



Highland Lakes Steward

June 2017

Volume 8, Issue 2

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
Cathy Hill
cmhill1957@yahoo.com
713-898-7895

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

Secretary
Karen Lundquist
jzion@austin.rr.com
(512) 288-2374

Treasurer
Susan Downey
shdowney@gmail.com
(830) 693-9291

MESSAGE FROM CATHY

by Cathy Hill

When I gave a short address at the recent Graduation Ceremony for our 2017 Training Class I received several nice compliments. Therefore I decided to reword it slightly so that its message would apply to all of us. For your information this was the 15th Master Naturalist Training Class for our Chapter. It should be mentioned that several of those first graduates are still members of Highland Lakes Master Naturalists; namely Marvin and Judy Bloomquist, Linda O'Nan, Bill Luedecke, Karen McCurley, and former Extension Agent / Educational Coordinator Wade Hibler.

I would like to address the realities of being a Master Naturalist, especially in our chapter. If you Google the Texas Master Naturalist Program you will find the following definition: A program designed to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas. Now I don't know what brought each of us to this organization other than I assume an interest in and love of nature. In my opinion, and speaking for our chapter in particular, we could not have found a more interesting, dedicated, and friendly group of people. In addition not only do we work hard towards a common goal, but we always seem to have fun doing so.

Although some of our members are masters, as in very knowledgeable about their particular area of interest, like plants or birds for example, I be-

lieve that most of us can bear the title of "master naturalist" due to our masterful love, interest, and enjoyment of the natural world. In our training, whenever that was, we were introduced to a wide variety of topics. Because of the diversity of our backgrounds some of us were familiar with some of these topics, but others were not. Regardless I'm sure all of us had the desire to learn more once our appetites had been whetted. Hopefully this is still true for all of us, as we should never stop learning more. Being in Master Naturalists makes this easier with our many educational presentations, workshops, and in the field type studies. Personally I like all "critters" even spiders and snakes, but my favorites are birds. I know I would never have learned as much on my own as I have going on various bird hikes and surveys with other members who are more knowledgeable about them and happy to share that knowledge with others.

Have you ever considered how lucky we are to be Master Naturalists in the Highland Lakes Chapter here in our part of the Hill Country? We are blessed with a wide range of locations and opportunities for us to fulfill our mission of promoting environmental education and stewardship and of course accruing those required advanced training and service hours. Many of those volunteer activities are with our partners, the state parks, national refuges, and the like and their associated Friends groups and their

(Continued on page 2)



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Message from Cathy Cathy Hill	1
The Native Plant Spot Sammye Childres	3
Helpful Hints Marilyn McClain	4
Farm and Ranch Feathers Ed Lilley	5
World's Greatest Leaper Lori Greco	8
Refuge Welcomes 1,200 Students Jennifer Brown (Balcones Canyonlands)	10
Meet Our Members Sheryl Smith Rodgers	12
Hatchery Outdoor Program (H.O.P.)	14
Greater Outdoor Program (G.O.P.) Cathy Hill	17
Grand Opening of Community Paradise Becky Breazeale	23
Windows vs. Birds Betsy Bouchard	25
Early Spring Images P.R. Wyde	25
Life Goes On... Lyn Davis	32
Photo Gallery HLMN contributors	34
Congratulations Graduates Photo creds Susan Downey	37

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.

Message from Cathy cont'd

organized programs. However please remember that not all of your volunteering needs to be with a scheduled group activity. Many citizen science type activities can be done solo and even in your own backyard. Or you can research a topic and write an article for this newsletter. Not only will you learn something new yourself, but you can share it with others and earn service hours. Use your imagination and when in doubt check with our AT and VS coordinators. With regards to doing some of our group service activities, don't forget that your spouse or other family member is welcome to join us at many of them. No, you don't get double the hours, but just a chance to let them see what you are doing and share it with them if you wish.

One thing I would like to stress to our newcomers, and it doesn't hurt to remind all members of this. Explore as many possibilities for volunteer service and advanced training as you can. Get and stay involved by coming to the meetings as often as you can so that you can keep informed on our chapter activities and business. Serve on a committee or as an officer or board member if asked. And yes, you need those yearly required service hours, but don't forget that the volunteering service itself is the important thing. Don't overextend yourselves. We don't want anyone to feel stressed or burn out. On a lighter note have you noticed, like I have, an unusual increase in the number of dragonfly themed items in your closet, jewelry box, and general home decor since you became a Master Naturalist?

Finally I would like to say that being a Master Naturalist means different things to each of us. Like so many pursuits in life Master Naturalists will be for you what you put into it. So in closing I would like to repeat the State Park Motto which we also believe in: LIFE IS BETTER OUTSIDE! And encourage us all, new members and old to:
HAVE FUN! MAKE FRIENDS! MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!

Cathy Hill

THE NATIVE PLANT SPOT

By Sammy Childers

Branched stems with fern-like leaves end in flower heads with many bright purple, very narrow rays surrounding a yellow central disk. Tahoka Daisy is a low, spreading annual with delicate aster-like flowers. The plant is about 12 inches high and can clump or mound to 3 feet wide. Each plant has numerous showy flower heads, blooming May to frost. The stems are densely covered with sharp-pointed, deeply cut leaves which appear fern-like, lending a valuable contrasting texture to your landscape.

The fern-like leaves of this beautiful species make it one of the easiest to identify in a complex group. False Tahoka Daisy (*M. parviflora*) is similar but has smaller flower heads, with a smaller central disk and less elaborately divided leaves.

The plant grows in full sun to part shade and will adapt to most well-drained soils. Be aware that less sun will create fewer blossoms. It is drought tolerant but periodic supplemental watering will encourage more



Tahoka Daisy



Machaeranthera tanacetifolia
Tahoka Daisy, Tansy-aster

blooms over a longer period. Easy to grow, Tahoka Daisy is an excellent choice for rock gardens and those hard to maintain locations. Plants provide a nectar source and are deer resistant.

Sow seed in situ or start seedlings and then transplant 6 to 12 inches apart. Once established plants will reseed readily if their environment is left undisturbed. Seeds are available from Native American Seed.

Helpful Hint

By Marilyn McClain

Remove Yourself from an Approved Opportunity

You may remove yourself from an opportunity for which you are approved at any time by using the instructions below.

Removing yourself from the opportunity has no effect on hours you have posted against the opportunity and does not prohibit you being approved for the same opportunity in the future. One reason for removing yourself from opportunities is that it will shorten your drop down list.

1. Log in using your volunteer user ID and password
2. From the volunteer dashboard, select "My Placements"
3. Scroll through the list of opportunities for which you are approved until you find the one you wish to remove and click on the line "Click here for details or to remove yourself"
4. On the resulting screen, click on the Red button containing the prompt "Remove Me".
5. A confirmation window will display with the prompt "Are you sure you want to unsign from this opportunity?" Click the OK button to confirm or click "Cancel" to cancel the action.
6. Return to the Volunteer Dashboard



Volunteer Management System

By Marilyn McClain via Jennifer Weisensel

Have you volunteered recently? Have you taken a class or attended a walk or chapter meeting and need to report your hours? Remember you have **45 days from the date of service** to report so get those hours reported today!



Report my Service

Submit volunteer hours.

Log on to your profile and click on "Report my Service." Select the survey from the drop down and after a few quick clicks, you're done. It only takes a few moments to log in and report those hours.

We all live busy lives - especially now when it's a great time to be outside!! Some of us prefer to log hours each time we volunteer, but some of us can't get to it each time. So, if you tend to forget, here's a helpful hint:

HELPFUL HINT #1: Set up a recurring date and time on your mobile phone to report your VH and AT.

Farm and Ranch Feathers

By Ed Lilley

A fellow Master Naturalist and representative of the Bird and Wildflower Society recently asked if I would write an article concerning birds. Having been raised on, and living on a farm/ranch for many years, I agreed to give it a try, thinking perhaps some of my bird experiences might be somewhat unusual.

Because of living on several different farms before age six, I can establish some times based on where we lived when remembered things happened. For example at age 3 and 4 we had a sizable flock of chickens which are my earliest remembrances of birds.

Three things I remember well about those chickens; they gave us eggs and Sunday lunch was not possible without at least two fryers making the ultimate sacrifice. I was a chicken-chaser in that process. Mom took care of the dirty work, and of course the cooking. My first great revelation concerning birds was that they always taste better with milk gravy.

The third thing I vividly remember about those chickens was that big red rooster. He was the cock-of-the-walk, and he did not like little boys in his pen. If I weren't real close to my Mom or Dad, he would flog my head and shoulders quicker than a duck on a Junebug. Believe me, it was no fun for me –I was scared to death of him.

The more I think about it, additional incidents come to mind, like the time I found a nest with more eggs than I could carry. I had no can or basket, so I did the only logical thing I could do –stuffed them all in my overall pockets and headed toward the house. Yes, they were all scrambled, just not cooked.

As I continued to grow up on the farm, we always had chickens and sometimes turkeys and guineas. I don't remember anything about wild birds until about age ten when I was allowed to begin hunting ducks and doves. The population didn't suffer very much though.

Once while dove hunting, I was sitting quietly waiting for them to come to water at a windmill. The gun was cradled in my arm, sticking up in the air, ready for action –when all of a sudden a wren landed on the end of my gun barrel and played around for what seemed like a long

time, all the while only about a foot from my face.

While I remained at home, we always had many beautiful birds from chickens to turkeys, ducks, geese, pheasants and even peafowl. It was always fun to find the nests of the free ranging ones, and I always had the most interesting eggs to take to school for Easter.

Back on the farm after many years away, I couldn't help but get back in the poultry business again. We had so many ducks that a buyer would come from Dallas to purchase for the farmers' market. Locals even started referencing our place as the "Duck Farm" as opposed to the "Hog Farm" down the road.

Because of the title of this article, I feel that at least one ranch story should be included. Some of you may have had the pleasure of suddenly busting a covey of quail right under foot. Well, I've done you one better. Try that on horseback with a wild turkey. Somehow I did manage to stay on.

As the years have passed, I find it much easier to sit and watch nature in general, and birds in particular. For example, a buzzard knocking an other one off the top of a pole causing it to fall to its death, or a male cardinal moving all around me and eventually going under my legs as I sat in a lawn chair, or Inca Doves stacked three deep on a window sill for warmth, or an America Kestrel knocking himself out on a window while I grabbed the bird book to see what he was, or pulling a snake out of a bluebird nest box, or watching a roadrunner fight himself in the glass on the sun porch, or when he would jump up on the window sill literally inches from me, or seen hawks (maybe eagles) free fall perhaps two thousand feet.

These are just a few memories from being in the great outdoors, but before I wrap this up I must include a story that involved my poor wife, Sue.

At one point I was raising Ring-necked Pheasants for release, and had the incubator going with a hundred or so eggs, not due to hatch for three or four days, which was good because I had to go out of town for a few days. All was carefully arranged, but you already know what happened. Apparently, I had barely cleared the county when Sue began to hear strange noises coming from the incubator. It has been rumored that she lost her complete sense of humor. Thankfully, with the help of a good friend, they were able to ease the situation. I should have had a big birddog at the time – maybe he would have shared his house.

We still run a few chickens, as they say, but nearly all our bird activity today is centered around the wild birds. We enjoy watching them from our eating area or just out in the area around the house. We try to provide feed, water and shelter as well as nestboxes and the planting of many native plants and field crops to help our feathered friends.

We recognize most of our more frequent visitors, but are not accomplished birders. We just love the beauty of creation and feathers have to be included.

Have you ever returned from church service and the first thing you see on your driveway is a Scarlet Tanager on a fresh dusting of snow? Keep watching.

POET'S TREE

*Underneath the poet tree
Come and rest awhile with me,
And watch the way the word-web weaves
Between the shady story leaves.
The branches of the poet tree
Reach from the mountains to the sea.
So come and dream, or come and climb –
Just don't get hit by falling rhymes.
By Shel Silverstsein*



Did you know that if HLMN sponsored a Book Club, Volunteer Hours would be awarded for the Discussion portion of the Book Club Meeting (not the reading of the Books).

World's Greatest Leaper!

By Lori Greco

Every time I see “spit” on a blade of grass or on a plant, I remember my grandpa telling me that it was snake spit, so I had better be extra careful about snakes! I believed that until 2013 when I went to the Master Naturalist course. How sad.... But it reminds me of grandpa, which is a great thing!!

This spring there seems to be a plethora of it all over my plants so I thought I would finally get the facts on that “spit”.

A couple of days ago I picked up two plants with spittle on them and carefully fingered through the foam and found this little green nymph that was quite shy. The common name "spittlebug" arises from the lifestyle of many species, whose nymphs form spittle



masses in which they develop, concealed from predators and protected from desiccation. The froth serves a number of purposes; it hides the nymph from the view of predators and parasites, it insulates against heat and cold, providing this thermal control and moisture control which they create by blowing air into a fluid excreted from their anus. Without the froth the insect would quickly dry up. The nymphs pierce plants and suck sap causing very little damage and much of the filtered fluids go into the production of the froth, which has an acrid taste, deterring those predators.

An interesting factoid; A froghopper can exert more than 400 times its body weight; a flea can do 135 times its body weight; a grasshopper can do about eight times; and we can do about two to three times our body weight. The G-force generated was more than 400 gravities in the best jumps monitored. In comparison, a human astronaut going into orbit on a rocket may experience no more than about 5 gravities(Gs). The froghopper's secret is found in its two hind legs that are so specialized to the high jump task that they are simply dragged along the ground when the insect is walking. Also, these little spittle-

bugs can jump 100 times their own length!

Spittlebugs, or froghoppers, constitute the superfamily *Cercopoidea*, which currently includes up to 5 families: *Aphrophoridae* (treated as a subfamily of *Cercopidae* by some), *Cercopidae*, *Claspteridae*, *Epipygidae*, and *Machaerotidae* (treated as a subfamily of *Claspteridae* by some). This superfamily embraces approximately 2,500 described species and 330 genera. A few of the species are serious agricultural pests. The Two-Lined Spittlebug is the central Texas native, but others can be found here.

The life cycle of froghoppers consists of three developmental stages: egg, nymph and adult insect. Spittlebug eggs are laid in late summer and are left to over winter on plant debris. The eggs will hatch in early spring and go through five Instars, or stages, before becoming adults. The nymph stage is



often green colored and it looks like a miniature, wingless version of the adult. It takes 1-2 months for nymphs to mature and during the summer and adults will lay eggs every 2-4 weeks. The wings are held like a tent over the body and an adult will live about 23 days. In damp, humid conditions, populations will soar if left untreated. However, it is not easy to see spittlebug damage when it is wet and moist. It is during this time that they can lay hidden in the wet,



healthy grass and remain unseen. But as soon as conditions dry and the local grass is put to the “health” test, spittlebug damage will show its impact. Overwatering your yard can increase your spittlebug population, but using a natural, organic pest control application will help rid yourself of them if you are worried about them weakening or killing your grass.

So live a little and pull the blade of grass with that “spit” on it and investigate it. You know you want to!

Refuge Welcomes 1,200 Students with Help from Master Naturalists

By Jennifer Brown (Balcones Canyonlands)

Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge had amazing success this year with Bridges to Birding and Going Buggy environmental education programs and it's in no small part due to Highland Lakes Master Naturalists. As the new education specialist for the refuge, I was nervous and excited to experience the field trips the refuge offered to third through fifth grade students. From our training held in March, to each of the fifteen (!) field trips held at the Doeskin Ranch unit of the refuge this spring, Master Naturalists helped to execute phenomenal educational experiences for our local school children. Field trip after field trip, teacher after teacher, I heard over and over how Master Naturalist volunteers did an exceptional job teaching and guiding students. Because of the dedication and hard work of the Highlands Lakes Master Naturalists (and other TXMN chapters) the refuge had 1,200 students participate in field trips this spring. Thank you SO much to everyone who volunteered their time and talent to connect students with nature on Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge!



Looking for the Golden Cheeked Warbler with binoculars and Joan



Photos by:
Stennis Shotts

Bird feathers with Fred Z.



Jennifer leading a HIKE

Meet Our Members: by Sheryl Smith Rodgers



Connie Barron

Blanco, Class 2009

Where were you raised?

Yorktown, Texas.

What is your professional background?

Registered nurse, personal trainer, lobbyist.

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

Riparian restoration and water conservation.



Terry Bartoli

Llano, Class 2005

Where were you raised?

I was raised in San Antonio.

What is your professional background?

I spent my working career at IBM as a contract administrator.

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

My greatest interest is in wildlife, and I get to exercise that in a very hands-on way by volunteering in wildlife research with Dale Schmidt. He is the TPWD biologist for Llano and San Saba counties. But our activities have taken me well outside those counties.



Jane Brunclik

Where were you raised?

I was raised in Wisconsin and spent a lot of my childhood in the woods.

What is your professional background?

I was in the restaurant business for many years. Then I went into the automotive business, both selling and doing finance.

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

After retiring, I thought I would make a study of pollinators since wildlife gardening has been my passion for years. I had been a founding member of the Friends of Balcones National Wildlife Refuge and got back into volunteering as the volunteer coordinator there. Now, with that plus becoming the president of Friends, I'm afraid I spend more time at the computer than getting outside!



Minnie Eaton

Bertram, Class 2013

Where were you raised?

I grew up in McAllen in South Texas.

What is your professional background?

Before I retired, I was a registered pharmacist for 41 years.

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

My nature-related passion and volunteer activities are planting native and pollinator gardens, birding, interpretive hikes, and sharing my love of nature with others.



Donald Jungkind

Horseshoe Bay, Class 2016

Where were you raised?

I grew up in Austin (grade school) and then attended middle and high school in Wharton.

What is your professional background?

I have a PhD in Medical Microbiology from the University of Texas Medical Center–Galveston. I attended a two-year clinical laboratory post-doctoral program at Temple Medical School and Hospital in Philadelphia. I was a professor in the Departments of Pathology and in Microbiology at Thomas Jefferson Medical School and Hospitals in Philadelphia, where my primary duty was to be director of the Clinical Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Laboratories that served four hospitals. I was elected to be a Fellow in the American Academy of Microbiology and was a diplomat in the American Board of Medical Microbiology. Later, I became chairman of the Department of Microbiology of St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies. My research was in the development of instruments and laboratory test kits for faster and more accurate diagnosis of infectious diseases in consultation with various international companies and the U.S. Military Infectious Disease Research Program. Notable achievements included the first publication on the FDA approved-molecular test kit to diagnose an infection and the first instruments to automate that process. I also was also a consultant for the U.S. Military Infectious Disease Research Program, was involved in efforts to improve laboratory medicine in China, and served as faculty advisor to the Christian Students Association in Grenada.



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

Ever since my parents gave me my first microscope, telescope, chemistry, and electricity sets for Christmas, I enjoyed all aspects of science. I put that to work throughout my career and am now applying it to rehabilitating an over-grazed cattle ranch that I inherited from my father. The Highland Lakes Master Naturalists education program allowed me to learn about many natural science areas necessary for that. Most importantly, the HLMN and the Nature Center at Reveille Peak Ranch have given me the chance to pass on the joy of discovery and natural science by serving as a volunteer teacher at various events designed to enrich our area's children and young adults. America needs more young people to become scientists so we can continue to be the world leader in new product development.



Jerry Stacy

Horseshoe Bay, Class 2006

Where were you raised?

I grew up in Temple.

What is your professional background?

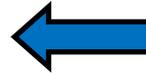
I worked in large electronic equipment support with Texas Instruments in College Station, Dallas, and Austin.

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

My specialty is identifying native plants and talking about them. I'm also interested in edible native plants, such as hackberry, erect dayflower, spiderwort, and wood sorrel.

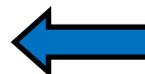
Hatchery Outdoor Program (H.O.P.)

The Hatchery Outdoor Program is an outreach program of the Friends of Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery (FOIDNFH). Public school children from the area surrounding the Hatchery visit for a fun and educational tour. This year's activities were Using the Bird Blind and Binoculars, Fish Anatomy and Production, Scientific Discovery Method using an Earthworm, Hike the Hill Country exploring geology and native plants, and Master Casting with sportsmanship.



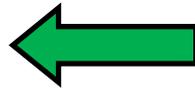
**Hike the Hill
Country**

**Exploring earthworm
using Scientific
Method in the
Education Building**



**Fish Anatomy and
Production in the
Holding House**

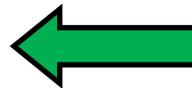




**Bird blind and
binoculars!! 😊**



Watch your step



Master Casters

Great Outdoor Program at Inks Lake State Park (G.O.P.)

By Cathy Hill

For many years our chapter has partnered with Inks Lake State Park to put on an outreach program in April for area first graders that we call the Great Outdoor Program. For the last couple of years I have been in charge of this program and I'm happy to say that it was a rousing success once more. Of course this would not have been possible without the hard work and enthusiasm of over fifty of our members, FOIL, and ILSP staff. I was happy to see a number of our training class participate. We certainly appreciate everyone's willingness to work whether you were there everyday or just when you could be. Everyone's contribution was invaluable. We survived one rain out and another day when we thought we might all blow away. Great job troops!!

For those of you who have never done GOP, let me give you a brief summary. First off a program at a lake would have to have an Aquatic Station. Here the students got a brief lesson in ecology while our seiners (hopefully) caught some fish for the students to see and learn about. Then on to the larger tank to see (and get splashed by) some bigger fish caught by park staff. Next they trekked over to the Bird Station which also overlooked the lake. Here they learned about the wood ducks and their nesting boxes. The students were also instructed in the use of binoculars and hopefully got to see some real birds with them. While still on the subject of birds the students moved on to learn more about area lake birds: osprey, geese, ducks, pelicans, owls, and great blue herons through the use of silhouette cutouts on the park store. At the Butterfly Station the students learned about the life cycle and the milkweed dietary requirements of Monarchs. In addition they got some exercise with some vigorous migration activities. At the Vertebrate Station the subject was the different characteristics of the different classes of vertebrates: fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Lastly to have something about plants, the students came to the Tree Station. Here the students learned about several native Texas trees including our state tree, the pecan tree. They also looked at growth rings on tree "cookies" and did leaf rubbings. Finally they ended with enthusiasm to all become "tree huggers!"

In the beginning of each day we told the groups that the state park motto is "Life is Better Outside." Everyone seemed to certainly prove this by having a good time. It is always fun to interact with the kids and hear their comments as well.

I want to thank Sue Kersey for the many photos she sent me. It was really hard though just to select a few for this article. If you want to see more, you will just have to come and see for yourself next year.

In addition, since GOP, HLMN members have participated in many other outreach programs, including those at Balcones Canyonlands NWR and Inks Dam NFH.

Kudos to all our volunteers!

Photos by Sue Kersey



**Sean Jones
welcoming the
students**



Guides and Cathy Hill



Group shot last day - all smiles !!

Dennis E leading group



Jerry with aquatics



Phil and Jerry seining for fish in Inks

Phil at Aquatics Station



Student with fry



Sue L. at Bird Station and binoculars

Bird Station with Ray and wood ducks



Celia and Eva at Bird Silhouette Station



Sharon Mc, Judy H. and Sondra at Monarch Station

Lori G. and Carole H. at the Vertebrate Station



Cathy at Tree Station with leaves and seeds



Grand Opening of a Community Paradise

By Becky Breazeale

The City of Granite Shoals and Highland Lakes Master Naturalists joined together to create a community paradise and Sunday, April 30th was the grand opening of that effort. The community paradise is a wildlife viewing station on 132 secluded acres located by a pond adjoining the 2 mile Leo Manzano hiking trail.

The City of Granite Shoals provided the land as a park and Highland Lakes Master Naturalists (HLMN) provided the equipment, supplies, and manpower for the wildlife viewing station. At the opening day ceremony, Mayor Carl Brugger welcomed everyone, Fredi Franki of HLMN thanked all the volunteers, and Seth Smith, Chair of the Parks Advisory Committee invited us to return to enjoy the City's numerous parks. And in the background, Goldfinches and Hummingbirds were entertaining at their feeders.

Members of the HLMN Board, Marvin Bloomquist, George Brugnoli, Melissa Duckworth, Fredi Franki, Ed Myatt, Linda O'Nan, and Allan Wolfe, approved funding for the Wildlife Viewing Station in December 2016 and the Membership approved the funding in the Fall of 2016. Work began in February 2017 and was mostly complete by the end of March. There were thirty-three volunteers logging in 839.5 hours to date. By Texas Parks and Wildlife standards, that is a value of \$19,038.50 in labor. There were also hours recorded in the planning phase, but those have not been tabulated. Materials and equipment cost have been around \$8,000.



Ribbon Cutting, photo by Martelle Luedecke



The Celebration!! Photo by Becky Breazeale

Windows vs. Birds

By Betsy Bouchard

My newly washed windows are beginning to look gritty, not only from dust and pollen but also from little splats where bird heads hit the windows. Only one has met her end in my garden, a lovely grey phoebe, although who is to say what a concussion does to a bird's long-term health. I stood outside and looked at the windows. I saw what a startled bird would see: a reflection of sky and trees.

I combed the Internet for ideas. The stick-ons, owl shaped or geometric, do not work, in my experience, or I was unwilling to sacrifice my view and paste on enough to deter them. I bought shiny metallic ribbons used in orchards to protect ripening fruit. The clatter drove me nuts. I did see an elaborate, roll down screen, applied by suction cups, but it was complicated.

Finally, with the help of a handyman, we found a way to protect one picture window over the kitchen sink. He measured a distance around the window, on the outside frame and not the window, and had Tru Value Hardware in Marble Falls make a new window screen to size. Using a sticky-backed Velcro tape, he attached the new screen to the outside of the window frame. It works beautifully in theory. By putting it over the window, there is enough distance between the screen and the window to give the screen bounce. If a bird zooms into the screen, she will bounce off. I have not yet been witness to a test.

The other windows in my house will not be fixed so easily, as the glass is flush with the frame, so a screen will not be far enough away to give the desired bounce. I am thinking of painting wooden strip, or even just pieces, to which I can attach a screen. If you have a solution, please post.

Early Spring Images

By P.R. Wyde

I know that when you read this article it will be, or almost be, summer in the Texas Hill Country. But as I am typing this report spring is officially only a few weeks old and new color, activity and life is erupting throughout this area. Below are a few of the images that I captured during the past few weeks. All were taken in Burnet and Llano Counties.

As you remember, the wild flowers this spring were often spectacular. However, I frequently found it difficult to get my camera to capture some of the vistas that my eyes saw. Images 1 and 16 are two examples that worked. I had more luck when I zoomed in on the flowers. Image 2 shows one of my favorite shots.

When seen up close in the right light, the vivid colors of the flowers were often dramatic!

I frequently found single or small groups of flowers arresting and worthy of photographing. Images 3, 4 and 5 provide some examples.

Unfortunately, invasive plants also proliferate in the spring! The Russian thistle shown in Image 6 provides an example. (I did not take a picture of the outrageously abundant Malta star thistle as that plant does not make a very nice picture.) Talking of thistles brings me to a thought that has been rumbling in my head. We are supposed to love native plants and plants well-adapted to this area, e.g.,



esperanza and pride of Barbados, and hate invasive plants. I keep thinking that invasive plants are really, “very well adapted” plants. However, I understand the need to ROOT OUT the invasives.

Not all plants need flowers to be photo-worthy. Image 7 of a lace cactus provides an example.

In the past two weeks, I also took a number of bird pictures. These were shot during the Raptor Release

Event held March 19th on a Canyon of the Eagles boat cruise and during my peripatetic photo safaris.



**Image 3.
Close Up Paint
Brushes
Along Park Road 4,
Burnet County**

**Image 4.
Prickly Poppy Seen
River Oaks Dr.
Kingsland**



**Image 5.
Texas Dandelion
Seen At Balcones
Canyonlands
Refuge**



**Image 6. Russian Thistle
Seen In Llano Along Llano
River**



**Image 7. Lace Cactus Inks Lake
State Park**



**Image 8.
Great Horned Owl
Seen Raptor Re-
lease Canyon of
the Eagles**



Images 8-11 were all taken during the Raptor Release Event. It was terrific seeing these birds up so close and learning more about them. I am not sure which of them was my favorite. The regal bald eagle, fierce great horned owl and colorful caracara were certainly impressive. However, the little screech owl was cute as can be – and I am sure that he is most impressive when swooping down on a mouse. Also seen on this excursion were a barred owl and Harris's hawk. (The latter, as the bald eagle, was not

released during this event but used as “learning tools” to teach the public about raptors and bird rescue.)

I did not get a good picture of the barred owl and I am not showing you the picture of Harris's hawk since we were told that these hawks are found further west of here and are not native to Burnet, Llano or Blanco Counties. Actually, I was happy to get any good photos on this trip. The cruise passengers were constantly walking in front of my camera, the boat was often in motion and the lighting was often terrible. You will notice that I am not showing any birds flying off after their release. They were much, much too fast for me to shoot!





Image 11.

*Caracara Seen Raptor
Release Canyon of the
Eagles*

Image 12.

*Two Caracara and
Black Vulture Behind
5366 River Oaks Dr.
Kingsland.*

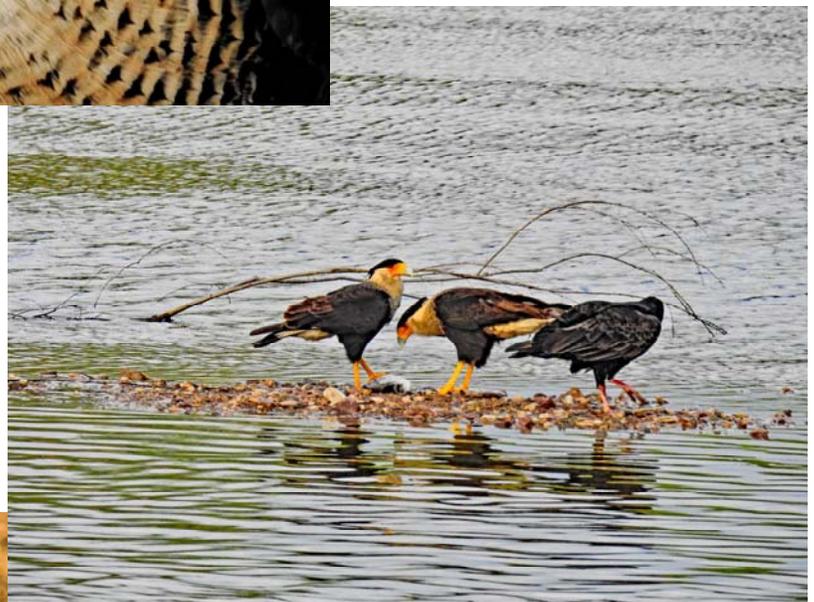


Image 13.

*Speckled Ear-
less Lizard Inks
Lake State Park*

I have included Image 12 to show that you can see raptors without going on a special cruise. I took the picture of the caracara shown in Image 12 behind my house (5366 River Oaks Drive, Kingsland) on the morning of April 1st. The black vulture (also a raptor) was trying to get a piece of the fish that the two caracaras were eating. They would have no part of that! If you look, the fish is quite big, indeed, much bigger than any fish that Billy Hutson has ever caught. Billy, take heart, I am sure that the caracara did not catch it, but found it lying on the small sand bar. So, it doesn't count in any contest.

I will end this effort with 3 other images taken during my early spring photographic safaris. The first is of a spotted earless lizard (Image 13). This image was taken at Inks Lake State Park. I find these creatures irresistible with their bobbing and scooting. Note how effective that little guy's camouflage is. My camera had a tough time focusing without my help.

The image of the small snail (Image 14) was taken in my yard. It was nice to not have to worry about fast shutter speeds to stop the action or having my subject bolt out of the frame.



The last image is of Stumpy Hollow at Inks Lake State Park during the "Golden Hour" when the sun has just gone beneath the horizon. It was truly the "Golden Hour."

As these representative samples indicate, you can see there were lots of images to be seen and captured during early Spring 2017 in the Texas Hill Country. I don't expect things to taper off too much during the coming months. To be sure, I will continue to get up early and wander about with my cameras to see what there is to see.

Image 15.
***Stumpy Hollow, Inks Lake State Park,
Burnet County***

Life Goes On Update on Breeding Eastern Screech Owls

By Lyn Davis

Much prodding on our front yard tree by an arborist took place mid-March to find the tree was rotten in the inside/center and needs to be taken down for safety reasons. I didn't buy it because all its limbs are green with leaves and one of our screech owl boxes was the home of "Wings" and hopefully his partner for the coming months. But undenounced to me the owl and its partner decided to move to a knot hole in a live oak tree right next door. Convenient --- yes, because they knew where to come for food and water.

Amid storms and hurricane force winds an owlet was found early one morning on the ground underneath one of the boxes in the backyard. Sadly, all there was, was a mound of fuzzy fluffy white feathers. As much as I fretted about this I know it is all part of the food chain and life goes on..... BUT we

couldn't help but wonder if "it" had gotten all of them or was this the only one. I so much wanted to climb that ladder and just take a peek! Several days later and really not many days at all as we were wondering around the backyard with our 4 dogs we spot owl on the ground. Had it fallen out as well or had the mother pushed it out? After watching it several minutes, we determined that it could not fly or even hop. My husband put on a pair of leather gloves and picked up the sweet non-combative owlet. (see picture) He crawled up the ladder one handed since the owlet was in the other hand to return him/her to it's nest. Mission accomplished!

There are now 2 owls and one fledging hanging out in the well leaved tree every day. Sometimes they are side by side but most time they are each within 12 - 24 inches apart. Same tree and almost



most time they are each within 12 - 24 inches apart. Same tree and almost



the same spot every day. The mother is obviously the larger of the three and the dad is the distinguished one who is thin but proudly sits tall. And the cute half fuzzy one is the fledging that the mother still feeds at dusk and dawn. We put out 3 small pyrex bowls of meal worms around 8:15 each evening. We watch them feed themselves and then carry one to the fledging on a nearby lower tree branch EVERY night. Yes, only the female feeds the young. This has been going on now for about 10 days and we are anxiously watching to see when the fledging will start feeding itself.

In past years, we have had owl pairs have 2 or 3 babies, but this is the first time that we have seen a pair have just one (but keep in mind that two of the up to 5 eggs hatched and one was eaten by an unknown creature!!!) Each year is different de-

pending on weather, food supply and water.....but life goes on

Photo Gallery



Mike and Sue Kersey visited the Crane House in Port Aransas. These are some of the beautiful creatures they saw.



Closer view of seven cranes in one spot.





The sun was just right and the wall was warm. Now, look a little closer.
Becky Breazeale

Flying In!



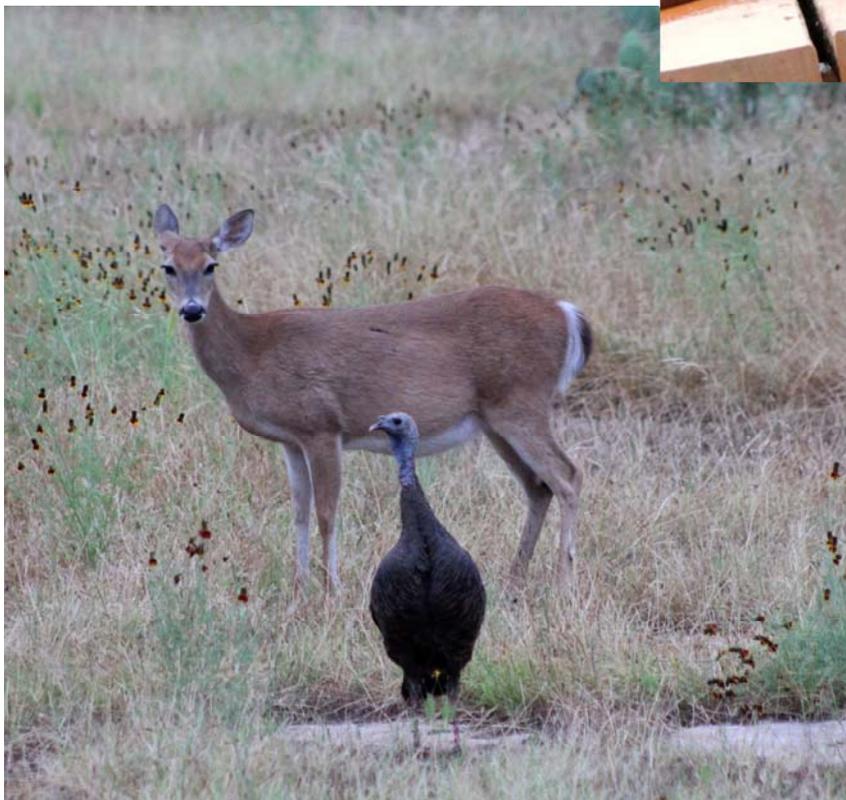
Antelope horn milkweed pod
by **Betsy Bouchard**





**Mama Mallard and babies
by Sue Kersey**

**Mama mallard and babies tak-
ing a nap
By Sue Kersey**



**Ummmm...
Who are You?
By Martelle
Luedecke**



Congratulations HLMN Class of 2017!! Welcome !!

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.