



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

# THE TEXAS STAR

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## APRIL PROGRAM: HILL COUNTRY HERPETOLOGY

Kathy Rice-Fletcher, a local Naturalist, will present a program on "**Reptiles of the Hill Country**", including living specimens of local lizards, snakes and turtles. She will discuss how each reptile goes about its daily life, and answer any questions we might have on these critters.

Kathy has been the Naturalist at the Mo Ranch for over three years working in the field of Outdoor Education. She has a B.S. degree in Biology from Principia College in Illinois. Some of us met Kathy at the Master Naturalist State Meeting at the Mo Ranch, where she attended several of the presentations, including the Riparian Habitat lecture and hike.

This meeting will be held on **Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM** at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, Kerrville. The public is invited to join us. **Please note that this month we are returning to our usual schedule of a social hour beginning 6:30 PM and our Program beginning at 7:00 PM.**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*BY SANDY PEÑA*

April 26<sup>th</sup> is a red-letter day for our chapter as we officially open the application period for our next training class this fall. Edna Platte and John Rogers have been busy creating our chapter display table for the Earth Day Celebration at Riverside Nature Center, and several of our members have volunteered to be on hand to answer questions, and tell folks what valuable work we do for the communities we serve. Myrna Langford has done a great job getting the updated applications ready, and Edna Platte is seeing to it that announcements about the class go out far and wide.

I'm sure that everyone of us knows a friend or acquaintance that would make a great Master Naturalist, so please grab some applications and go recruiting! Myrna will have plenty of them on hand at Earth Day, and will also bring some to our meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Remember though, that the deadline for applying is a little shorter this year---June 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Board recently asked for a report from our hardworking database manager, Betty Thomas, on our volunteer activities since last October 1<sup>st</sup> (when we began recording volunteer hours.) In just six months, chapter members have devoted more than 700 hours to 23 volunteer projects and administrative activities. This is an impressive achievement for a first-year chapter, and we still have nine months to go! Congratulations to each one of you who has contributed to this chapter effort--every single volunteer hour is your gift to the community. What you do COUNTS!

## FOUR MORE MEMBERS CERTIFIED IN OUR CHAPTER

**Myrna Langford, Maggie Tatum and Jim and Priscilla Stanley will receive their Certified Master**

**Naturalist certificates and dragonfly pins at our April meeting. Thus, four months into our first year of Chapter meetings, we will have 25% of our members certified.**

## CALENDAR

**“APPROVED AT” INDICATES THAT AN EVENT HAS BEEN APPROVED AS ADVANCED TRAINING FOR OUR CHAPTER.**

**April 24--26 Texas Ornithological Society Meeting**, Port Lavaca, TX  
[http://www.texasbirds.org/meetings/port\\_lavaca\\_2003.html](http://www.texasbirds.org/meetings/port_lavaca_2003.html) **APPROVED AT**

**April 26 Earth Day Celebration & Mostly-Native Plant Sale**, by Riverside Nature Center & Native Plant Society of Texas – Kerrville Chapter; two presentations are **APPROVED AT**:

10:00 AM **“Butterflies & Butterfly Gardening”** by Deborah Payne of the Fredericksburg Butterfly Ranch and Habitat, and

1:00 PM **“The ABC’s of Rainwater Collection”** by Raul and Sandy Pena

Contact: Barbara Quinby at [jsquinby@hctc.net](mailto:jsquinby@hctc.net) or 367-4612 for more information.

**April 26 “Hill Country Landscape Design”** at Cibolo Nature Center, Boerne. Contact: [nature@cibolo.org](mailto:nature@cibolo.org) or Nina at 830-249-4616 **APPROVED AT**

**April 28 Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter** meeting at 6:30 PM for social hour and 7:00 PM for **“Reptiles of the Hill Country”**(see article above)

THE FOLLOWING **APPROVED AT OPPORTUNITIES ARE ALL AT CIBOLO NATURE CENTER IN BOERNE;**  
**CONTACT:** [nature@cibolo.org](mailto:nature@cibolo.org) or Nina at 830-249-4616

**May 1 Spring Grasses Workshop**

**May 8,9 &10 Wildlife Field Research**

**May 17 Deer Management**

**May 24 Backyard Wildscape**

**May 24 Bird Walk**

## VOLUNTEER PROJECT OF THE MONTH:

### **Bandera City Park Workday: Trail Maintenance**

A Workday was held in Bandera City Park on April 5<sup>th</sup> to perform Spring trail maintenance and to repair the Rainfall Runoff Comparison Plots that we built as our class project last Fall. Ten people worked on the trail; nine were members of the Native Plant Society of Texas - Bandera Chapter and five were Master Naturalists. Clearly, some folks were members of both organizations, which is to be expected since the missions of these two organizations are complementary. The group had a very good morning clearing away fallen trees and branches along two legs of the native plant trails. Eventually there will be a third leg. Each trail starts at the hard surface road and winds down to the Medina River and back up. Each rustic trail is about 1/4 to 3/8 miles long.

In the photo above, Master Naturalists John Rogers and Karen Johnson (front row) cut encroaching vegetation from the trail in Bandera City Park as fellow Chapter member Mike Johnson and Doris Uhl (from the Native Plant Society of Texas – Bandera Chapter) rest from their trail clearing work. Master Naturalists Sandy Pena and George Tinsley also

worked on this project. . Sandy pointed out the abundance of poison hemlock growing near the trail which they cut back as carefully as possible without touching it. Sandy also did a great job of identifying the early Spring blooms along the way. There was one exotic plant that will need watching. It was a giant variegated thistle that was surrounded by a lot of hemlock.

This intrepid group also worked on resetting the water collection pipe in grass drainage area of our class project, the Rainfall Runoff Comparison Plots (one plot contained grass, while a similar nearby plot contained grass and a cedar tree). Hopefully George will be able to get the pipe cemented in so that the water will go into the collection barrel. We then might see some difference in the water runoff of the two plots. If you are interested in participating in future workdays in the Bandera City Park, contact John Rogers.

## UPDATE on the EARTH DAY CELEBRATION and MOSTLY-NATIVE PLANT SALE

### **Saturday, APRIL 26<sup>th</sup> - 8 AM to 3 PM at Riverside Nature Center**

Many of us will be attending the Earth Day Celebration to volunteer at our Chapter exhibit, to purchase native or adaptive plants, or to attend the presentations at the Nature Symposium. **There is one correction to last month's newsletter. "The ABC's of Rainwater Harvesting" presentation by Raul and Sandy Peña will begin at 1:00 PM** (earlier than the time shown last month). We don't want you to be late, since it is a great talk, and it is approved as **Advanced Training** for our Chapter.

### **The Plant Sale will offer over 1200 plants representing 60 different species of flowering plants, shrubs, and grasses.**

Special efforts were made by the Plant Committee Co-Chairs, (also our Chapter members) Gwynn Jackson and John Quinby, to obtain unusual native plants, including those that were grown specially for this event. The sale will include big red sage, an endemic species native to south-central Texas, thought to be extinct until its rediscovery in 1987. Other hard-to-find plants include blue mist flower (an incredible butterfly magnet), native ferns, purple skullcap, deer-resistant mealy blue sage, early-blooming Harvard penstemon, native passionflowers, western ironweed, pigeon-berry, Texas betony, damianita, square-bud primrose, native prairie larkspur, blue flax, fluttermill, tube tongue, skeleton plant and many others. Shrubs will include anacacho orchid, elbow bush, pink mimosa, coral berry, flame acanthus, Texas honeysuckle, rose pavonia, kidneywood, silk tassel, agarita (highly deer-resistant) and more. Experienced gardeners will be available to help with questions on the plants, where and how to plant them, growth habits, etc.

Members of the Native Plant Society and/or Riverside Nature Center can shop at the **"Members Only Presale"** on Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 6:30 PM. (You can become a member at the Presale.)



On an April 14<sup>th</sup> visit to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, we were pleased to see the Texas star, our Chapter flower, blooming, both as a 6 inch tall, single-stem plant, and as a 12 inch tall, branched, multi-flowered plant. On April 16<sup>th</sup> I found the first Texas star flower in our garden on a 3.5 inch single-stemmed plant. The flower faithfully tracks the sun across the sky. Be sure to watch for the blooms of your Texas star!