

## AUGUST PROGRAM:

# BUTTERFLY GARDENING



*Photo by Billy Walker*

A Queen butterfly sips nectar from a lantana bloom.



*Photo by Billy Walker*

A bright yellow Sulfur butterfly seeks nectar in a hibiscus bloom.

Our August program will be a presentation on “**Butterfly Gardening**” by our Master Naturalist Chapter member Billy Walker. He will discuss the large, colorful butterflies that frequent his gardens throughout the warm weather season, and the flowers that attract the various species. Billy will show us the Giant Swallowtail, Gulf Fritillary, Queen, Sulfurs and the Monarch, as well as their respective caterpillars and their host plants.

Billy became interested in flowering perennials when he discovered they did not require the water and attention that the vegetables he had grown for years did. His interest in butterflies grew as they visited his plants. He gave some talks on butterflies and began favoring plants that attract them or host their larvae. Thus, Billy has intentionally planted to attract butterflies for 15 years. He notes, however, that his family had unintentionally cultivated butterfly food and host plants like the Verbenas, Zexmenia and Ice Weed for over 100 years. He has a small formal butterfly garden at his office, and much more extensive butterfly gardens at home. He grows mostly native plants, but also grows many carefree non-natives, such as firebush, indigo spires and of course, several passionflower vines as larval food sources.

Billy is a fourth generation Bandera County resident, who lives on a 900 acre ranch that has been in his family for over 100 years. He is an attorney and owns a title company in Bandera. Along with his wife, Billy maintains a 35-box bluebird trail, grows native plants and grasses, conducts prescribed burns, and cultivates bird habitat. He has been married 33 years and has two daughters, one grown and living on the ranch, and one entering college this fall.

This program will be held at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, in Kerrville, on **Monday, August 23rd** beginning with a social time at **6:30 PM**. The meeting begins at **7:00 PM**. The meeting is free, and the public is invited to attend. **Be sure to join us for this program on how to attract these jewels of the insect world to your garden.**

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

*BY SANDY PEÑA*

Our **2004 training class** is an impressive group of folks and I hope all of you will join me in welcoming them at our special reception before this month’s chapter meeting on August 23rd. Just to give you a quick glance at our newest members before you meet them (and they meet each other!), here’s a bit about each one:

**From Bandera County:** **George Allen** is a retired auditor from “the big city” who’s looking forward to learning about our native resources; **Benjamin Eldredge** is a ranch manager with a B.A. degree in Environmental Science; **Ronald Hood** is retired from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service where he was a wildlife biologist and refuge manager; **Scott Magee** and his wife, **Sandra Magee** are both very active in the Native Plant Society, Bandera Chapter, and pursue wildlife management on their property north of Medina; and **Robert Wehmeyer** is a former attorney whose areas of interest include outdoor education and field research.

**From Gillespie County:** **Dan Behringer** lives in Harper and serves on the LCRA Pedernales River Advisory Panel; **Sally Brown** homeschools her two children and volunteers for the Texas Hill Country Youth Choir; **Cheryl Griebenow**, aka “The Cowgirl Concierge”, manages recreational ranches and implements wildlife management plans for clients;

**Martha Kuper** is a retired teacher and long-time volunteer with the Junior League; **Phyllis Muska** is a former computer analyst who has volunteered for the Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (Austin) since 1987; **Andrew Smith** grew up in San Antonio and now lives in Fredericksburg and runs the family ranch in Mason; and **Jim and Betsy Winn**, who are in transition to the Hill Country, are so excited about our TMN program that they applied while still living in Houston, where they are avid birders with a passionate interest in the natural world.

**From Kendall County:** **Kathleen McBride** lives in Boerne where she is very active at the Cibolo Nature Center and serves as its Afterschool Enrichment Coordinator; **Thomas Mitchell** hails from Comfort where he already volunteers 20 hours a month at the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area; **Joan Murphy** is another Comfort resident who participates in annual bird counts in the area; and **Joe Ripkin** of Boerne is also a volunteer at Cibolo and a member of the Native Plant Society.

**From Kerr County:** **Doug Bresler** of Kerrville is looking forward to acquiring a greater depth of knowledge about our ecosystems, now that he's retired from Dow Chemical Co.; **Virginia deWolf**, a PhD statistician, has just moved here from Washington, D.C. and has already joined both the Riverside Nature Center and the Native Plant Society; **Betty Gardner** and her husband just moved to Kerrville recently and are developing their land in Bandera as a wildlife management area; **Cynthia Johnson** is a retired biochemist, avid birder, and woodturner who volunteers for the Kerr Arts and Cultural Center; **Adele Junkin** is a retired math and science teacher in Hunt, who belongs to the Riverside Nature Center, Native Plant Society, and Hill Country Archaeological Association; **Wanda Mattarocci** is also a retired teacher in Hunt who volunteers for the West Kerr County Chamber of Commerce; **Scott May** is an artist and photographer who lives in Ingram, and has done volunteer work for U.G.R.A.; and **Kenneth Ruark** also lives in Ingram and enjoys gardening, landscaping, and outdoor activities.

## 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](mailto:nature@cibolo.org), or online at [www.cibolo.org](http://www.cibolo.org) under "Learning". **Class sizes are limited, so it is important to pre-register. Fees apply to some events.**

**August 18: Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter- Board Meeting** - Noon at Riverside Nature Center. **Chapter members may attend.**

**August 23: Texas Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter, "Butterfly Gardening"** by Billy Walker, at **6:30 PM** at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, Kerrville ([see article above](#)).

**August 24: "Prescribed Burning Workshop"** by Bill Armstrong (TPWD) and Joe Franklin (NRCS) at Kerr Wildlife Management Area. This all-day workshop will include a film, several different presentations about different aspects of prescribed burning, and a chance to go out and look at areas that were burned recently. There is a limit on the number that can attend. Call 830-896-4911, X 107 to register, or for more information. **"APPROVED AT"**

**August 31: "Seedball Construction Demonstration"** by at Native Plant Society of Texas, Fredericksburg Chapter at **7 PM.** at Pavillion #3 at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park in Fredericksburg. For more information, see <http://www.npsot.org/Fredericksburg/>

**September 11: "Hill Country Living 101: A Learning Opportunity for New Landowners": Session I: Getting to Know the Hill Country** organized by Roy Walston, Kerr County Extension Agent for Agriculture. Participants will literally work from the ground up to learn the what, why, when, where and how of managing the magnificent natural resources found in the Hill Country". This first session is a prerequisite for the other three sessions in the series, including: **"Commercial Horticulture Production in the Hill Country", "Wildlife Management in the Hill Country",** and **"Livestock Production in the Hill Country"** (dates not yet announced). Registration fees are \$30/session which includes lunch, refreshments and hand-outs. **You need to register by Sept. 1** if interested. There is a limit of 20 attendees. A brochure available at the Ag office on Rt.27 in Kerrville (near the Veterans' Hospital), or you can call the Extension office at 257-6568. **"APPROVED AT"**

**October 2<sup>nd</sup> [Down By the Riverside - Nature Festival and Native Plant Sale](#)** co-sponsored by our Chapter and Riverside Nature Center. **Volunteers needed!** ([See article below](#))

**October 25<sup>th</sup>: “Fall Wildflowers & Prairie Restoration”** by Janis Merritt, San Antonio Natural Resources Dept (previously worked at the San Antonio Botanical Garden) **9 AM - Noon** at Cibolo Nature Center. Learn how to start and maintain a wildflower meadow or a native grass and wildflower prairie on your property. **Cost:** \$10/member; \$15/member couple; Non-members: \$12/person; \$18/couple. (*See top of Calendar section for Cibolo contact information for Registration.*)

## **Down By the Riverside - A Nature Festival and Native Plant Sale**

As Sandy noted in her President’s Message last month, our Chapter is co-sponsoring “Down By the Riverside” with Riverside Nature Center on October 2<sup>nd</sup> as our first fundraising activity. This will be a fun-filled, educational event for our communities, with programs for all family members. We will have many of the excellent presentations our Chapter had scheduled for our Nature Fair in the City Park earlier this year that was unfortunately rained out. **We need volunteers for this event!** This event is a great opportunity to introduce our Master Naturalist Chapter to our community via our sponsorship and our presence at the event. This event also allows us to fulfill our Mission of “education, outreach and service” on the natural resources of the Hill Country. We will provide you with more program information in our September newsletter.

**Since this event is a fundraiser for our Chapter, your time will count as Volunteer Hours.** Because the event is after October 1, the members of our Class of 2004 can also volunteer and count their hours (after their class fieldtrip that morning). **There are many volunteer opportunities available**, including our TMN booth, the entrance table, kids’ activities, canoe rides, plant sale cashiers, plant sale docents and more. **Contact John Rogers** at [jmrogers@ev1.net](mailto:jmrogers@ev1.net) or **830-460-4356** to volunteer for a shift (or more, if you wish) from 7:30 – 9 AM, 9 to 11 AM, 11 – 1 PM, or 1 – 3 PM.

**The Native Plant Sale will feature many hard-to-find native trees, shrubs and perennials.** Fall is by far the best time to plant trees and shrubs so they can become established during our mild winter and be better prepared to withstand the stress of our summer heat. As a co-sponsor, TMNs can shop at the **“Members Only Plant Sale”** on **Friday, October 1<sup>st</sup> from 5 – 6:30 PM.**

## **MASTER NATURALIST CERTIFICATIONS FOR 2004**

At our August meeting, **Lonnie Childs** and **Nancy Vaughan** will achieve certification as Texas Master Naturalists and **Julia Campbell** will achieve re-certification. This will make **28%** of our 47 members that are certified so far in 2004.

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. The Master Naturalist program encourages members to continue serving their communities, and continue their education by requiring a minimum of 40 hours of approved volunteer service, and a minimum of 8 hours of approved Advanced Training in each successive year to achieve recertification for that year.

**Editor’s Note:** I am aware that some of you are more enthusiastic about snakes than others. Thus, a few of you may be thinking “Why is she talking about snakes *again*?” The answer is, “Because they are both more numerous and more often seen this time of year,” as evidenced by the following experiences and photos from two of our Chapter members. If you are out and about in rangeland, woods or even your backyard, you are more likely to encounter snakes now since they tend to be more active in hot weather. In these often sudden, chance meetings, I find it far more pleasant to have some idea what the snake is, and as importantly, what it is not. Many of us consider the absence of rattles to be a good start.

## **KNOW THE MOST COMMON VENOMOUS SNAKE IN THE HILL**

## COUNTRY

# WESTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE

*Crotalus atrox*



Photo by John Quinby

The Western Diamondback Rattlesnake is very common in the Hill Country. Adults in our area average 3 to 4 feet in length. The 40 inch specimen shown above was found by John Quinby near his home.

The Western Diamondback Rattlesnake is by far the most numerous and widespread venomous snake in the western two-thirds of Texas. It can be found in any terrestrial habitat within its range. Its bold temperament and diurnal (*daytime*) foraging also make it one of the most likely venomous snakes to be encountered. As with most snakes, it prefers to avoid humans.

**Prey:** Adult snakes feed mostly on mammals, including squirrels, cottontails and even young jackrabbits.

**Reproduction:** Live-bearing. A litter ranges from 9 to 14 snakes, with newborns being about a foot long, and feeding on mice. Young are born in September and early October. At this time of year they are more often encountered by humans because they can be locally abundant, they are still unwary of humans, and they are dispersing across unfamiliar terrain. Even newborns are capable of a venomous bite.

<p>Photo by John Quinby</p>	<p>Photo by John Quinby</p>
<p>Large triangular head is twice the width of the neck</p>	<p>The “coon tail” of black and white stripes of <b>equal width</b> identifies a Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. It is not unusual for the rattles to have broken off, as in this case.</p>

**Coloring:** The principal markings along the back are dark “diamond” shapes (for which the species is named), outlined in a lighter tan. Coloring can vary widely among individuals, but the **species can generally be identified by its boldly banded “coon tail”, with black and white stripes of equal width** (see above). It is a myth that the snake’s age can be determined from the number of rattles, since the rattles periodically break off, somewhat like a too-long fingernail. Such was the case with John’s snake (see above). The Western Diamondback Rattlesnake has a somewhat flattened, triangular head that is two times larger than its neck (see above). A brownish-gray mask, characteristic of pit vipers, marks each cheek.

**Behavior:** Most Western Diamondback Rattlesnakes follow seasonal activity patterns. By May or June, it hunts in the early morning and evenings. During July and August, it tends to hunt at night to avoid the daytime heat. In winter,

most will seek shelter at some time in communal dens, however they may be active at midday in winter. In the spring this snake may move as far as 3 miles to a summer range, however this makes the snake highly vulnerable to human predation.

**Venom & Risks to Humans:** Most serious cases of snakebite treated in Texas hospitals are from the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. Its venom contains neurotoxins, hemotoxins and tissue-digesting enzymes. Few people die from the bite of this snake if they receive prompt hospital care, however the loss of fingers, toes or even limbs is still fairly high in cases of deep envenomation. Most fatalities occur in children.

## KNOW A VERY COMMON **NON-VENOMOUS** SNAKE IN THE HILL COUNTRY **EASTERN BLACKNECK GARTER SNAKE**

*Thamnophis cyrtopsis ocellatus*



Photo by Marilyn Murmann

The **Eastern Blackneck Garter Snake** lives in moist, wooded ravines and riparian areas in Hill Country. An adaptable creature, it has found that well-watered, heavily-foliaged residential neighborhoods are highly suitable habitats as well. This snake's bright colors and diurnal (*daytime*) foraging often cause it to be noticed in residential neighborhoods. Fortunately Marilyn Murmann had her camera when she noticed this one working to consume a reluctant toad on her front porch. An average adult is 16 to 18 inches in length. The record length is 40 inches.

**Coloring:** This snake has an **orange stripe down its back and a yellow stripe on each side of its body**. Between the orange and yellow stripes on each side of the body, this snake has **black blotches in a zigzag pattern** against a background of tiny light and dark bars. The Eastern Blackneck Garter Snake has a **large black blotch** just behind its jaw, which differentiates it from other checkerboard-patterned snakes. When surprised by humans, this snake rapidly glides away and simply vanishes into foliage or rocks, unless of course, it is enjoying a toad.

**Information from:** Tennant, Alan, *A Field Guide to Texas Snakes*, Second Edition, 1998, Gulf Publishing Co.

This is an informative, easy-to-use field guide for identifying the snakes we see. Also [www.zo.utexas.edu/research/txherps/](http://www.zo.utexas.edu/research/txherps/)

### REFRESHMENTS

Thanks go to **Tracy Garofano** for the delicious refreshments at our July meeting.

Refreshments for our August meeting will be provided by **Edna Platte**, **Myrna Langford** and **Marilyn Murmann**.

Please send newsletter contributions and comments to your Editor, Priscilla Stanley at [jpbstan@kvc.com](mailto:jpbstan@kvc.com). Thanks go to Marilyn Murmann, John Quinby and Billy Walker for sharing their experiences and photos for this month's article on our Hill Country snakes.