

THE TEXAS STAR

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HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Our February program will be ***Firewise Landscaping*** by **Jan Fulkerson** of the **Texas Forest Service**. She has been with TFS since 2001, managing their Wildfire Preparedness Education Program. Before that she was the tree planting coordinator for the City of Austin.

She will discuss plant selection, plant arrangement, and aesthetically pleasing hardscapes to make a home more likely to survive a wildland fire. This program will be particularly important and informative to people who build in the country where cedar, tall grasses, and a long response time from volunteer fire departments may all increase the risk of fire spreading to a house.

The program will be held on **Monday, February 28** at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville, beginning with a social time at 6:30pm. The meeting and program begin at 7:00pm. The meeting is free, and the public is invited to attend. We hope that you can join us.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JIM STANLEY

The results of the questionnaire we sent out last month are in. It appears that most of you are generally satisfied with the monthly meetings, but we did get some directions for improvement. A clear, but not huge, majority favors the evening meetings over a daytime meeting, and Mondays seem to be as good for everyone as any other day. Therefore, we will continue to have most of our monthly meetings at the same time (6:30pm, fourth Monday) and place (Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville) as we have in the past. Because a number of you indicated a desire to have occasional meetings in the other counties, we will have some meetings outside of Kerr County. Many of you indicated a desire to have field trips, and the desire to have the meetings be Advanced Training (AT) events was almost unanimous. So we will occasionally have field trips, and we will try to make sure that some of the meetings are AT. Thanks to all who shared your thoughts with the Board. We continue to solicit any ideas or concerns you have.

In terms of reporting volunteer hours, we now find that we do not need specific dates recorded for a particular project, but rather just the total number of hours you spent on that project for each month. So, for example, if you spent three hours on project A on January 5, six hours on January 10, and two hours on January 23, just report eleven hours for January for that project and don't include the individual dates. Also, please ***save your own records*** of both your volunteer hours and AT hours – don't discard your records after you have submitted them to Tracy. We may need some information at the end of the year that the database is not programmed to give us, so we may need to get back to you for that information later.

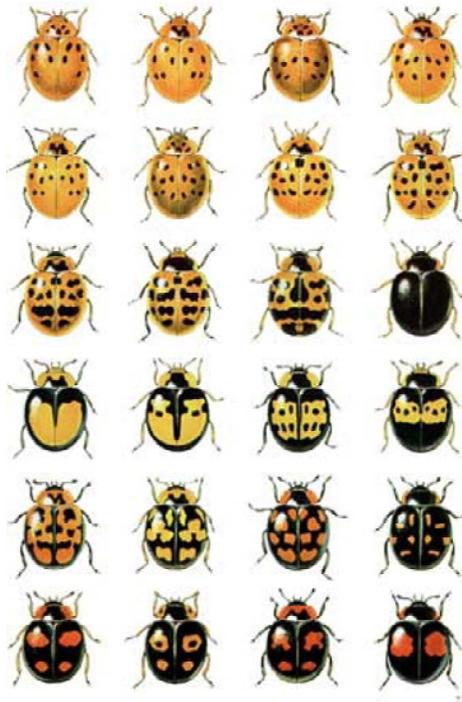
If anyone receives a request to make a presentation to another organization about Master Naturalists, please contact me before you make the presentation. We want to be sure we are all speaking with one voice in terms of how we present the Chapter to others, and I may have some material that will be helpful to you as well.

ASIAN LADY BEETLES

BY ED GAGE

The multicolored Asian lady beetle (*Harmonia axyridis*) is native to Asia but occurs in many areas of the United States. This beneficial insect was imported and released as early as 1916 in attempts to naturally control certain insect pests. The first populations were not found in this country until 1988 in Louisiana near the busy port of New Orleans.

The multicolored Asian lady beetle is similar to other familiar lady beetles commonly found throughout the United States. One major difference is the fact that they occur in many more color forms with variable markings. The example below from Oregon State University shows the wide diversity in this species. Adults and larvae typically feed upon the same prey. Aphids and other small insects are their favorites. Later in the fall, near the time of killing frosts, the adult beetles seek shelter to spend the winter.



The multicolored Asian lady beetle: *Harmonia axyridis*

This variably colored and spotted lady beetle provides natural control for harmful plant pests such as aphids, scale and other soft-bodied arthropods. Still, its tendency to overwinter in homes and other buildings, sometimes in large numbers, may make them a nuisance to many persons. If agitated or squashed, the beetles may exhibit a defensive reaction known as “reflex bleeding,” in which a yellow fluid with an unpleasant odor is released from leg joints. This reaction generally prevents predators, such as birds, from eating lady beetles. But in the home, the fluid may stain walls and fabrics.

Multicolored Asian lady beetles have become a problem in some regions of the United States. It is probable that their introduction into new habitats in the United States freed these lady beetles from some natural population checks and balances that occur within their native Asian range. These beetles are beneficial insects. Their natural control of aphids in pecan orchards has decreased insecticide use against those pests. Additionally, they have controlled aphids on some

ornamental plants. Lady beetles do not chew or bore holes in walls or eat carpet or furniture. They do not lay their eggs in homes. Multicolored Asian lady beetles are attracted to lighter colors such as whites, grays, yellows. So, light-colored houses, especially on hillsides in forested areas, are more attractive.

Once the lady beetles enter the walls of a building through cracks and crevices, they may or may not proceed to the interior of the building. Most stay in the wall spaces. During warm days of late winter and early spring, overwintering beetles in a wall space may become active. In their search for an exit, they may enter the home's living areas and become a nuisance. Warmer temperatures or lighting in the living areas may attract these active beetles as they search for an exit.

Ed Gage is a pesticide registration specialist with the Texas Department of Agriculture. He was certified as a Master Naturalist in the Hill Country Chapter in January 2005.

OUR NEW ADVISORS

Amy Sugeno is the area manager and biologist at Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area. She has been at Old Tunnel for a little over one year and with Texas Parks & Wildlife for four years. For the past twelve years, Amy has worked with a variety of wildlife species across Texas, New Mexico, and the southeastern US, as well as some in Mexico. She grew up in Arlington, Texas, regularly catching snakes, lizards, bugs, and various other wildlife in the fields behind her house. She earned a BS in Wildlife & Fisheries Science from Texas A&M University and an MS degree in Biology from Tennessee Technological University, where she studied Canada geese. She enjoys hiking, birding, volunteering, and singing, and lives in Johnson City with her husband, two dogs, and a cat.

Roy Walston, Kerr County extension agent, is responsible for agriculture and natural resource educational programming for Texas Cooperative Extension in Kerr County. He moved here from Crockett County 2½ years ago, and has also served as county extension agent in Wise, Hall, San Saba, and Crockett Counties. Roy has been recognized by his peers on a state level as Outstanding New Agent in 1987 and has received numerous communication awards. He graduated from high school in Winters, Texas, received his BS from Angelo State University, and his MS from Tarleton State University. He and his wife Serena have two children, Katheryn, 18, and Dub, 17.

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL IN JUNCTION

Texas Tech University Center at Junction is sponsoring a Hummingbird Festival **March 19 from 9:00am to 5:30pm**. Advanced training hours will be awarded to participants.

This is the first in a series of ornithology workshops to be conducted by the Field Research Station. Five speakers will be presenting workshops on vocalization, distribution, anatomy, behavior, and banding methods. A guided field trip will also be part of the workshop. Future workshops will focus on birds of the Western Edwards Plateau.

The speakers will include:

- Dr. **Kent Rylander**, zoology professor at the Texas Tech University Center in Junction. He is the author of *Behavior of Texas Birds*
- Dr. **Terry Maxwell**, biology professor at Angelo State University
- **Mark Klym**, Texas Parks and Wildlife, editor of *The Texas Hummer*
- **Dan Brown**, owner of Hummer House in Christoval, Texas
- Dr. **Brent Ortego**, wildlife diversity biologist with Texas Parks & Wildlife

Registration fee is \$20 for Master Naturalists, including lunch. Registration deadline is March 11. Forms are available at www.junction.ttu.edu under Field Research Station.

For more information, contact Amanda Camp, Field Research Station, TTU Center at Junction, 325 446 2301, amanda.camp@ttu.edu.

CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

Cedar Biology and Management--Hill Country Land Stewards – Saturday, February 26, 9:00am – 2:00pm

Honey Creek Water Conservation--Hill Country Land Stewards – Saturday, March 5, 8:00am-2:00pm.

Call Cibolo Nature Center at 830-249-4616 for more information or to register for these events. Cibolo Nature Center is located on Highway 46 east of Boerne.

NEW CURRICULUM AVAILABLE

The new standardized curriculum to be implemented statewide is now available. To purchase a copy of the workbook (\$30), contact Nancy Vaughan.

MASTER NATURALIST MILESTONES/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS/KUDOS

At the January meeting, **Ed Gage** and **Ron Hood** were recognized for achieving their first certification. **Ann Creel**, **Mike Johnson**, **John Rogers**, and **George Tinsley** were recertified. Congratulations to all our recently certified/recertified members!

Kip Kiphart, our 2004 chapter advisor, has transferred his Master Naturalist membership from the Alamo Chapter in San Antonio to the Hill Country chapter. We're happy to welcome Kip as a regular!

Sandy Pena has been named to the Texas Master Naturalist state advisory committee, which has overall responsibility for the creation, development, and management of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, through such activities as chapter management and training guidelines, program marketing and promotion, curriculum development, and other chapter resources. Congratulations, Sandy – it's good to know our chapter will have a voice on issues at the state level!

Thanks to **Sharon Corley** and **Nancy Vaughan** for bringing refreshments to our January meeting. **Jim** and **Priscilla Stanley** will be bringing refreshments in February.

CALENDAR

February 22: Native Plant Society of Texas, Fredericksburg Chapter – 7:00pm, Gillespie County Historical Society building, 312 W San Antonio Street, Fredericksburg – **Bill Lindemann** presentation on **Attracting Birds to Your Backyard**

February 23: Texas Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter board meeting – 2:00pm at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, Kerrville – chapter members may attend.

February 24: LBJ National Historical Park – 7:00pm, Visitor Center – presentation on soil preparation and care of vegetable gardens by Texas Master Gardeners **Peggy Benson** and **Liz Althaus** – call 830 868 7128 X244 for more information

February 25 – 27: Docent training for Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area – to be held at Mason Mountain WMA – contact Amy.Sugeno@tpwd.state.tx.us

February 26: Water Worries Conference (AT) – featuring keynote address by **Dr. Betty Sue Flowers**, Director, LBJ Presidential Library and Museum, and a situation report on the water crisis in Congress from **David K. Langford**, Vice President Emeritus of the Texas Wildlife Association. Conference will be held at Texas Disposal Systems exotic game ranch and pavilion off FM 1327 near Creedmore just south of Austin. Cost is \$50 per person or \$80 per couple, including lunch. For more information, see www.hrm-texas.org.

February 26: Native Plant Society of Texas/Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Joint Spring Symposium – topics to include grasses, sedges, ferns, cacti, and soils and organic techniques www.wildflower.org

February 26: Cedar Biology and Management--Hill Country Land Stewards (AT) – 9:00am – 2:00pm at Cibolo Nature Center – Call 830 249 4616 for more information or to register

February 28: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter monthly meeting – 6:30pm at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, Kerrville – **Firewise Landscaping** (see above)

March 1: Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter – 2:00pm, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville – **Pat McNeal** of McNeal Growers – presentation on **Landscaping with Native Plants**

March 5: Honey Creek Water Conservation – Hill Country Land Stewards (AT) – 8:00am-2:00pm at Cibolo Nature Center – Call 830 249 4616 for more information or to register

March 8: Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center – 7:00pm, Gillespie County Ag Extension Office, 95 Frederick Rd, Fredericksburg – **Paul Tybor** from the Hill Country Underground Water Conservation District will speak on water in the Hill Country

March 9: Fredericksburg Garden Club – 2:00pm, Central Texas Electric Co-op building, 386 Friendship Lane

March 12: Native Plant Society of Texas, Bandera County Chapter – 2:00 pm, Medina Community Library Meeting Room – **Susan Sander** presentation on **Oak Wilt** – contact Susan Tracy, 830 589 7124

March 19: Hummingbird Festival (AT) – Texas Tech University Center, Junction – 9:00am-5:00pm – contact Amanda Camp, amanda.camp@ttu.edu or 325 446 2301 (see above)

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

