



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

THE TEXAS STAR

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MAY PROGRAM: FIELD TRIP TO LOVE CREEK PRESERVE

SATURDAY, MAY 31 FROM 10 AM TO 2:00 PM

This month our field trip will **replace** our regular Monday night meeting. Members and prospective members (and a spouse or a friend) are invited on this special Field Trip to a new, pristine Nature Conservancy Preserve near Medina that is not open to the public.

The 1,400 acre Love Creek Preserve protects one of the most diverse habitats in the nation and some of the most scenic land in Texas. The preserve is named after Love Creek which runs for 2 ¼ miles through canyons and forests on the property. Crystal-clear water flows from numerous springs and seeps originating from the geologic seam separating the porous Edwards limestone from the dense Upper Glen Rose formation. These perennial, life-giving waters cut through the deep, cool canyons, enabling a wide variety of Texas native plants and wildlife to flourish on the Edward Plateau.

Rare plants such as Texas mock-orange, sycamore-leaf snowbells, darkstem noseburn, spreading least-daisy, scarlet leatherflower (a clematis), bigtooth maple, buckley tridens, big red sage, and tubusch fish-hook cactus are some of the native flora in the preserve. Rare golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos, as well as Acadian flycatcher, Louisiana waterthrush, summer tanager, indigo bunting, blue-gray gnatcatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, a nesting pair of zone-tailed hawks and many other birds are found in the preserve.

Our tour will be led by a Nature Conservancy staff member familiar with the property and its exceptional fauna and flora. **We will meet at 10:00 AM in Medina near the Apple Store at the Apple statue on the west side of route 16.** We will carpool in 4-wheel drive vehicles to the preserve. You will need shoes for wading (a significant part of the canyon trail is through the shallows of Love Creek), a sack lunch, loppers or clippers (to prune any intruding vegetation from the trail), drinking water, a hat, sunscreen, insect repellent etc. We hope you can join us in viewing the wonders of this very special Nature Conservancy Preserve.

Adapted from The Nature Conservancy of Texas literature

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SANDY PEÑA

Ben Franklin once said, "When the well is dry, we know the worth of water." Water is very much on my mind as I write this morning. There's a 40% chance of rain today, and I've got my fingers crossed. The Hill Country is facing another drought cycle this summer, unless we are rescued by a deluge. At the recent Earth Day Celebration, the presentation on "Rainwater Harvesting" was well-attended, and we continue to get calls from folks currently on wells wanting to switch to rainwater.

As Master Naturalists, we focus on educating people about conserving and managing our natural resources. Surely one of the most important (but often overlooked) natural resources is rainwater. With the increasing demand on our existing water sources (rivers and aquifers), and the projected doubling of our population over the next few decades, our water problems are only going to get worse. To help respond to these critical water issues, I am hopeful that our chapter can develop volunteer projects which deal with water conservation, water quality, and water education for our service area. If you are interested in pursuing these topics as a volunteer, please get in touch with John Quinby, our volunteer projects chairman, with your ideas.

To learn more about water issues in Texas and the Hill Country in particular, let me recommend a great website I have recently learned about: www.texaswatermatters.org. In addition, the Sierra Club has produced a timely booklet, "Facts About Texas Water and Simple Steps to Appreciate, Conserve and Protect Our Most Valuable Resource." I have 30 copies of it, and will bring them to our next meeting (June). In the meantime, I hope everybody has a great time at the field trip to the Love Creek Preserve on May 31st. Unfortunately, I can't be there with you because of my husband's class reunion with old friends from his college days (40 years ago!). See you in June!

TWO MORE MEMBERS CERTIFIED IN OUR CHAPTER

John and Barbara Quinby will receive their Certified Master Naturalist certificates and dragonfly pins at our next meeting. Thus, five months into our first year of Chapter meetings, we will have 32% of our members certified.

CALENDAR

"APPROVED AT" INDICATES THAT AN EVENT HAS BEEN APPROVED AS ADVANCED TRAINING FOR OUR CHAPTER.

THE FOLLOWING TWO APPROVED AT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AT CIBOLO NATURE CENTER IN BOERNE;
CONTACT: nature@cibolo.org or Nina at 830-249-4616. (Cibolo Nature Center is a Resource Link on our Chapter website.)

May 24 Backyard Wildscape

May 24 Bird Walk

Monday, May 26 – No Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter meeting this month (see Field Trip below)

Saturday, May 31 – Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter Field Trip to Love Creek Preserve in Medina (see May Program information on page 1)

June 1st – Deadline for submission of Applications for the Class of 2003 Hill Country Master Naturalists. Please remind any potential applicants that you know so they don't miss this deadline. Do you have any friends that might be interested? Tell them about your experiences, and see if they would like to join us! Applications are available from our secretary, Myrna Langford.

June 18 Project Wild at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park, Fredericksburg, **7:30AM Early bird walk 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM Workshop** Contact: Jane Crone 830-661-2639 - APPROVED AT

VOLUNTEER PROJECT OF THE MONTH:

Wildlife Field Research at Cibolo Nature Center

Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne (Kendall County) holds Wildlife Field Research in both May and October. The research is performed by small teams of volunteers led by experts over a three day period. Cibolo is now in the third year of this wildlife research, which began with one project and has now grown to 10 projects, including Insects, Birds, Fish, Macro-invertebrates, Prairie Vegetation, Riparian Vegetation, Small Mammals, and Water Snakes. Volunteers signup for the training sessions and research teams in fields that interest them. Training classes (approved as Master Naturalist Advanced Training for our Chapter) were given on some of these topics by experts, including Texas Parks and Wildlife, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and County Cooperative Extension personnel. Our Chapter was well represented by Ann Creel, Myrna Langford, Jim and Priscilla Stanley and our Chapter advisor, Kip Kiphart. (Others of you may have attended also.)

In the **Prairie Vegetation Project**, three small teams ran 100 yard transects to evaluate the effects of prescribed burns vs. unburned prairie on the vegetation, the impact of mowing to simulate grazing etc. The study was conducted by placing a small frame on the ground, and then identifying the grasses and forbs within the frame, estimating the percent woody plants, other vegetation, litter (non-living plant matter), and bare ground, and finally estimating the percent of grasses and forbs, normalized to 100%. The frame is then moved along the transect line by two paces and the process is repeated. Data are typically logged for 50 frames in each transect. It was fascinating to see the major differences in the vegetation from one square to the next only 6 feet away. It was also a wonderful, hands-on learning experience to see that many plants in their various stages of development identified by the team, and verified by our expert leader.

The next research opportunity at Cibolo Nature Center will be in October. There will probably be at least one class and/or project of interest to each member of our Chapter.

NEW ADDRESS FOR OUR CHAPTER WEBSITE

The new address for our Chapter website is <http://www.hillcountrymasternaturalist.org> . Our hardworking webmaster, Kim Whitaker, has moved our website to this easy-to-remember address. Kim has also added some interesting and useful Resource Links for us (including a site on topographic maps). Be sure to add this new address to your favorites list, and then surf on over to our ever-growing and improving website to see Chapter meeting information, Chapter news (now including photos!), and volunteer and advanced training opportunities as well.

NATURE FACTS: Did you know...?

Insects: There is a caterpillar that eats mountain laurel leaves that is commonly known in Hill Country as "The Worm". In the Cibolo Insect class, entomologist Nathan Riggs from the Bexar County Cooperative Extension told us that this is the **genista caterpillar**, a tropical sod webworm that just happens to prefer mountain laurel. The genista caterpillar becomes a small (wingspan of 3/4 inch) brown moth (if you let it eat its fill of your mountain laurel). In *A Field Guide to Common Texas Insects* by Drees and Jackman, it is discussed on pages 241 and 263 with a photo on Plate 261.

Deer Corn: In the Cibolo Deer Management seminar, our Chapter advisor, wildlife biologist Rufus Stephens of Texas Parks and Wildlife in Kendall County, gave us two interesting reasons not to feed "deer corn" to deer.

1. Corn is only 10% protein, which is not adequate protein for supplemental feed for deer. Deer corn has been nutritionally likened to "beer for deer". High-protein deer feed (pellets) from the feed store contain 12+% protein. Lactating does require 14 to 16% protein to successfully raise their fawns.
2. "Deer corn" (in camouflage bags or with deer and target pictures on the bag) is not regulated as an animal feed suitable for long-term use, since it is considered a bait for hunting deer. Deer feed is required to contain less than 20 ppb aflatoxin, a toxic mold that grows on corn. "Deer corn" can contain 60 ppb aflatoxin. Aflatoxin levels of 50 ppb kill

quail and songbirds; levels of 100 ppb kill turkey and hurt deer. Since it is a mold, aflatoxin can grow on corn during storage, both in the commercial distribution chain and in your garage. This toxic mold has its strongest effect on fawns and older deer. Last year in Bulverde, fawns died in urban areas from being fed corn with high levels of aflatoxin.

The maximum stress periods for deer, when supplemental feeding is most beneficial, are late winter through early spring, July through mid-September, and other times when inadequate forbs, mast (e.g. acorns) and browse are available (such as during drought, and on over-grazed land).

Conclusion: If you want to feed deer, consider feeding them high-protein deer pellets instead of "deer corn". Protein pellets are only a bit more expensive than corn, and the nutrition and safety are far superior.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The Earth Day Celebration and Mostly-Native Plant Sale sponsored by Riverside Nature Center and the Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter was a great success. Thanks go to the many Master Naturalists from our Hill Country Chapter who staffed our booth, attended nature talks, and supported the plant sale with numerous purchases. Edna and Howard Platt and John Rogers built a very appealing Chapter display with information about the Master Naturalist program and Patrick Klein's photographs of some of our activities.

"Volunteer Project of the Month" Candidates Requested: If you have any comments or suggestions on this newsletter, please contact the editor, Priscilla Stanley at jpbstan@ktc.com or 830-257-2094. I would welcome contributions on interesting volunteer projects you have done. I can't share them with the Chapter if you don't tell me about them, and other members might like to participate.

Dear Prospective Members and Other Interested Folks:

This newsletter is available in living color via e-mail. It arrives in the body of the message (**not** as an enclosure that can be difficult to open). You also get your newsletter 3 to 4 days earlier than via the postal service. We will protect your e-mail address by putting it in a blind address field so no one can see your e-mail address, even when the message is printed. We will give your e-mail address only to other Hill Country Chapter members who have a valid reason to contact you.

If you wish to receive your newsletter via e-mail, please send your e-mail address to me at jpbstan@ktc.com.

Thanks,

Priscilla Stanley



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