. There is not space to list them all, but here are a few of my "best" plants. Every plant needs water during the first year to get established but after that the plants listed below need very little water.

I bought a four inch pot of Globe Mallow two years ago and it is now two feet by three feet. It has light gray-green leaves and light orange flowers. It does great in the sun, blooms profusely, and attracts hummers, bees, and butterflies. I planted Four Nerve Daisy for the first time last spring. It is sun lover and near the hot sidewalk. I watered a little with a hand-held hose and it never stopped blooming. It is near my Blackfoot Daisy, another favorite. The two make a nice show.

Ornamental grasses with their weeping form and tall seed heads provide interest in the garden and require almost nothing in care and maintenance. I have Muhlenbergia Lindheimeri, commonly called Big Muhly, a larger grass. Gulf Muhly is an excellent medium size grass, and Mexican Feathergrass is a smaller variety. Every garden should include one or more of these elegant plants.



Goldenball Lead Tree

If you need a small tree, I highly recommend Desert Willow. It has very low water needs, gives dappled shade, and blooms all summer just for the hummers. It is a great alternative to Crepe Myrtle, which takes more water. I have two other new trees, Anachacho Orchid and Goldenball Leadtree. It is too soon to tell, but I think they will be great.

There are many cacti, yuccas and agaves to choose from. Don't assume they will like full sun, as some do not! My Red Yucca is fine in the sun and Linda O'nan says this is her go-to plant, always a pleasing addition to the landscape. Linda says there is a new cultivar this year called Brakelights. Gotta have it.

Go to the Master Gardener's Lawn & Garden Show, Burnet Community Center on March 31. There will be many native plants for sale and knowledgeable folks to help. The Native Plant Society will have booth at the show. On April 7, the Kingsland Garden Club has a plant sale at the Kingsland Arts Center, off RR 1431 behind Wells Fargo. It is not exclusively natives, but features home grown plants. Go early.

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## APRIL MEETING

by Linda O'nan

Join us Wednesday, April 4, at the Kingsland Library for a special appearance and presentation by popular outdoors columnist for the Austin American Statesman, Mike Leggett. Mike is a Burnet resident, father of 3, grandfather of 7, who has hunted and fished all his life, and he loves birds! He has been with the newspaper since 1985, and will talk about "Animals I Have Known". Come and be entertained and see if he will give up the best honey hole in Texas...



## MARCH MEETING

Dr. Ned Woodall, an anthropologist from Llano, presented "Little Red Riding Hood, Beowulf, & Pecos Bill: Conditioned Concepts of the Natural World". This presentation explored how culture influences the way the natural world is perceived and manipulated. It was a delightful program, very informative and thought provoking.

Photos by Mike Childers



## Nature Center News

by Billy Hutson

Progress is being made at the UHLNC. We've had busy committees working on plant identification, geology identification and program planning, publicity in at least one local paper and a plant walk/talk by the noted taxonomist Barron Rector. While Barron was dazzling us with his plant knowledge he also gave advice on building a nature center. Seems he knows a lot about that too and we welcomed his comments and encouragement.

We opened a Yahoo site and have invited the friends of the UHLNC to join. To date we have 102 members and 17 members have joined the site. The site (just like the HLMN site) will make available information on upcoming work schedules, surveys, and events and files such as meeting minutes and summaries of special talks like Barron's. It can also be used by members to post their observations and nature notes.

We are going to try to have a special presentation for the friends each month such as Barron's talk and may eventually move some of them to the friends monthly meetings. Some will have to be done whenever we can catch the speakers in town during their busy schedules.

I want to thank all the friends with their busy retired schedules for being so enthusiastic on this mega project and especially the HLMN members that won't get volunteer credit for some of their efforts at Reveille Peak Ranch, but volunteer anyway. I also want to thank the friends that are not Master Naturalists that help in a big way with their ideas and volunteer time. It's good to see local community people with the same mission in mind and you are all very welcome.

We are presently drawing up plans for the main reception building using recycled materials donated by RPR and some purchased items. We hope to have these plans soon for everyone to see.

More next month.

## Top Ten Reasons to be a Master Naturalist

by Linda O'Nan

- 10) Act like an animal--ask a couple of our members (L & H?) what kind of animal suits they wore to promote HLMN at the L & G show.
- 9) Collect cool pins--naturalist bling...girl scouts forever.
- 8) You don't have to dress up--wear crummy clothes...mud optional. Cabela's is your shopping destination.
- 7) Walk on the wild side--be observant. Marilyn Monroe said "sex is part of nature and I'm all for it".
- 6) You get to inspect scat--I've spent more time looking at and analyzing animal poop than I did when my kids were little.
- 5) DON'T use the word "naturegirl" as your yahoo ID, or on any other social media.
- 4) Impress your grandkids when you tell them you are doing toad restoration, an owl prowl, or you're off to see the lizard.
- 3) Use your 401K, social security, or mandatory IRA withdrawal for bird seed--those little dudes do eat a peck at a time.
- 2) Last chance to embrace your inner hippie. Think green, keep it clean! Recycle, man. The girl with the dragonfly tattoo should take some kind of award at state meet...

And the Number ONE reason to become a master naturalist...

Know as a HIGHLAND LAKES MASTER NATURALIST you can make a difference!

Go Play Outside

### Stewardship

An ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources with organizations, communities and others to actively engage in the prevention of loss of habitat and facilitate its recovery in the interest of long-term sustainability

## GALLERY

Red—Shouldered Hawk

Linda O'nan



Deer Pea Vetch  
Jerry Stone

Scrambled Eggs  
Jerry Stone



## GALLERY

Blue curl  
Jerry Stone



Low Bladderpod  
Jerry Stone



Giant Spiderwort  
Jerry tone



## GALLERY

Pucoon  
Jerry Stone



Lindheimer Astragalus  
Jerry Stone



Spreading Bladderpod  
Jerry Stone



## GALLERY

Slenderstem Bitterweed  
Jerry Stone



Drummond Phlox  
Jerry Stone

Golden-eye Phlox  
Jerry Stone



## WILDFIRES OF 2011—LESSONS WE CAN LEARN

Story by Steve Nelle

Retired NRCS Wildlife Biologist  
San Angelo, Texas

Reprinted from the January/February edition of The Reverchon Naturalist, a newsletter published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

2011 was a year that many Texas landowners would like to forget. Yet it has been a year that will long be remembered and etched into our memories. It will go down in the books as both the worst wildfire year, and the worst single drought year in the state's history. These two forces of nature ganged up for a horrendous synergistic effect on the land, plants, animals, and people.

Statistics and records cannot adequately capture nor communicate the true impacts of these wildfires. For the rancher or land-owner who lost all or part of their ranch to wildfire, and then to experience week after continuous week of unrelenting heat and no rain, the biological, financial and emotional impacts were over-whelming. Ranchers tend to be a stoic group of people, especially the multi-generational families who have seen hardship before. They may not outwardly show their pain and anguish; they may not complain or talk about it, but inside it hurts. This pain comes from their connection to the land. In an almost literal sense, the land is part of the person and the person is a part of the land. When one is injured, the other is affected. For city and town people and those who do not own or directly manage land, this connection is not as close, the impacts not as personal and the pain not as painful.

One of the marks of successful people is that they learn from life's experiences. 2011 was a year to learn from. One of the things we have learned from the unprecedented wildfires is that the experts do not always have the right answers. We often rely on professionals and experts to help guide us in the right direction, and the best way of thinking. The advice of the experts is usually worthwhile and helpful. But in a year like 2011, there were no experts. No living person had ever seen these conditions coincide and collide the way they did in 2011; so it is no wonder that ex-



**In 2011, there was heavy wildfire damage throughout north-central Texas, including this area in Palo Pinto County. (Photo Credit: Ricky Linex, USDA-NRCS)**

perts were at a loss. Perhaps they should have remained silent. The statements below were made by some of the leading fire experts in Texas during the 2011 wild-fire season, followed by lessons we can learn.

*"Fire is a natural part of the ecology of Texas; therefore, the effects of fire should be viewed as good and beneficial."* Everyone agrees that fire is natural and has an important place in the ecological big picture. However, wolves, screw worms, brucellosis, anthrax, ice storms, drought, and tornados are also natural. We don't consider them beneficial and we don't welcome them as desirable. The lesson: **Long term ecological impacts and dynamics should not be detached or isolated from real human and economic impacts.**

*"The effects of wildfire are similar to the effects of prescribed fire."* This statement is based on scientific research following the huge Amarillo Complex Fire in 2006. Researchers concluded that the impacts to grasses were no different than a properly carried out prescribed burn. What must be understood is that it rained 15 inches in the first six months following the

Amarillo fire, and that the next three years had average or above average rainfall. The effects of the 2011 wildfires were not at all similar to a prescribed fire due to the intensity of the fires, and the prolonged drought which preceded and followed the fires. The lesson: **Scientific information collected in one place under one set of conditions does not necessarily apply to other places, other times, or other conditions.** "Fire does not kill grass." On the contrary, much of the perennial grass cover is completely dead on millions of acres burned in 2011. The fires and the drought occurred in tandem and each exacerbated the damage of the other. Some avid promoters of prescribed burning choose only to see the beneficial aspects of fire while failing to see the damaging impacts. The lesson: **A wide-angle perspective and objectivity are always better than tunnel vision or blind paradigms.**

Natural resource experts and professionals provide a valuable service to landowners; their contributions are respected and appreciated. But there are times when the experts get it wrong. In times like this, the gut feelings and experience of committed land stewards provides perhaps the best illumination and



*In Palo Pinto County, Texas, wildfires burned many recreational areas that included Possum Kingdom State Park and dozens of homes. (Photo Credit: Ricky Linex, USDA-NRCS)*

direction. The effects of such natural calamities cannot be evaluated by their ecological impacts alone. The impacts must be considered in a holistic sense of human, economic, ecological impacts, and all the intricate interrelationships of these factors.

Yes, the land is resilient; designed that way by the Creator. Texas lands will recover from the damaging drought and fires of 2011. That recovery will proceed better and faster under proper stewardship. The good news is that 2012 is already off to a good start, and will undoubtedly be better than 2011.

**The Reverchon Naturalist newsletters can be found at:**  
**<http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/bio/reverchon.html>**



***Helping People Help The Land***

## RIPARIAN WORKSHOP AVAILABLE FOR YOUR LEARNING PLEASURE!

We welcome your participation in a Riparian Workshop on March 28<sup>th</sup> at  
The Trails of Horseshoe Bay.

Participants will learn the basic interaction of Hydrology – Erosion/Deposition and Vegetation for central Texas creeks and rivers. Among topics to be covered are channels, floodplains, water table, vegetation, base flow, flood flow, sediment and how these things in combination are what make up the Riparian Area. The term “Proper Functioning Condition” or PFC will be discussed with examples to promote understanding of the health of the creek or river.

Riparian resource materials will be provided to all participants. This information will be valuable in enhancing your understanding and education of riparian areas and riparian function.

The workshop will **begin promptly at 8:30**, so plan to arrive in plenty of time to find the clubhouse at The Trails, park and be ready to start on time.

The field portion of the workshop will be held at creek sites in The Trails.

Bring a lunch as we will eat at the clubhouse prior to going to the field.  
Bring water for field visit.

Be prepared for possibility of chiggers and/or ticks.  
Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, sun screen and a hat. We will be walking adjacent to and in creeks with some rough ground to cross. A walking stick will come in handy for navigating the terrain.

We will need to condense into as few vehicles as possible to make quick time going from site to site.

**Please RSVP as soon as possible but no later than March 26<sup>th</sup> to  
Sammye Childers at [sammyenmike@yahoo.com](mailto:sammyenmike@yahoo.com).  
Please be aware that seating is limited.**

This Workshop is provided by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), a division of the USDA, in cooperation with Highland Lakes Master Naturalists and The Trails.

(See next page)



**Riparian Workshop  
The Trails, Llano County  
March 28, 2012**

8:30 – 8:40 General Introductions

8:40 – 8:45 Goals of Highland Lakes Master Naturalists      Sammye Childers

8:45 – 9:35 Introduction to Riparian Function      Ricky Linex

9:35 – 11:20 Hydrology / Fluvial Geomorphology Principles and Interactions      Kenneth Mayben

11:20 – 12:05 Riparian Vegetation      Ricky Linex

12:05 – 12:45 Lunch

12:45 – 3:15 Observation and Discussion of Riparian Sites on creeks in The Trails

3:15 – 3:30 Wrap Up Discussion and Dismiss

## THE NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*COLINUS VIRGINIANUS*) AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS

By Sherry Bixler

There are thirty-two species of quail world-wide and six in the United States. (Quail have recently been put in their own family.) Four species occur in Texas but the Gambel's Quail, Scaled Quail and Montezuma Quail are only found in west Texas. The Mountain and California Quail are found only in the far west and northwest.

Northern Bobwhite are the only quail found in the eastern half of the country, much as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are. Bobwhite are increasingly rare as drought, fire ants, loss of habitat, feral hogs, diseases and parasites take their toll. Bobwhite populations suffer even in areas of adequate rainfall or where there are no fire ants or feral hogs, since so many other factors are involved. Invasive plants often replace the food plants the birds depend on and severe winters in northeastern states may result in losses.

Scientific research is ongoing and several groups hope to use their findings to reverse the downward population trends. Texas Agri-life's Bobwhite Brigade is one of five camps for teens which teach science and conservation for certain species.

Northern Bobwhites are compact and rounded and spend most of their life on the ground. They have a pale eyebrow and throat and an overall scaled appearance. They are about ten inches long. They are one of the birds named for the sound of their call and can be heard in open woodland, brushy fields and farmland.

Quail lay from twelve to sixteen eggs in a shallow, hidden depression lined with grass. Their diet is mostly vegetarian but insect consumption goes up in the summer. They also eat berries, tubers and snails. They feed and roost in coveys of up to 30 individuals except when nesting.



Although they prefer to stay on the ground, they will fly when flushed or when seeking new breeding or feeding territory.

Bobwhite have been introduced in small areas of Washington, Oregon and Idaho but are not found in large numbers there. The subspecies "Masked Bobwhite" was long found only in Mexico but has been re-introduced in southern Arizona. This subspecies looks quite different from other subspecies with its black face and throat and rust underparts.

One of the interesting facts uncovered by science is the presence or absence in plants of a substance called phytoestrogen. In years of drought, plants have a higher concentration of this substance which has been shown to reduce egg production. Subterranean clover has seeds buried in the ground and are part of a quail's diet in many places. The phytoestrogen in subterranean clover has even been shown to affect the reproduction rate of animals.

Perhaps science will also uncover new ways to increase our quail numbers.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND AT/EVENTS CALENDAR**

Mike Childers

**MARCH - APRIL EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

HLMN Training Class - Archeology and Geology Nightengale Archeological Center and Inks Lake State Park	Mar 22 9:45am-3:15pm
Clean Sweep Inks Lake State Park	Mar 23 8:30am-Noon
Riparian Workshop - Rickey Linex and Kenneth Mabin of NRCS The Trails at Horseshoe Bay	Mar 28 8:30am-3pm
Interpreters Workshop for Master Naturalists-Tara Humphries, Carol Navarro-Adams Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery Education Center	Mar 28 8:30am-3:30pm
HLMN Training Class - Vanishing Species, Tour of Seed Bank, Landscaping for Wildlife Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center	Mar 29 10am-3pm
Drop by Dropless: Managing your Resources Through a Drought LCRA Dalchau Service Center	Mar 30 8:30am-3pm
2012 Lawn and Garden Show Burnet Community Center	Mar 31
Bridges to Birding - Apr 4,5,11,12,18,19, May 4 Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge	Apr
HLMN Monthly Meeting - Mike Leggett - Animals I have Known Kingsland Library	Apr 4 1-3pm
HLMN Training Class - Rainwater Collection, Firewise Landscaping, Grasses Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge - Flying X Ranch	Apr 5 10am-3pm
HLMN Training Class - Plant ID by Keys Westcave Preserve	Apr 12 10am-3pm
Going Buggy Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge	Apr 13
Great Outdoor Program Inks Lake State Park	Apr 17-20
HLMN Training Class - Invasives and Entomology Blanco United Methodist Church	Apr 19 10am-3pm
TWA Wildlife for Lunch Webinar Series - Riparian Management Go To <a href="https://texas-wildlife.webex.com">https://texas-wildlife.webex.com</a> the webinar day and click on the webinar title.	Apr 19 Noon-1pm
Native U - Flora and Fauna of Central Texas Certificate Training Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Saturdays	Apr 21-May 12 9am - 4pm
Great Outdoor Program Inks Lake State Park	Apr 24-27
HLMN Training Class - Birds and Herps of the Hill Country Perdenales State Park, Johnson City Events Center	Apr 26 10am-3pm
Songbird Festival Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge	Apr 27-30
Seven Hundred Springs Tour Courthouse, Junction, TX	Apr 28 10am - 2pm
Family Day of the Songbird Festival Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge	Apr 29 Noon-5pm

Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, calendar and event entries, etc. to chili865@gmail.com. Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions to each months news-

**FUTURE EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

HLMN Training Class - Mammals, Rangeland Management Oatmeal Community Center	May 3 10am-3pm
HLMN Training Class - Wildflowers, Camera as a tool for Master Naturalists Home of Marvin and Judy Bloomquist	May 10 9:30am-2:30pm
Day in the Park Blanco State Park	May 11
TWA Wildlife for Lunch Webinar - Integrating Cattle and Wildlife on Small Acreage Go To <a href="https://texas-wildlife.webex.com">https://texas-wildlife.webex.com</a> the webinar day and click on the webinar title.	May 17 Noon-1pm
HLMN Training Class - Graduation Celebration and Pizza Party Reveille Peak Ranch	May 27 4pm

For volunteer opportunities and events scheduled at Inks Lake State Park, Blanco State Park, and Balcones Canyonlands, Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, check these websites for information:

[http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/inks-lake-state-park/park\\_events/](http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/inks-lake-state-park/park_events/)

[http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/blanco-state-park/park\\_events/](http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/blanco-state-park/park_events/)

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/balcones/>

<http://friendsofbalcones.org/>

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/onlineregistration/ecowebevents.cfm>