

MARCH PROGRAM:

1. INFORMATION ON KERRVILLE SCHREINER PARK:

2. AN OVERVIEW OF SIX CHAPTER VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

The former Kerrville-Schreiner State Park on Bandera Highway (State Highway 173) in Kerrville has become a Kerrville City Park. Tim Hufstedler, the Superintendent of the new City Park, will briefly discuss the park changeover and the City's vision for the Park. Hufstedler has been in Kerrville since 1981, including over 20 years working for Texas Parks & Wildlife Department as the Superintendent of Kerrville-Schreiner State Park.

The second portion of our program will be an overview of six popular Volunteer Projects approved by our Chapter.

The Bat Tunnel: Myrna Langford will describe her experiences in sharing information on bats and the history of the Old Tunnel with the public, and assisting graduate students in bat research projects at the **Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area** between Fredericksburg and Comfort. Project # KL-03-A

The Butterfly Gardens at Kerrville-Schreiner Park by Barbara Lowenthal *See the Volunteer Project of the Month article on page 4.* Project # KR-01-B

Cibolo Nature Center Research Field Days by Kip Kiphart. If you are interested in hands-on experience learning about prairie vegetation, insects, birds, small mammals, water snakes, aquatic invertebrates and much more, under the guidance of TPWD and other agency professionals, you will want to know more about this project.

Library Landscaping in Bandera by John Rogers - We will receive an update on this program involving native plantings around the Bandera Public Library.

Monarch Larval Monitoring at Cibolo Nature Center by Kip Kiphart In this international monitoring program sponsored by University of Minnesota, volunteers are trained to recognize Monarch eggs on milkweed plants and the larva in various developmental stages (instars). The monitoring helps track the Monarch population and the causes for losses of Monarchs. Project # KL-02-A

Children's Programming at Riverside Nature Center by Maggie Tatum – Riverside offers a variety of opportunities to interpret nature for children, ranging from the popular Nature Guide program for school classes with age-appropriate content, to the summer camp, and special events. Project # KR-02-A

This program will be held at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, in Kerrville, on **Monday, March 22nd** beginning with a social time at **6:30 PM**. The meeting and program begin at **7:00 PM**. The meeting is free, and the public is invited to attend. We hope that you can join us.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SANDY PEÑA

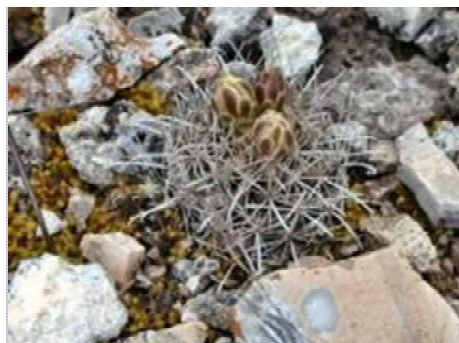
It was a misty, foggy morning last Wednesday (3/3), but that did not deter four adventurous MNs from driving out to the Kerr Wildlife Management Area in western Kerr County to hunt the elusive, endangered Tobusch fishhook cactus. Myrna Langford, Maggie Tatum, Wilma Teague, and myself volunteered to assist TPWD botanist, Jackie Poole, in locating new specimens of this tiny cactus hidden in and among the wiry grasses, cedar brakes, and rock-strewn hillsides of the KWMA. Previous searches there had already revealed the locations of more than 100 of these cacti, but Jackie felt sure there were more to be found. And find we did!



Photos by Raul Pena

The intrepid cactus hunters, from left to right,

Myrna Langford, Maggie Tatum, Wilma Teague, Amy Sugeno (TPWD Manager, Old Tunnel WMA), Sandy Pena, TPWD unidentified, Bill Armstrong (TPWD Manager, Kerr WMA), TPWD unidentified, and Jackie Poole (TPWD Botanist)



The Hunted Rare Cactus

Tobusch Fishhook Cactus, in bud

Note the Namesake fishhook spines

We were joined in our search by Amy Sugeno of the Old Tunnel WMA, along with two TPWD colleagues of Jackie's, and my husband, Raul, who also served as our official photographer. Bill Armstrong, the manager of KWMA, showed us the way to our search area, where a few Tobusch had very recently been found. With eyes glued to the ground and careful steps inching forward, the group began searching for our prey. After about 15 minutes, Raul scored with the first find. After several individual Tobusch were spotted, Amy finally hit the jackpot with a large grouping of 14! Maggie and Wilma also found specimens. As we broke for lunch, the threatening skies made good on their promise, and we packed it in for the day. We all had a great time and felt good about helping with ongoing TPWD research activities. There will be other such "one-day" volunteer opportunities with TPWD coming up this year, so sign up for the fun of it!

CALENDAR

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

For [Cibolo Nature Center events](#), contact Cibolo at **(830) 249-4616** or by e-mail at nature@cibolo.org.

Class sizes are limited, so it is important to pre-register. Fees apply to some events.

March 17: Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter- Board Meeting - Noon at Riverside Nature Center. Chapter members may attend.

March 22: Texas Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter, “The New Kerrville City Park and An Overview of Six Chapter Volunteer Projects at **6:30 PM** at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, Kerrville

April 6 at 2 PM: “Seeds: The Fruit of the Matter” by Chapter member Barbara Lowenthal and Linda Riner at **NPSOT – Kerrville Chapter meeting** at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St., Kerrville.

April 6 at 6:30 PM: “Identifying Texas Wildflowers” by Lottie Millsaps at **NPSOT – Boerne Chapter** at the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne. See their website for driving directions at www.npsot.org/boerne

Lottie Millsaps is a certified Texas Master Naturalist, and a long-time Native Plant Society member. Her lifelong fascination with native plants has led her to spend many years studying the local vegetation. Much of her education on native vegetation was gained while collecting for the Bexar Regional Herbarium. Besides knowing how to identify most of the native plants in this area, she also has interesting and amusing facts to tell about nearly every plant.

April 13 – 18: Nature Quest in Uvalde County, TX see www.thcrr.com/quest or call 800-210-0380 for more information. Some presentations may be AT (see e-mail from Jim Stanley dated Feb 27, 2004 11:03 AM for more details).

April 14 – May 19 9 AM – Noon: “Botanical Drawing of Native Plants” by Joy Poe M.F.A. at Riverside Nature Center for six Wednesday mornings, registration = \$15.

April 21: Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter- Board Meeting - Noon at Riverside Nature Center. Chapter members may attend.

May 1: Nature Fair in the Kerrville-Schreiner Park co-sponsored by the City of Kerrville Parks & Recreation Department and our Chapter. Call George Tinsley at 796-4770 for more information.

May 22: Tree and Shrub Identification by Susan Sander sponsored by Club Ed (Kerrville Adult Education) and Riverside Nature Center. Workshop fee is \$45, and part of fee goes to Riverside Nature Center. You must pre-register at 830-895-4386. This workshop will teach the use of the Tree Identification Key, a botanical decision-tree system that will allow you to correctly identify most Hill Country trees and shrubs by observing their leaf structure and characteristics. You will have practical hands-on practice identifying trees at Riverside.

Earth Day Celebration and Mostly Native Plant Sale

April 24 8 AM – 3 PM: This annual event is co-sponsored by Riverside Nature Center and the Native Plant Society of Texas - Kerrville Chapter. It is held at **Riverside Nature Center**. **Admission and the seminars are free.** There will be live music, food, and events for children and for adults throughout the day.

Highlights:

Mostly Native Plant Sale will include well-known native plants as well as some more unusual, hard-to-find native plants grown especially for this sale. Herbs and some near-native plants will also be sold. Plants will be available in 4 inch, one gallon and two gallon-size pots.

9 AM “Wildfire Preparedness” by Jan Fulkerson of the Texas Forest Service - Urban Wildland Interface will discuss plants, landscaping choices, and landscaping materials that can make your rural home better able to withstand a wildland fire. She will show examples of how a "firewise" landscape can also be aesthetically pleasing to people and attractive to wildlife as well.

10:30 AM “A Passion for Trees” by David Bamberger of the Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve, discussing how he has planted thousands of trees on his ranch to mitigate the ravages of oak wilt.

1:00 PM “Lawn Watering in Kerrville – An Explanation of the Watering Schedules” recently enacted by the City Council for City residents by Paul Knippel, Director of Development and Infrastructure for Kerrville.

1:00 PM “Water Issues in Rural Kerr County” for residents outside the City by Lon Langley, General Manager of the Headwaters Underground Water Conservation District.

2:00 PM “Juniper Interception of Rainwater” by Dr. Keith Owens of Texas A&M University on his ongoing study quantifying the impact of “cedar” trees on the fate of rain falling on the cedar canopy.

Some presentations may be approved as AT. Watch your e-mail for a final determination.

YOUR CHAPTER NEEDS YOU! Next month we will begin the application process for our Fall 2004 Class. As in past years, we will be doing a chapter display/applications/information booth at several events, to tell others about the Texas Master Naturalist program and the wonderful volunteer activities of the Hill Country Chapter, and to encourage folks to apply for our next training class. For these events, we need members to sign up to work at our booth for 1-2 hours at a time on the following Saturdays:

1. **April 17th** at Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne (their annual Mostly Native plant sale event)
2. **April 24th** at Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville (their annual Earth Day event)
3. **May 1st** at the new Kerrville-Schreiner City Park (our chapter's Nature Fair for the official opening)

Please, if you can volunteer a couple of hours for any (or all!) of these events, there will be a sign-up sheet at the March 22nd chapter meeting. And, if you'd like to volunteer but can't be at our meeting, please email John Rogers (jmrrogers@ev1.net), our VP of PR and Communications. Help get the word out about our chapter and what being a member means to YOU!

VOLUNTEER PROJECT OF THE MONTH:

🦋 THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN AT THE NEW CITY PARK

The Kerrville–Schreiner State Park contained a large amphitheater with concentric rows of benches surrounding a presentation pavilion and fire ring in the center. The amphitheater contains a butterfly garden that is protected from hungry deer by high fencing that is attractively disguised with vines and plantings. Several of our Chapter members have been instrumental in funding, building, planting and maintaining this butterfly garden for the enjoyment of Park visitors, even before our Master Naturalist Chapter was founded in 2002. This project is continuing now that the State Park has become a Kerrville City Park.

Spring is a busy time in all gardens, and this project is appealing for additional volunteers. Workdays are each Monday and Wednesday at 9:00 AM. In the summer, work begins at 8:00 AM. Folks usually work about one hour. You are welcome to take seeds or any plants that need to be removed. Thus, this volunteer project is a good way to increase your knowledge of native plants and enhance your home garden as well.

As you know, our Chapter is working with the City of Kerrville to co-host a Nature Fair for the Grand Opening of the new City Park on May 1st. We will hold several programs in the amphitheater and it would be wonderful if the garden could be in top shape for folks who might be seeing it for the first time. There is a wide variety of native and adaptive plants in the garden that attract a remarkable number and variety of butterflies.

You might want to consider the Butterfly Garden as one of your Volunteer Projects. You can work as much or as little as you choose. The Park entrance fee is waived for volunteers on Butterfly Garden workdays. Please contact Chapter members Barbara Lowenthal or Kay White for more information.

REFRESHMENTS

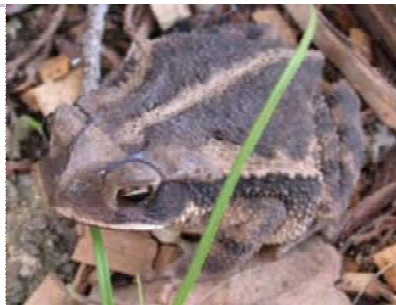
Thanks go to **Jane Crone** and **Priscilla Stanley** for the refreshments at our February meeting.

The March refreshments will be provided by **Barbara Lowenthal** and **Milby Moore**.

Hill Country Critters

The GULF COAST TOAD 🦎

Bufo valliceps



Photos by Priscilla Stanley

Mature Gulf Coast Toad in a potted plant.

Smaller Gulf Coast Toad.

See the characteristic prominent “cranial crests” (dark

See the characteristic dark stripe from its eye back

Y-shaped ridges above each eye). _____ along the dorsum (side).

Range: In North America, this toad is found along the Gulf Coast from Louisiana into Mexico.

In Texas, it is found in Central and South Texas, and in the southern portion of East Texas..

It is the most common toad in Hill Country.

Identification:

- The Gulf Coast Toad is a fairly large toad reaching lengths of from 2 to over 4 inches. Some exceptional specimens may reach 5 inches.
- **The most distinguishing characteristic of the Gulf Coast Toad is the dark lateral (side) stripe running the full length of the toad behind the eye.**
- Another very distinguishing characteristic is the well-defined “**cranial crests**” which form a deep valley between the eyes.
- The color pattern is variable. Many specimens are very dark and nearly all black, others may be greenish-white or even a gray-green.
- A light mid-dorsal stripe is present as in many other species of toads.
- This toad is rather flat in appearance.

Habitat: The habitat of this toad varies widely from coastal prairies and barrier beaches along the Gulf of Mexico to roadside and irrigation ditches to urban/suburban sewers and backyard gardens.

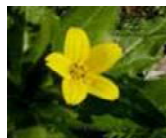
Behavior: It feeds on insects attracted to light sources and is most active at twilight.

Breeding: Breeding takes place from March to September.

Commentary: We live on native rangeland over a half mile from the nearest perennial water source. In over three years here, I have yet to see a toad on the rangeland. Since we high-fenced one acre around our home, planted native plants, and began plant propagation in pots (with regular hand watering), we routinely see toads in the warm seasons, as well as Northern Cricket Frogs and Southern Leopard Frogs. The Gulf Coast Toad in the photo on the left above has lived intermittently for two summers in a sheltered depression it created in a large pot of geraniums on the porch. While it LEAPED from the pot the first time I watered the plant that had become its home, we reached an accommodation whereby I could trickle in water from the far side of the pot as it hunkered down and watched. Neighbors who have installed water features have had resident frogs and toads within a few days after adding the water. How do frogs decide to leave a stream to cross long distances of dry rangeland to find a new home? I wonder what their success rate might be, and how many perish in the attempt to find their own water.

References: Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, www.npwrc.usgs.gov/narcam/idguide/bvall

University of Texas, College of Natural Sciences, www.zo.utexas.edu/research/txherps/frogs/bufo.valliceps



Texas Star

Lindheimera texana

Please send contributions and comments to your Editor, Priscilla Stanley at jpbstan@kctc.com