

THE TEXAS STAR

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HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Our November program topic will be *Biology and Testing of the Soil Foodweb*, presented by Melinda Kneese. She will describe the differences between a standard soil test and a complete soil foodweb test, and the relationship between soil fertility and soil biology.

The soil food web is a complex, interdependent, mutually beneficial group of organisms ranging in size from bacteria, to fungi (the largest organisms on the planet) to protozoa, to nematodes, microarthropods, worms and beetles. The foodweb develops good soil structure by binding pieces of soil (clay, sand, silt, organic matter, roots) together and by building airways and passageways through the soil. Good movement of air and water are vital to the health of plants and the soil food web itself. While it seems contradictory, good soil structure allows water to drain from too wet soil as well as help soil to hold water when it starts to dry out

Information will also include how to establish a healthy soil foodweb with the use of compost and compost teas. Specific examples will be given for disease control and prevention and insect control.

Mrs. Kneese and her husband, Bryan, are the owners of Oma's Haus & Garten composting facility and plant nursery in Stonewall and Fredericksburg. She studied with Dr. Elaine Ingham, Corvallis, Oregon (<http://www.soilfoodweb.com>). She was an educator for 12 years and is finishing her Masters in Microbiology from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.

This meeting will be held on Monday, November 28, at 7:00pm at the Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville, with our social beginning at 6:30pm. We hope that you can join us.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JIM STANLEY

Well, it is going to be a busy few weeks for our Chapter. The new class—the largest ever—will be doing their class project and graduating on November 16. We will have our last regular monthly meeting on November 28, with election of new officers. And on December 3, we will celebrate the holidays with all members, including the new class members. (Details on this event are given below.)

Then on Friday, December 9, we are invited to a Tri-Chapter Holiday Party hosted by the Alamo Area Chapter at Cibolo Nature Center. Our Chapter and the Lindheimer Chapter (New Braunfels) are invited. The Alamo Area Chapter will provide the entree, plates, etc., drinks (BYOB if you want an “adult beverage”), and we are asked to bring a side dish or dessert. The social hour begins at 6:00pm with dinner starting at 7:00. If you (and your spouse or friend) are interested in going, please let me know (jstmn@kctc.com) so we can get a head count.

The Land Management Assistance Program took third place among all of the projects presented at the TMN State Meeting at the MO Ranch. The \$100 prize is being put toward our Chapter Holiday party. Thanks to everyone who made this project possible.

HOLIDAY PARTY

Our chapter's final event of the year is our fourth annual Holiday Party, coming up on Saturday, December 3, from 1-3 pm. The ladies of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Comfort are cooking up a mouth-watering lunch for us. Here's the menu:

- a gourmet version of turkey tetrazzini (with veggies, too!)
- a green salad with "everything in it but the kitchen sink!"
- home-made dinner rolls and desserts (several choices)
- coffee and tea

The church's price is \$8.50 per person; however, your board has voted to pay \$1 of that cost as a thank-you for all your volunteer services this year, so all tickets will be only \$7.50 for this outstanding meal! You may sign up and pay at our November meeting, or you may pay at the door. Either way, you and your spouse/guest have a treat in store! In addition, many of our members will be recognized for special achievements during 2005, and we will present this year's *Friend of the Chapter* award to **Rufus Stephens** of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Here are the directions to the church (318 High Street in Comfort):

From Kerrville, take Highway 27 east through Center Point and on to Comfort. At the first blinking light in Comfort (High Street), turn left and the church will be a half block down on the right, across from the historical war memorial. Everyone should park in the large parking lot just beyond the front of the church, and enter the fellowship hall which opens directly onto the parking lot.

From Boerne, take exit 524 (Comfort), go through town on Highway 27, and turn right at the last blinking light (High Street).

Thanks to our committee members **Sharon Corley, Myrna Langford, Sandy Peña, and Nancy Vaughan** for organizing this special get-together!

BOARD ELECTIONS

The chapter's nominating committee is very pleased to present the following slate for the four elected board officers to serve in 2006:

President – **Jim Stanley**
Vice-President – **Bob Richie**
Secretary – **Kathryn Harrison**
Treasurer – **Marilyn Murrman**

The election will take place at our final 2005 chapter meeting on November 28. At that time, nominations will also be taken from the floor for any of these positions. In accordance with the chapter by-laws, all other positions on the board are appointed by the incoming president. The past president is automatically a member of the board.

STATE MEETING

At this year's TMN State Meeting at Mo Ranch, **Michelle Haggerty** showed off the beautiful *Take Pride in America* award from the US Department of the Interior, which was presented at a ceremony in Washington, DC in late September. The Texas Master Naturalist program received this award in the category of state programs.

The *Take Pride in America* initiative was created by the US Department of the Interior as a partnership between federal, state and local governments and various groups "dedicated to instilling a sense of volunteerism and good stewardship in all public land users," according to the program's web site.

At the TMN State Meeting, Michelle invited representatives of all chapters present to come up and have their photo taken with the award. **Ron Hood, Sandy Peña, and Angelo Falzarano** represented our chapter. Congratulations to all our members!



For the first time, this year's TMN State Meeting included an "Exemplary Project Fair" to showcase outstanding projects from chapters across the state. There were a number of criteria such as:

- useful and practical for all chapters
- need-driven (addressing a pressing natural resource need)
- well-planned and executed
- collaborative of many chapter members' skills, interests, and expertise.

Our chapter entered our new Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP), which was created by our President, **Jim Stanley**. **Ginny deWolf** did an excellent job of putting the display together to highlight this program's accomplishments in its first nine months of operation. You can see the display and the award at our November meeting.

There were some twenty chapters that brought project displays, ranging from interpretative trails to creation of an herbarium. At the awards ceremony on Sunday morning, Michelle made a surprise announcement: Exxon-Mobil donated funds to give out prizes for the top three projects. **Our chapter's LMAP project took third place and received a \$100 prize!** Congratulations to everyone who participates in the LMAP project—we are proud of you, and so is the TMN program!

BIRD SURVEYS AND COUNTS

This year's Winter Prairie Bird Survey will take place at Cibolo Nature Center on December 11, January 15 and February 12, from 10:00am to about 12:30pm.

This is chapter volunteer project KL-02-B, an extension of the Field Research Days at Cibolo Nature Center – a good experience in learning how these surveys are conducted. Let **Jan Wrede** wrede@texas.net know as soon as possible if you can participate, and whether you can make the commitment to all three dates.

This is a group effort, with teams led by **Rufus Stephens** and **Dave Bolster**. We work carefully together, walking the transect lines, counting and identifying the birds that are flushed. This is challenging but very educational, and you also get to experience the prairie in winter! If you have questions or need additional information, contact **Myrna Langford** mfl@omniglobal.net, **Sandy Peña** Sandy@penasco.net, or **Jan Wrede** wrede@texas.net.

The Kerrville Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on January 2, and the West Kerr CBC will be on January 4. Volunteer hours available under Project ID CC-06-A. If you are interested in participating, contact **Charles Howell** chapahow@kvc.com or 830 367 4588.

The CBC is the "great granddaddy" of citizen science programs, first conducted on Christmas Day of 1900. Each CBC takes place in a 15-mile circle, and each count has an organizer/compiler. The CBC provides a snapshot of birds in the early winter. Each of more than 2000 different CBCs takes place on one calendar day within the official count period, and every bird seen by field parties within the circle is tallied and compiled to a master list for each season. Audubon publishes the summary results in *American Birds*.

The combined results of CBC data over the past century are now available online, and are providing information to researchers on the status of early-winter birds. When combined with "trend" data from the Breeding Bird Survey, the CBC helps us understand what is happening to bird populations across the continent and beyond.

If you live within a CBC circle, you can join in and count birds at your feeder, submitting your numbers to the count's compiler. If you do not live within a CBC circle, you will need to travel to the area to participate. Even if you are a first-time CBC participant in the field, you will be out with experienced observers.

The CBC is coordinated by Audubon in the United States, Caribbean, and Latin America, and by Bird Studies Canada in Canada. There is a \$5 participation fee for field observers.

The ninth annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is coming up February 17-20. A joint program of National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the GBBC is a family-oriented, enjoyable, and simple Citizen Science activity that engages people of all levels of experience and expertise to learn about and count the birds they see over a four-day period at the end of winter. First held in 1998, it now involves more than 600,000 people, who may submit more than 50,000 checklists containing more than 600 bird species and sightings of more than six million individual birds.

For more information on the CBC and GBBC, see www.audubon.org/bird. Report hours under Project ID CC-06-A.

MASTER NATURALIST MILESTONES/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS/KUDOS

Wanda Mattarocci from the Class of 2004 has certified (receiving her Dragonfly pin) and recertified (receiving her pin of the year, a Blue Kingfisher in 2005).

Nancy Vaughan reached her 250-hour milestones – 250 cumulative volunteer hours since becoming a Master Naturalist. Her Bronze Dragonfly pin will be awarded at the Holiday Party in December.

Congratulations to Wanda and Nancy for their achievements!

CALENDAR

November 15: Second Annual Conference on Land Stewardship and Water Resources – 8:30am–3:30pm, Uvalde High School Auditorium, One Coyote Trail, Uvalde. Hosted by Nueces River Authority with funding from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. Free admission. For more information, call 830 278 6810 or e-mail info@nueces-ra.org. *Advanced training hours available.*

November 15: Kerr Cactus and Succulent Society – 7:00pm, Butt-Holdsworth Library, Kerrville.

November 17: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter board meeting – 2:00pm at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville – chapter members may attend.

November 17: Boerne Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas – 7:00pm at Cibolo Nature Center, Highway 46 east of Boerne. **Jan Wrede**, naturalist and author, will speak on *Native Plant Conservation: How and Why for the Hill Country*. Ticket cost: \$5 (annual fundraiser for chapter; limited number of tickets available). Contact **Suzanne Young** 830 249 8240 for more information.

November 17–18: Invasive Plant Conference – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin. Co-hosted by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Texas Forest Service, Forest Health Protection branch of USDA Forest Service, and NBII. For schedule and to register, see www.wildflower.org.

November 19: Hill Country Archeology Association – 1:00pm, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville. **Dr. Grant Hall** will speak on Presidio de San Saba and **Dr. Steve Black** will give an illustrated talk on *The Ancient Peoples of the Plateaus and Canyonlands*. Free, open to public, refreshments.

November 19: Invasives Public Awareness Day – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin. Expert presentations on invasive plants, exhibits of Central Texas invasive plant species. See www.wildflower.org for more information.

November 28: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter monthly meeting – 6:30pm, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville. (*See above for details.*)

December 3: Texas Master Naturalist – Holiday Party – 1:00pm–3:00pm, Immanuel Lutheran Church fellowship hall, 318 High Street, Comfort. Catered luncheon and awards. (*See above for details.*)

Note: There will be no board meeting or newsletter in December, and no regular meeting other than our holiday get-together.

Please send newsletter contributions and comments to Phyllis Muska at pmuska@omniglobal.net.



Texas Star
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