



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

# THE TEXAS STAR

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## JUNE PROGRAM: AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

American Farmland Trust is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is dedicated to stopping the loss of farm and ranchland. The approach is a combination of technical assistance, public education, public policy development and direct land conservation projects.

While the national American Farmland Trust organization was established in 1980, the Texas Regional office in San Marcos was opened in 1999. The primary focus of the Texas Regional office is to develop a statewide private lands protection program that will give landowners the necessary tools to keep their land in agricultural operation. The Texas Regional office also provides technical assistance and information to the public and works with communities to plan for the future of agriculture.

Our speaker, Julie Shackelford, the Texas Regional Director, will provide an overview of the American Farmland Trust's work in Texas. She will highlight how land fragmentation, or the breakup of larger ranches into smaller developments, is impacting the Hill Country. Ms. Shackelford will also discuss the results of a recent economic study that the American Farmland Trust completed in Bandera County, which demonstrated the economic benefit of agricultural land to county budgets. Lastly, she will describe some of the mechanisms that private landowners can use to protect their family lands.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*BY SANDY PEÑA*

Despite an early morning downpour on Tuesday, Jane Crone and I braved the elements to appear on the local cable channel to spread the word about our upcoming fall training course. It was a great chance to talk about what a Master Naturalist is and why we are all so enthusiastic about it. We had provided the show's hostess with some questions to feed us (which she did), but she also took us off on some interesting tangents as well. It made me realize how important it is for us to be visible in the communities we serve. One way we are doing that this month is by sponsoring (along with TPWD) a "**Project Wild**" workshop in Fredericksburg on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to Jane Crone for spearheading this opportunity on behalf of our chapter. It's not too late to sign up; just give Jane a call (830/669-2639).

Another opportunity for us to "make a splash" in all four of the counties we serve is by signing up to participate in the recently announced UGRA "**River Monitors Program.**" Folks may not pay a lot of attention to the quality of the water they swim in, but they ought to. This project will enable us to help the public learn about their local water resources in a new way. I am especially glad to be working on this

with UGRA since they are a major local partner of our chapter. Please call or email Charles Kneuper at UGRA (896-5445) to become involved in this great project.

Our second training class is just a few months away now. We presently have 17 applications, and there are others on the way. The Board will act on those received to date at its meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Since we have extended our deadline to July 1<sup>st</sup>, there is still plenty of time for folks to get their applications in. We will act on all subsequent applications at the July board meeting. Myrna has placed applications at the Riverside Nature Center as well as dozens of other places throughout our service area. Barbara Lowenthal and Jane Crone have put together a terrific group of instructors. It makes me want to do it all over again!

## FOUR MORE MEMBERS CERTIFIED IN OUR CHAPTER

**Ann Creel, Jane Crone, Edna Platte and Betty Thomas will receive their Certified Master Naturalist certificates and dragonfly pins at our June meeting. Thus, six months into our first year of Chapter meetings, we will have 46% of our members certified.**

**For the information of our prospective members, a Master Naturalist achieves certification by completing the 40 hours of required training, a minimum of 40 hours of approved volunteer service, and the minimum of 8 hours of approved Advanced Training within approximately one year.**

## CALENDAR

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

**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**

**July 1<sup>st</sup> – Extended deadline for submission of Applications for the Class of 2003 Master Naturalists in the Hill Country Chapter.** 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 at Riverside Nature Center and other locations, as well as from our Secretary, Myrna Langford.

**Monday, June 23 Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter meeting** at 6:30 PM for social hour and 7:00 PM for a presentation on the mission and achievements of **“The American Farmland Trust”** (see the article above). The public is invited to attend.

**June 27-28 or July 18-19** (to be determined) **Identification of Texas Fresh Water Fishes Short Course** by B. G. Whiteside, Ph.D at the Aquatic Station, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, \$200 fee/person, registration was due on June 11<sup>th</sup>. For more information, call (512)-396-1622 or email at [cwhiteside@centurytel.net](mailto:cwhiteside@centurytel.net). **APPROVED AT**

**July 11-13, 2003 The 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial Texas Prairies and Savannahs Conference** at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin. Talks include: Using USDA Soil Surveys to Evaluate Sites in the Field; Protecting Soils & Plant Diversity thru Conservation Easements; Bacteria, Fungi and

Nematodes Associated with Roots; Developing Sustainable Soils; and more; plus a field trip to a local Preserve, Ranch or a National Wildlife Refuge. There is a \$10 late fee for registration forms postmarked after July 1. For more info. [www.texasprairie.org](http://www.texasprairie.org) **APPROVED AT**

## **VOLUNTEER PROJECT OF THE MONTH:**

### **UGRA Calls for Volunteer River Monitors**

**Kerrville, TX, June 4** -- The Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) is calling for volunteers to sample the Guadalupe River and its tributaries. Greg V. Etter, UGRA General Manager, said: "The Guadalupe River is Kerr County's central asset, and we are initiating a program where citizens can contribute to the understanding and stewardship of this vital resource". The monitoring will focus on suitability for swimming and will run from July 7th to September 15th. Anyone with a desire to monitor water quality, or learn more about water resources, during some or all of that time is invited to volunteer. The monitoring program is open to individuals, groups, organizations and classes. Volunteers will be trained in water sampling by UGRA. Samples collected by volunteers will be analyzed at UGRA's state-of-the-art laboratory and provide information in addition to that already being collected by UGRA. Contact Charles Kneuper or Scott Loveland (830-896-5445) before June 18th to learn more or volunteer for the UGRA River Monitors Program.

This Volunteer Project, highlighted in Sandy Pena's President's Message (see above), will let us build on the aquatic information that we learned in our class and field trip last year. It is also a great way to meet other concerned citizens who might be interested in learning more about our Hill Country natural resources, and perhaps even joining us as Master naturalists.

## **SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MONTH:**

### **DISCOVERY OF A MOTH NOT PREVIOUSLY RECORDED**

#### **IN KENDALL COUNTY**

The moth species *Cyenia inopinatus*, never before reported in Kendall County and with few reported in Texas, has been discovered and authenticated in Kendall County by a network of interested people connected with our own Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists.

While participating in the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) and observing monarch larvae on antelope-horns milkweed on the family ranch, Myrna Langford was also closely watching orange caterpillars on the same milkweed. Unable to identify these mystery caterpillars and concerned that they were dominating the shared milkweed feast, Myrna contacted Kip Kiphart, HCMN advisor and MLMP Trainer, and Patty Pasztor, an ethnobotanist and butterfly enthusiast. Kip took it from there.



Photo by Kip Kiphart

### Myrna's mystery milkweed-munching caterpillar

Suspecting it could be the *Cycnia*, Kip took a couple of the caterpillars under his care, positioning them for clear, precise digital photos. Next he proceeded with a flurry of consultation emails with photo attachments to Patty, Mary Kennedy and Mike Quinn of MLMP, and Dr. Karen Oberhauser of the University of Minnesota's Department of Ecology. Area entomologist, Ed Gage, also viewed the larvae. However, Kip was not able to get a positive ID with the help of this, by now involved, group of professionals, nor from reference books or the internet. Meanwhile to the delight of all, the caterpillars pupated on the milkweed. And then, this note from Kip. "It eclosed. We now have a white moth in the container!"



*Cycnia inopinatus* (Hy. Edw., 1892 Emerged ex larva  
8 May 2003, Kendall Co., TX. Coll. Myrna Langford.  
Larval foodplant, *Asclepias asperula capricornus* (Woods.)

© J F Doyle

Kip's stunning digital photo of the moth as well as a frozen specimen was submitted to Terry Doyle. Mr. Doyle, listed as an avocational entomologist at Texas A & M, has been interested in lepidoptera since age 10. He is a member of Lepidopterists' and Southern Lepidopterists' Societies with published papers in both. Together they completed the ID. It is truly the *Cycnia inopinatus*. Here is Mr. Doyle's written contribution.

To the best of my knowledge, the arctiid moth *Cycnia inopinatus* (Hy. Edw.) is currently known from only six counties in Texas; Collingsworth, El Paso, Hemphill, Kleberg, Montgomery and San Patricio counties. This information is available from two websites: TIARA at Texas A&M University and a USGS site at Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center. Kendall county will make seven with this record. It is my opinion that the insect is more abundant than we now know. The caterpillars' milkweed foodplant, *Asclepias asperula*, is a common plant in approximately two-thirds of Texas counties. It may or may not use other species of milkweed. Thirty-six species are known from Texas. Diligent searching will no doubt accomplish new discoveries.

There is so much that we have to learn about the moths of Texas. Estimates eventually could number over 5,000+ species (including butterflies). The large majority of this number is moths. This is equal to 45% of U.S. butterfly and moth fauna. The documentation utilized to determine the specimen of inopinatus collected by Myrna Langford and reared by Kip Kiphart is from a Peterson Field Guide Series book titled *A Field Guide to the Moths of Eastern North America, 1984. Covell Jr., Charles V., Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA., p. 73.* The intended recording of this discovery will be part of a paper submitted to the Southern Lepidopterists' News. Joseph F. Doyle III, 13310 Bar C Dr., San Antonio, TX 78253.

Myrna expresses her gratitude to the team players for their dedication.



**Chapter Flower:** The Texas star plants in the Editor's garden are currently both blooming and dispersing ripe seeds. Hopefully this bodes well for more Texas stars next year, since it is an annual plant. Since Texas star is a Hill Country native plant, it is more likely to be tolerant of our long droughts followed by periods of substantial rain.