



Highland Lakes Steward

Spring 2018

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MISSION

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas A&M 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

OFFICERS

President:
Martelle Luedecke
(512) 769-3179
martelleluedecke@gmail.com

Vice-President
Susan Montgomery
(281) 782-4782
29sanmont@gmail.com

Secretary
Lori Greco
lgreco13@gmail.com
(910) 494-9634

Treasurers
Kim & Stennis Shotts
shottskim@gmail.com
stennisshotts@gmail.com
(678)637-8367



MESSAGE FROM MARTELLE

by Martelle Luedecke

A Salute to You!

I cannot begin to express my gratitude in having the honor to represent y'all. You would not believe the bundle of nerves I was when I stood in front of y'all at our first meeting. It wasn't the public speaking part, it was standing in front of a group of person's that I have admired from a distance (before I was a student HLMN) and up close as your VP. Yes, I am HLMN self-proclaimed cheerleader, and why not. How fortunate for me to have a team so talented, dedicated, loving and caring.

We've had a phenomenal start to the year!!

I would like to encourage **EVERYONE** to get involved in something new this year that you haven't explored previously.

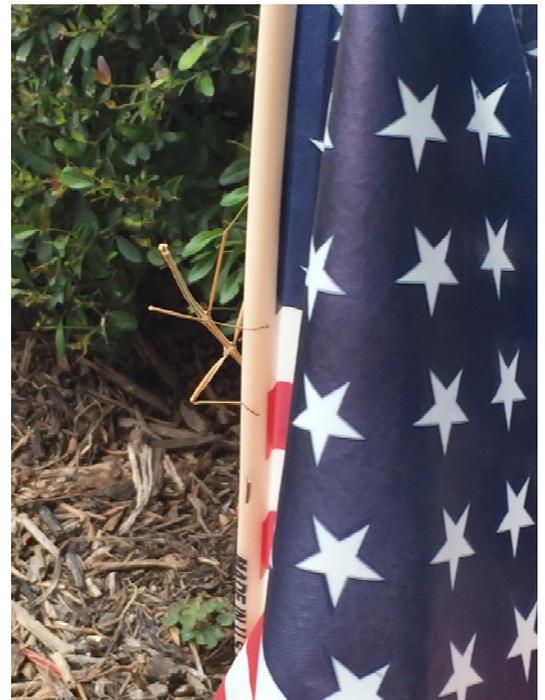
- ◆ Volunteer at a location that you've always wanted to visit but haven't carved out the time to.
- ◆ Take those brilliant brains and create a way to share your knowledge with others. For instance, I LOVE bones and skulls. So, this July in our "slow" time, I'm going to make a Twister size game of concentration to match skulls, bones, hides to the animal.
- ◆ Discovery trunks are a wonderful way to share your knowledge. Y'all have experiences that no computer can google. Gather a team of persons that share your passion.
- ◆ I would be remiss if I didn't include writing articles for your wonderful

Newsletter or the local papers.

- ◆ Take on a new project or an existing one. We need someone or a couple to head up the Granite Shoals Viewing Station.

Y'all get the idea and hopefully you see me in your mind's eye cheering you on along the way. If you ever need anything Susan is only a phone call away Just kidding I meant Kim and Lori.

I would also encourage **EVERYONE** to introduce yourself to someone new at each meeting. Perhaps invite a newbie or a transfer to join your table.



Even the Praying Mantis Salute You!!
Photo Creds: Mike Riley

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Butterflies Dance

By Gretchen Samuels

*When butterflies flutter and flare about
To the music of liberty as you are set apart
When all around seems bleak and taste upon
doubt
Butterflies at play to the drum of your prevalent
heart.*

*When butterflies choose you while no man is near
To the lyrics of your calling mind and unspoken
fear
When the ambience takes you a moment away
Butterflies dance around you to honour your day.*

*When butterflies dance
And a sparrow chirps sweet
When the rays in the sky embraces your feet
When butterflies dance and take flight around
Be blessed in all eternity as forever is now.*

Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, announcements, etc. to

becky_breazeale@yahoo.com

Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions for each quarter's issue are located on the HLMN event calendar. Or contact Becky and Martelle.

Thank y'all for all your hard work and contributions!!



Welcome, our new class of 2018

Week #1 February 22nd

Wade Hibler (for Kelly Tarla) introduced the New Class to HLMN and the Coordinators. The Coordinators, Melissa Duckworth and Susan Downey reviewed documentation, Mary Pearl Meuth provided the history of Texas Master Naturalists. Romey Swanson addressed the topic of Land Conservation



Wade Hibler



Mary Pearl Meuth



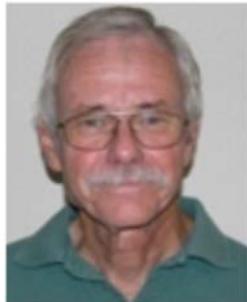
Romey Swanson

Week #2 March 1, 2018

The second session for the New Class, met with Marilyn McClain where they learned about the Volunteer Service and Advance Training reporting. Marving Bloomquist helped the New Class sign up for the group site. Ray Buchanan and Betsy Bouchard led a discussion of *A Sand County Almanac*.



Marilyn McClain



Marvin Bloomquist



Betsy Bouchard



Ray Buchanan

Week #3 March 8,2018

The Class visited Upper Highland Lakes Nature Center for a presentation by Frank Caramanica on Geology and Diane Dismukes on Archaeology.



Geology class at UHLNC on March 8th Photo by Betty Griess

Week #4 March 15, 2018

The following class session was at Inks Lake State Park and Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery. Sherry Bixler and Linda O’Nan introduced the Bird Blind at ILSP. Following, Susan Sander and Scott Walker (IDNFH) discussed current views on Ornithology and Ichthyology, respectively.



Inks Lake State Park Bird Blind and Wildlife Viewing Station.
Photo by Becky Breazeale

Week #5 March 22, 2018

This week's session was at Ink Dam National Fish Hatchery. Aquatic Ecology was discussed by Weston Nowlin of Texas State University and Wizzie Brown of Texas Parks and Wildlife discussed Entomology.

Jerry Stacy provided a tour of the Hatchery



Overlook Trail

Photo by Cosmo Omsoc

There will be seven more classes including introductions to Blanco State Park and Balcones Canyonlands Wildlife Refuge. Graduation will be May 17th at Bamberger Ranch.

Speaking of Jerry Stacy.....

The Latest on Wood Ducks

Last November, Jerry Stacy gave a presentation at our Chapter Meeting about Wood Ducks and his involvement. Here is an update:

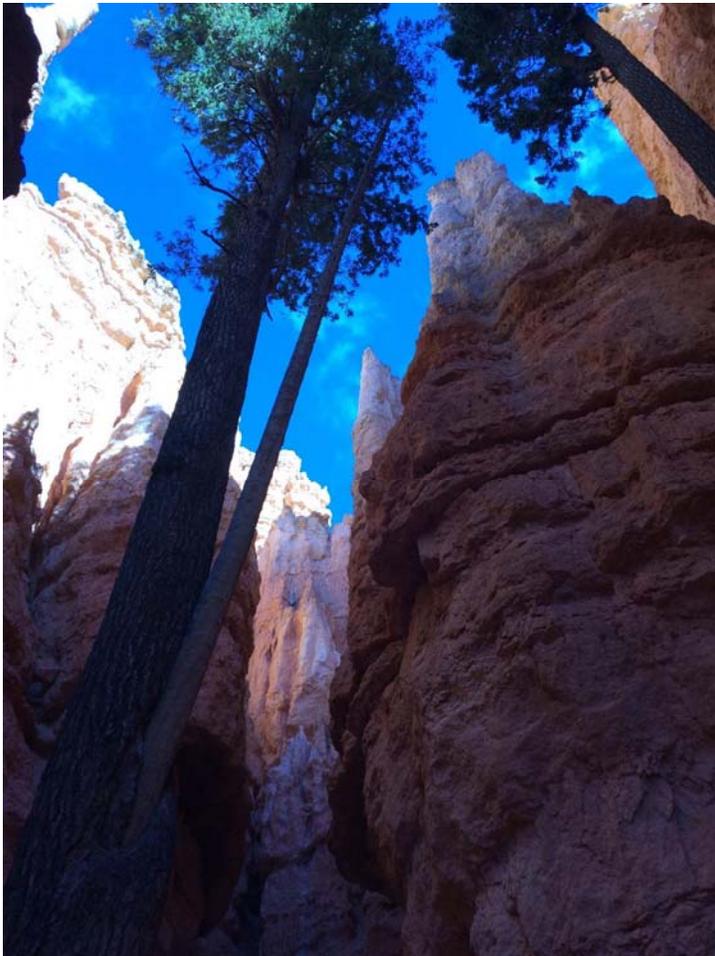
"It's been a very slow start to the nesting season, but I told you I'd let you know when I saw eggs. The latest I had seen eggs before was 3/29/2010. This year beats that by quite a bit. Our spring weather has got to be the culprit."



During his November presentation, he mentioned that he and Stennis were going to make improvements to the boxes to help protect the eggs. We asked Jerry if he had made improvements and had he seen any changes.

"I installed wider predator cones on all the nest boxes. This late nesting season is very disappointing with only one active wood duck nest so far, but surely more to come. Although no ducks have started incubating eggs yet, we've already had four Bewick's wrens fledge and leave the nest. There is another wren nest with six eggs under incubation and one more with two eggs just laid. No room for a big celebration yet, but at least no predator success out of the four boxes with eggs. Final success rates will have to wait, as I don't want to get too overconfident."

Here is a photo I took near "Wall Street" in Bryce Canyon.



It raises the question, how did the tree survive in the dark until it got tall enough to reach sunshine? Photo and thought by Allan Wolfe

Native Plants That Celebrate Spring

Article by Ella Tyler

Spring has arrived, and the temptation to plant something in the garden to celebrate its arrival is hard to resist. Here are some native plants that announce that spring is here, even when the thermometer doesn't. They also provide food for bees, dinner for baby birds, and nectar for any butterflies that are hanging out.

Agarita, *mahonia triflora*, is an evergreen shrub with lots of small, but bright yellow, flowers as early as February. It has some fragrance. The flowers are followed by red berries, which songbirds love and people can make in to jelly or wine. The foliage is grey-green and holly like. Its height is 3 to 6 feet. Agarita might be hard to find except at a nursery that features natives or at a specialty plant sale.



On the other hand, Carolina Jessamine, *Gelsemium sempervirens*, is easily available, even at the new HEB sometimes. It has a broad native range, Virginia to Arkansas and



East Texas. It is an evergreen vine with bright yellow, trumpet shaped flowers. It is one of the most popular native plants. It can start blooming as early as Christmas. As another common name, Swamp

Coral Honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens* L.,

is available at most nurseries. It is a semi-evergreen vine that begins to bloom in March and flowers for several months. The flowers are

narrow, trumpet-shaped, and are carried in clusters that look like fingers. Hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees find it very attractive.

This has been a very good spring for Texas Mountain Laurels, *Sophora secundiflora*.

They are medium-sized evergreen trees that have bunches of purple flowers that arrive in March. They look a lot like wisteria flowers. This plant is native to central Texas. The flowers have a strong smell that, to some, resembles grape Kool-Aid. This is a plant that you should smell before you buy.



Redbuds are plentiful in the wild, where they are a welcome splash of color among leafless trees, but they are also a very nice garden plant. The variety that is best suited to limestone soils is *Cercis canadensis* L. var. *texensis*. The flowers are light purple and appear in March, before the leaves. Some people add them to salads. The leaves turn yellow in the fall. The flowers come in several shades of purple, so this is another plant that is good to buy when it is in bloom, so you can get the shade you want.

Mexican buckeye, *Ungnadia speciosa*, is a short tree that has flowers that look a lot like a redbud or a peach. It likes rocky and limestone soils.

Texas Almond, Creek Plums, and Escarpment Black Cherry all flower early in the spring with masses of white flowers and could be used instead of Bradford Pears, which are not long-lived.

Eastern red columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis* L., begins to bloom in March and might bloom for several months. It is a perennial, with a show red and yellow flowers. It is about a 12 to 18 inches tall, flower included. It is available this time of the year, but not later on. The leaves may disappear in the summer, but the plant will return.

Scarlet Sage, *Salvia coccinea*, has multiple virtues, including that it survived our freezes, blooms from February to October, attracts butterflies and hummingbirds, reseeds, grows in sun or shade, and is not attractive to deer. The flower is edible. The flower is not showy, and the bush can get leggy, so they will look better clustered together.

Inks Lake State Park Easter Egg Hunt

F.O.I.L. volunteers stuffed over 1,800 eggs for the March 31st Easter Egg Hunt.



Over 300 participants gathered the Easter Eggs in about 30 seconds flat.



Photo creds: Stennis Shotts



Glenn Beaumont as the Easter Bunny and his assistant, Deb Poland. Lindsay Pannell of Inks Lake State Park organized the event. Other volunteers are George Brugnoli, Lori Greco, Mary Ann Holt, Cris Northup, Alice Rheame, Kim Stotts, and Stennis Stotts.

Canyon Lake Gorge Tour

By Lori Greco

The Canyon Lake Gorge is unique and a place like no other. A group of local Texas Master Naturalists and a few spouses forged a trip on Feb 24th, despite calls for rain. The Gorge Preservation Society docents were also MN who knew every aspect of the Gorge and did a wonderful job of describing our 3 hour moderate hike of over 2 miles of rocky Glenrose Limestone. Their mission is to promote the enjoyment and conservation of the Gorge while also providing stewardship and a safe trail system so people can learn about the geological, biological, historical and natural resources in their region. The following will be a bit about our trip and my hope is that you will want to make your own reservations to visit the Gorge before it gets too hot this summer.



Fresh Surface Water

The Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority is a leader in managing water resources over a 10 county district. Along with the Army Corps of Engineers who provide engineering services to the US, including parks like Canyon Lake Built the dam beginning in 1958 which cost \$21 million before the lake was declared full 10 years later at 909 feet above mean sea level. The dam is made of compacted, rolled earth, 7,000 feet long and 223 feet high. The lake covers 8,230 acres and was built for flood control and water supply.

The Gorge itself was built by nature in about a weeks' time due to receiving 34 inches of rain over 9 days during the summer of 2002. At that time the builders of the dam were both excited and terrified at the same time: "What would happen to the dam?" This is what happened: Canyon Lake Dam + 34 inches of water= a major hydrogeologic episode. Flood water from the lake overran the spillway for 6 weeks! The flood took out a subdivision, a road and much of the natural material was moved up to 2 miles down-

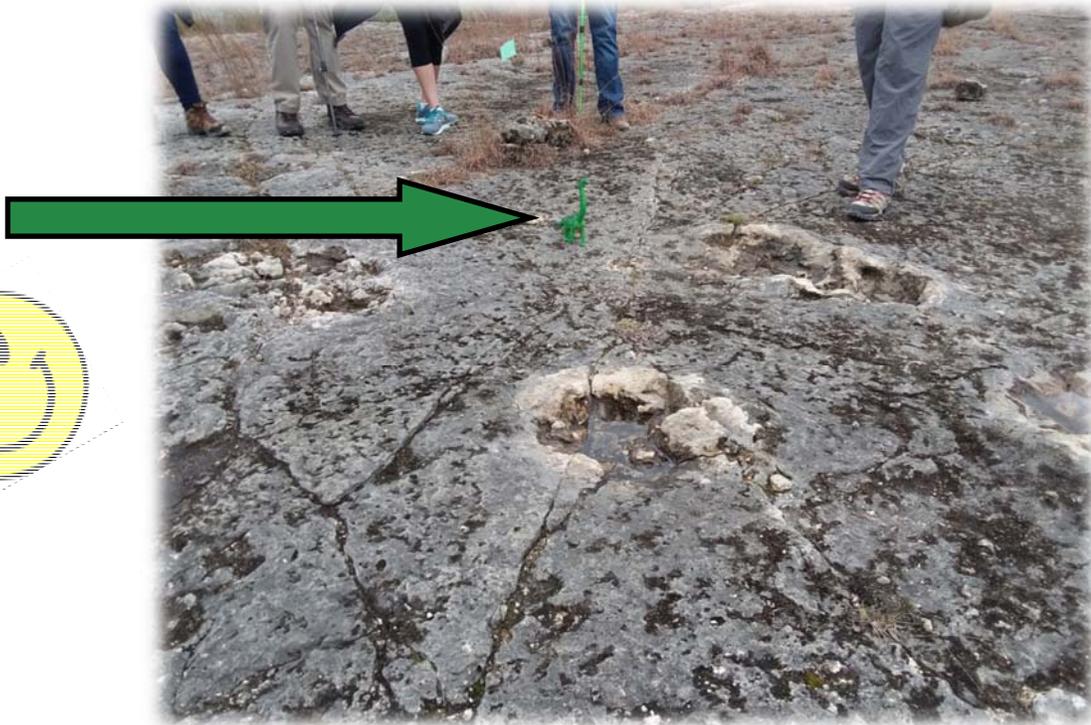
stream toward the Guadalupe River. (The amount of debris removed by these flood waters would fill up an entire football field that is 300 feet deep)

During our hike we started off by viewing dinosaur tracks of a meat eater about two-thirds the size of a T-Rex and a plant eater with feet like an elephant. Being the last guest, I got the rare treat of spying a Black Vulture flying in to “nest” near a stair railing we descended. They don’t really make a nest, they lay eggs in a rocky cleft or ravine.(Just a little side adventure)



Gorge Overview

Tiny Orbital Shells



Plant Eater Tracks

I will share that what we got to see was the ancient sea bottom below the spillway where BILLIONS of Orbitolinetexana shells were on the ground when the waters washed the limestone away that these tiny orbit shaped shells were embedded in. And those dinosaur tracks were made because this area was once a shallow sea where they roamed 100 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. They walked along the shore where probably the sun quickly dried out the sand they so that it became hardened. We also crossed an ancient shoreline with ripples parallel to the ancient coastline and covering this shoreline were Corbula fossils the size of grains of rice. These little fossils help geologists



Tiny Orbital Shells

differentiate between the Upper/Lower Glen Rose limestones.



Shell fossils

Farther down the gorge, we picked up Heart Urchin, Bivalve, Heart Clam and Worm Tube fossils. We were in awe at how many were there and in perfect shape! My favorite fossils were the Spiny Sea Urchins with their spines laying close by. These fossils are a window to the past that you can hold in your hand and just think, they were hidden for over 100 million years, until now. Going back

to that 2002 flood, many of the large boulders(VW Bug size) were tossed like pebbles by the 67,000 cubic square feet per second of water pouring over the spillway, creating the Gorge. In fact, lots of them look like dominoes lain over in the direction of the water. Geologists knew about the hidden Valley Fault for over 60 years, but only the surface. The big flood made it possible to see the Fault's inner workings to understand how water flows through the fractured Glen Rose limestone. Geologists and oil company reps even come to study the topography. Central Texas has thousands of faults and fractures and these make it possible- the action of water percolation and downward movement of water creating an aquifer. And what blows my mind (that's easy to do when it involves nature) is that this very surface water forms a tributary and flows downstream to the Guadalupe River where again it becomes groundwater when the river crosses the Balcones Fault Zone that recharges the Edwards Aquifer!

I could go on but I really don't want to give any more information away, so hopefully you will be encouraged to see the Gorge yourself. I know practically nothing about geology (much to my family's dismay), but I learned enough to be able to write this article so even othertonon- geology folks like me might find it intriguing. If you do, wear good hiking shoes, take a bottle of water, wear sun protection and be ready to climb up and down boulders.(This hike is fairly strenuous) Canyon Lake is about an hour and a half from

Marble Falls straight down Hwy 281 south. You must make reservations by calling 830-964-5424 or go to their website: www.canyongorge.org But be ready to wait up to three weeks and a required 10 people for the tour. The trip cost \$10 per person and a day trip well worth every penny! Lastly, this trip was organized by our Vice-President, Susan Montgomery, for the HLMN Class of 2017, but all MN were welcome to come along and the expert docents were Susan James and Jim Jameson, who we found to be spectacular!



Commentary on Bradford Pear and Related *Pyruscalleryana* Species

Submitted by Terri Whaley with permission from Durant Ashmore

Bradford pear was first introduced into the horticultural trade by the USDA Glenn Dale, Md. research facility in 1964. At that time, they were assumed to be sterile hybrids that would not reproduce. Over time, this assumption has been proven to be grossly inaccurate.

Bradford pear was considered to have ornamental and therefore economic value by the USDA because of the white flowers in the spring and the red foliage in the fall. All along, however, these researchers knew that Bradford pear trees had inherent structural deficiencies. Over the years, the USDA has made many valuable contributions to the horticulture trade. Unfortunately, this is not the case with Bradford pear, and the introduction of this tree has turned out to be a stain on their reputation.

The weakest branch structure in nature is a steep v crotch. Forked trees are inherently weak. There is little or no connective tissue between the limbs on forked trees, leaving them susceptible to breakage in high winds or ice storms. In fact, in severe cases, these limbs can simply split apart in calm weather due to the forces of growth fighting against each other. Bradford pear contains an overwhelming series of steep v crotches, and this branch structure is the reason these trees are unsafe and cause the tree to be so short lived.

In an effort to rectify the weakness of Bradford pear limbs, other cultivars with a more apical rather than rounded habit of growth were introduced. Varieties such as Chanticleer, Aristocrat, Cleveland Select, Redspire, etc. were chosen because they are slightly longer lived than Bradford pear. Bradford pears will live about 20-25 years. These newer cultivars may extend this range by as much as 5 years. They still have the confounding steep v crotches that all pear trees possess, and they still are dangerous.

Most unfortunately, the introduction of these new cultivars exposed an even more serious problem with *Pyruscalleryana* (*Callery pear*). *No two Bradford pears will cross breed with each other, but when other varieties of Callery pear are thrown into the mix, these pears cross breed indiscriminately. And, the resulting offspring reverts to the ancient Chinese pears that have four inch thorns and form impenetrable thickets.*

Now, there are literally millions of Callery pears dominating fallow fields in 25 states in the South, Midwest, East and in California. These pears are forcing out native species such as oaks, maples, dogwoods, redbuds, etc. This is an ecological nightmare that reduces the value of agricultural land by \$3,000 per acre, which is the cost of mechanical removal. The trees cannot be removed simply by cutting them down. The stumps sucker uncontrollably, and create an even thicker morass if not dug out or ground away.

The earliest scientific discussion of this problem was presented by Michael A. Vincent in a study conducted by him in 2003. The title of his paper is "On the Spread and Current Distribution of *Pyruscalleryana* in the United States". *The abstract of his article is copied below:*

Michael A. Vincent Abstract

*Pyruscalleryana, a very commonly planted ornamental tree species, is documented as an escape from cultivation in the District of Columbia and 152 counties or parishes in 25 states, and is reported as new to California, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, and West Virginia. Evidence is presented that the species is rapidly becoming invasive in much of its horticultural range in at least the eastern United States. Some of the escaped individuals (from 14 counties or parishes in 11 states) appear to be of hybrid origin, perhaps between callery pear and *P. betulifolia* or *P. bretschneideri*. Callery pear often produces thorny thickets as it escapes into marginal and disturbed areas, and appears to be reproducing readily in the wild.*

Society

Southern Appalachian Botanical

2004

March 8,

In September of 2005 the National Forest Service declared Bradford pear its "Weed of the Week" and banned its use in NFS properties. The link to that publication is provided here: https://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/callery_pear.pdf

The problem is further illustrated in a publication by the Clemson Extension Service in 2012:

Pyrus calleryana and varieties are on the Invasive Plant Pest Species of South Carolina list. Although the 'Bradford' pear was originally bred as sterile and thorn-less, they readily cross-pollinate with other varieties of callery pears, and subsequently produce fruit. The ripened fruit are eaten and disseminated by birds, which results in very thorny thickets of wild pear trees. These escapees are generally unnoticed until spring when the edges of fields are white with blooms.



Joey Williamson, ©2012 HGIC, Clemson Extension

Callery pears in bloom, spreading along the edge of woods in Upstate South Carolina. Joey Williamson, ©2012, HGIC, Clemson Extension Agency.

Additional instances of the invasive nature of Callery pear are well documented. A Google search will provide many other examples. The issue has turned into a Rural vs. Urban conflict, with many landowners and farmers becoming incensed over unthinking or uncaring homeowners continuing to plant Callery pears. They are well aware that these trees are causing destruction of the natural environment and lowering their land values.

As mentioned before, the invasive nature of Callery pear is only one of the problems associated with this tree. The other considerable problem is the weak branch structure, and the associated liability of planting a known danger.

Cities such as Greenville, SC, Lexington, Ky, Atlanta, Ga., Pittsburgh, Pa, Elmsford, Il., Baltimore, MD, Fayetteville, Ar., Columbia, Mo., and Champaign, Il., as well as the National Arbor Day Foundation, the Georgia Urban Forestry Council and the Missouri Department of Conservation all either ban - or discourage in the strongest terms- Callery pears from municipal plantings. There are many other cities who have adopted such policies throughout the nation.

The following is a quote from the City Forester of Champaign, Il.:

Because of these problems, the City of Champaign will no longer permit the planting of Callery pears on the City right-of-way. Bill Vander Weit, City Forester of Champaign, Il. states, "The main reason we are banning pears is due to their tendency to break up in storms. The past couple of windstorms we experienced really drove home this point. Despite the fact that pear makes up only 5% of Champaign's total tree population, nearly 50% of all damaged trees we responded to were pears. Many of these were private trees that split apart and fell, with branches covering a lane of traffic. Also we are concerned with the escape of a non-native tree into the wild, and do not want to contribute to an already long list of exotic invasives that choke out native flora."

Rob Deseo, Chief Horticulturalist for the National Park Service, was quoted in an article published in the Baltimore Sun in 2008:

He said no Bradford pears are planted on federal park land, "and if they were, I'd cut them down" In addition to removal costs, he said, Bradfords can lead to lawsuits if they fall on people or cars. "There is tremendous liability when trees fail, particularly on public lands" Deseo said "and the one thing you know about Bradford pear – it's going to fail".

Perhaps one of the clearest and most easily understood explanations of this problem was televised in 2016 by TV station WUSA9, the CBS affiliate in Washington, DC. The title of this story was "The Curse of the Bradford Pear". The link is provided below.
<http://www.wusa9.com/features/the-curse-of-the-bradford-pear/110041125>

These issues with the dangers of Bradford pears have been known to horticulturalists for years, but the general public is only now slowly realizing the extent of the problem. The control of invasive Callery pears is going to be a difficult and costly solution. Because Bradford pears (or Cleveland Select, etc.) are so self-destructive, it is only a short matter of time before these trees will disappear from the face of the earth. Their resulting progeny, however, is going to be a problem for generations. We don't need to exacerbate this problem by planting more pears.

Sincerely,

Durant Ashmore, MLA

Certified Nurseryman
Certified Arborist

8/13/17
durantashmore@aol.com

What Is A HLMN Photographer Supposed to Do? (P.R. Wyde)

Here it is February and I want to take pictures with my camera. But where can I go? Is there anything to take pictures of? We have had freeze after freeze this winter along the Llano River in Kingsland and there is hardly a colorful flower in sight. The trees are mostly bare and the skies mostly dreary. Lizards, frogs, spiders and insects are virtually non-existent. Except for squirrels, I haven't seen a rabbit, rock squirrel, nutria or other interesting rodent in a long time. Undaunted, each day I set off with my camera in hand. I never take a direct path to where I am going. If there is a back road, I take it. I go to every spot that I think may have something of interest. I cover every inch of our, and adjacent properties. As things turned out, I managed to get a number of images that I liked. I am hoping that you will like them also since they comprise the rest of this article. (The images were taken between February 1st and February 20th, 2018.)

As you can see from Figs. 1-4, I frequent the Granite Shoals Bird Viewing Station that our Highland Lakes Master Naturalist Chapter helped build. While it is rather simple in design, I love how close I can get to the birds. Indeed, out of the three bird viewing stations close to my house (Inks Lake State Park, Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery and Granite Shoals), this one is my favorite. I have seen numerous birds there including many water birds and a road runner. However, sparrows, finches and other common birds are among my favorite subjects. I think that I like the subtlety of their colors. Take note of the image in Figure 3. You can see that the water in the "tank" is almost gone. Indeed, a week after I took this image, there was no water left. However, I am sure that the water will return.



Figure 1. Chipping Sparrow, Granite Shoals Bird Viewing Station



**Figure 2. (pictured left)
White Crowned Sparrow,
Granite Shoals Bird Viewing
Station**



**Figure 3. (pictured above)
Great Blue Heron,
Granite Shoals Bird Viewing Station**



**Figure 4. (pictured left)
House Finch,
Granite Shoals Bird Viewing Station**

The image of the American White Pelican (Fig. 5) was taken at Inks Lake State Park during the time that the lake was lowered. I walked many feet out into the lake bed to take this picture. Fortunately, the light was hitting the water just right. For those of you new to the chapter, I get many, many interesting photographic shots at Inks Lake. My favorites include shots of osprey, a white skunk and many of the numerous water birds that “hang out” there.

Sometimes you do not have to go far to get worthwhile images. I took the picture of the American Kestrel (Fig. 6) from the head of my driveway (5366 River Oaks Dr., Kingsland, TX). What a beauty! Other raptors that are in my neighborhood include osprey, caracara, red shouldered hawks, red tail hawks, sharp shin hawks, back vultures and turkey vultures. The Yellow Rumped Warbler (Fig. 7), although not as spectacular as any raptor, was on my bird feeder. The picture was taken through my front window.



Figure 5. American White Pelican ILSP



Figure 6. Kestrel

5366 River Oaks Drive, Kingsland



**Figure 7.
Yellow Rumped Warbler
5366 River Oaks Dr., Kingsland**



By now you are thinking that I only find birds interesting -- or that is all that I can find. The next series of images will prove you wrong (Figs. 8-10). I find the horse in Fig. 8 fascinating. His eyes and coloration were striking, and I love his flowing mane.

I have many images of grey squirrels, most more striking than the rodent shown in Fig. 9. However, I particularly like this squirrel because I caught him totally checking me out.

Figure 8, Blue-eyed Horse

Figure 9. Gray squirrel
checking me out



Figure 10 Tex, Gretchen Pachelhoffer's pet longhorn

Anyone can get a picture of a longhorn (I have many). However, how many of you have an image of a long horn scratching itself? (Or is he trying to stretch of the fence to get some bovine treats on the other side of the barrier?) This image was taken at Gretchen and James Pachelhoffer's homestead. We never go over there without seeing something interesting (some choices being long horns, miniature donkeys, a next door (real) castle, dogs, cats, a parrot and of course, Gretchen and James.

The image shown in Fig. 11 was taken right behind my house. As indicated in the caption, "Who needs leaves?," if leaves had been present, you would not be able to see the blue sky, interesting cloud pattern, nor the intricate pattern of the tree's branching.



Figure 11. Who needs leaves?



I think that by now you have gotten the idea that one doesn't have to have a trillion blue bonnets and paint brushes, not huge swaths of color, to get interesting images. You also don't need to have painted buntings to get stirring bird pictures. (Indeed, the more that I learn about sparrows, the more I really like them.) I have learned that there are worthwhile images, everywhere, all year round. You just need to work harder, sometimes, to find them.

I will end with just two more images. As I was walking around my property this morning (February 19th), I suddenly saw signs that spring is close. Two examples are shown in Figs. 12 and 13. (I would swear that these blossoms were not present two days ago. To my great surprise, I saw a honey bee exploring the apple blossoms. How did she find

them so quickly? She seemed to be buzzing with happiness. There was little else that I could see for her to go to.

I guess that will have to admit, a little color can enhance a photograph.



Watch the Birdies

There are so many types of bird feeders and bird seed on the market that it can be confusing. We asked some members what they use to attract birds.

Hanna Drago, what type of feeders do you have

I have two bird feeders. One is a tube feeder with a cage over it. It is on a pole with a long baffle. I use black oil sunflower seed in it.

What birds do you attract

We have Chickadees, House Finch, American Gold Finch, Lesser Finch, House Finch, Titmouse, Sparrows, Cardinals (12 at a time is not unusual), Golden-Fronted Woodpecker, White Wing Dove on the ground beneath the feeder. I also have a this-tle tube feeder hanging from a branch where the finches feed.

What type of environment are you in.

Our property is on a hill with some Oak, Elm and Texas Persimmon. We have all native plants and grasses. I have bird baths near our feeders.

Sharon McBride, what type of feeders do you have

I have used several types of bird feeders in my yard over the years and have them in both front and back yards and try to keep them spread out because some of the birds are so territorial they spend all their time chasing all the other birds away. Primarily I purchase feeders from Lowe's or through Amazon. I also have hummingbird feeders and a Finch feeder (very small mesh). I had a suet feeder I used successfully for three winters but raccoons (I think) dragged it off one night this past January; I haven't seen it since.

I purchase seeds at HEB, the Hill Country Fare "Wild Bird Seed" blend that has millet, milo and Black Oil Sunflower Seeds. I buy two 20# sacks and mix in one additional 4# sack of Black Oil Sunflower Seeds (also from HEB). In the finch feeder I use Valley Splendor "Nyjer Seed" from Wild Birds Unlimited.

What birds do you attract

Unfortunately I am not very good at bird identification but I know I attract the usual suspects: cardinals, tufted titmouse, house finches, goldfinches, doves, blue jays, robins, sparrows (several types), black-chinned hummingbirds, even indigo buntings! There is a flock of turkeys in the area that occasionally browse underneath the feeder in my backyard for seeds (see attached photo).

Of course, the squirrels take their fair share too, but I wasn't prepared for the amount of other wildlife that like to browse the seeds that spill on the ground including foxes, porcupine and deer (of course) not to mention the ones who come in the middle of the night that I never see.



Photo by Sharon McBride

What type of environment are you in.

In the country, near Balcones Canyonlands on about four acres.

Linda O'nan, what type of feeders do you have

Wire mesh nyjer seed feeder(Tractor Supply) and tube feeders with large and small bird excluders (Wildbirds Unlimited). I use wild seed mix from Costco which everybody likes, suet (Sue's recipe) hanging from a cable and millet in the early spring for Buntings

What birds do you attract

Goldfinches on wire mesh nyjer; Lincoln sparrows, House finches, cardinals, chickadees, whitewing dove on the tube feeders; and golden fronted woodpeckers, titmice, cardinals, chickadees, orange crowned warblers on the suet & unfortunately redwing bb's luv it.

What type of environment are you in.

We live on Lake MF in woodsy, rocky hillside

Sherry Bixler, what type of feeders do you have

I feed birds year-round although they need less supplemental food when natural sources of seed are plentiful, usually in late summer and fall. I do this because I enjoy seeing the birds in my yard. I also keep one hummingbird feeder out year-round, bringing it inside if temperatures go below freezing. One rancher friend hangs a heat lamp over the feeder on his porch in the winter because he often has wintering hummingbirds and this seems to be

happening more frequently.

A birdbath or other water source is very important. Even though I live on a creek, I have a birdbath and dripper because birds enjoy bathing and I enjoy watching them. Any form of moving water (mist, drip, spray or running water) is more attractive than still water. Birdbaths need to be near shrubby cover or trees, as do feeders. The birds should be able to quickly find cover in case of hawks, owls, cats or other predators. If you have a man-made pond, make sure some of the sides slope gently so the birds can wade.

I use three types of birdseed: black oil sunflower seed, niger thistle seed and a good blend of millet and small seed or peanut hearts. Different birds are attracted by each type of seed and suet cakes and peanut butter suet are a great addition.

What birds do you attract

These plus a hummingbird feeder will bring in goldfinches, house finches, cardinals, sparrows, buntings, woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, hummingbirds, dove, even quail and turkeys in open land.

Two problems that can be dealt with are old seed (just buy from reputable dealers) and high numbers of some species like blackbirds, dove, and cowbirds. Fortunately these high numbers seem to be seasonal and some of these birds prefer to feed on the ground, so only the spilled seed is available to them. There are also feeders that are caged to keep larger birds away from the food.

If you want to begin feeding, start with one feeder with sunflower seed and one hummingbird feeder. When I am doing bird surveys I see more empty feeders than filled ones, so any food you may supply is more important than ever.

What type of environment are you in.

Our property is on a hill with some Oak, Elm and Texas Persimmon. We have all native plants and grasses. I have bird baths near our feeders.

Meet The Members



Someone I am supposed to know the name to Class of 2011

Where were you raised and what is your professional background?

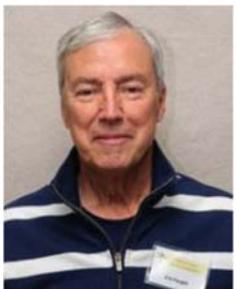
I was born in Corpus Christi Texas and spent my younger years in Robstown, San Benito and Brownsville before moving to Lufkin for my junior high and high school years.

What is your professional background?

I have a bachelors degree in Biology with minors in Chemistry and English and originally was planning on going to go graduate school in oceanography but got married instead. I went back to school to get my teaching certification and taught Biology, physical science, and oceanography. I left teaching to work for American Airlines then returned to school to get my masters in Library Science. I was a junior high and high school library media specialist in the Houston area until moving to Horseshoe Bay in 2010.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

I love nature and all of the outdoors and am especially interested in the interrelationships between animals and plants and the environment and the impact that man has on that balance. Sharing this knowledge with children and adults is of special importance.



Cris Faught Class of 2013

Where were you raised and what is your professional background?

I was raised in Houston and I spent my career in Houston and Austin in the Insurance industry where I was an Agent and Consultant for over 46 years.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

I have always been interested in the natural world, being captivated by how nature supports and depends on each species in the landscape for survival. HLMN has given me a greater appreciation for this lifelong love affair.



Judy Haralson
Class of 2014

Where were you raised?

I'm a Texas girl through and through. My childhood was spent in West Texas. My adult years have been spend in San Antonio, Crystal City, Austin and now Kingsland.

What is your professional background?

My undergraduate degree from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene is in Education. After spending the next twenty years teaching school, working in my husband's law office, and raising kiddos, I earned an MEd at the University of Texas in Guidance and Counseling. The part of my working life I enjoyed the most was spend as a Licensed Professional Counselor in private practice. My clientele was mixed, but with a majority of my time spent in working with children and adolescents.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

The gravitational pull of my life has been toward the out of doors. Whether it was athletics, hiking, camping, growing things, bird watching, or whatever, I preferred the open spaces. Maybe that is because of growing up in the wide open spaces of West Texas. I've always had a garden wherever I lived. Some were better than others, but it was a persistent hobby. My husband, Hal and I had property between Oak Hill and Bee Cave in what was far southwest Austin when we bought it. For thirty years I tried to grow that which was deer resistant and grew in rock instead of soil. I also had a "little house" which we build behind our main house. It had windows on three sides which took in a wide view of the wooded area west of Austin. This became not only my office, but also my indoor wildlife viewing station. As Hal's health declined we left that part of the hill country and moved to Kingsland. Finding the Master Naturalist group has opened so many doors to new friendships, new learning experiences, and

Horns a Plenty

By Becky Breazeale

Antelope Horn *Asclepias asperula*

I must have walked past Antelope Horn milkweed a million times before I realized what it was. Once you have seen a picture of it you will recognize it immediately. It is everywhere in the Hill Country.

As you can see, Antelope Horn milkweed is named for the shape of its seed pods. It is a favorite as a host plant for the Monarch and nectar for other butterflies and pollinators, but is toxic to many animals. It is a native perennial forb with a long tap root that allows it to flower even in years without much rainfall. Antelope Horn bloom in the spring and fall. In the spring, the first batch of Monarch caterpillars hatches on the plant and eat



Brown to purplish pods Photo by Becky Breazeale

as much milkweed and they can.



Photo by Kim Yarborough



Seed pod split open and seed silk
Photo by Carolyn Fannon

Antelope Horn milkweed requires full sun with medium to dry soil and will grow in sand, loam, clay and caliche. The plant will grow to a height of 8 to 24 inches. The cardiac glycoside in the sap has been used to treat some heart disease. Native Americans used the sap to make tea to strengthen their hearts and a treatment for a bite from a rabid animal. In WWII, the silk down of the seed pod was used for life jackets because the silk is 5 to 6 times more buoyant than cork.

Growing milkweed can be quite persnickety. **Bird and Bloom** magazine suggests collecting the seeds from pods before or as they split open. Remove the seeds from the pod and then separate the seed from the fluff. A cold treatment is necessary to end the dormancy so store in an airtight container for several months in the refrigerator. Sow seeds indoors in a seed starting mix or good potting soil. Texas Butterfly Ranch offers a more complex method:

<http://texasbutterflyranch.com/2013/03/13/how-to-get-texas-native-milkweed-seeds-to-germinate>

Packaged plant seeds can also be purchased online at The Native American Seed store and your purchase benefits the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

http://www.seedsources.com/catalog/detail.asp?product_id=3068

They can also be found Wrights Nursery, **6040 FM 2657, Briggs, TX 78608, Phone: 512-489-2239**

While you are on your daily walk or scenic drive this spring, look for the patches of Antelope Horn milkweed. The beautiful plant will be nestled among the Bluebonnets and Indian Paintbrushes and make a nice photo opportunity.

Resources

“Ask the Expert”, Bird and Bloom, February, 2018, Trusted Media, page 52.

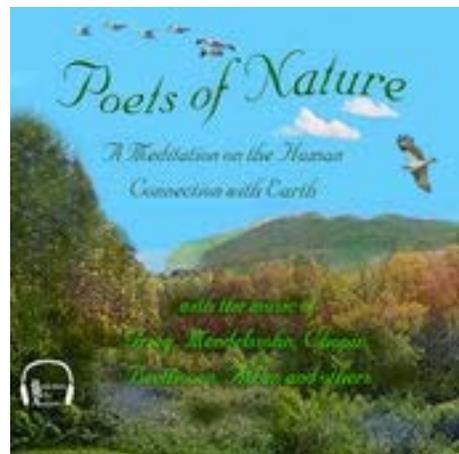
<https://npsot.org/wp/story/2011/1780/>

http://www.seedsources.com/catalog/detail.asp?product_id=3068

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=asvi2

Editor's Pick Poets of Nature: A Meditation on the Human Connection with Earth (Unabridged) iBook

Do you have an affinity for poetry and nature? This is the iBook for you. Poets of Nature features poet greats, Walt Whitman, John Keats, Emily Dickinson, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Brontë, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. This audio takes the listener from the distractions of our everyday life and transports them to another time and place. The pairing of poems and music renders a soothing and relaxing experience. Whether you are listening to the iBook as a compliment to a hike around the lake or while enjoying a winter day by the fire, Poets of Nature brings human and nature together. by Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Brontë, Emily Dickinson & John Keats



<https://itunes.apple.com/us/audiobook/poets-nature-meditation-on-human-connection-earth-unabridged/id322578106> Open iTunes to Buy - \$10.95



*Thank you
to **ALL**
who
contributed!!*

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.