

THE TEXAS STAR

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HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

APRIL PROGRAM

Our topic for the April meeting is *An Overview of Central Texas Archeology and Prehistory*. Our presenter will be Dr. Grant Hall, the academic director of Texas Tech University at Junction. Hall is an archeologist (PhD, Harvard) who moved to Junction two months ago from TTU's anthropology department.

The program will be held on **Monday, April 25** at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos St, 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

Just to give everyone a "heads-up", the Texas Cooperative Extension requires most all of their employees to have a background screen as part of their Youth Protection program. Since they are one of our sponsors, they have decided to expand that requirement to the Master Naturalists as well. The details have not been finalized, but it appears that any Master Naturalist who has, or expects to have, direct contact with children may have to have a background check in the near future, if they have not already had such a screen via another organization. The kind of screening we are talking about is similar to that required of teachers and youth program (Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H, etc) volunteers. As far as we know now, if you do not wish to work with youth, it won't affect you.

As mentioned before, the State Office is looking into a different system for maintaining records of volunteer service and advanced training. In the meantime, please continue to report your hours as before, but also please keep your own records. Also, whenever you accumulate the required number of volunteer and advanced training hours for (re) certification, please notify Priscilla at jpbstan@ktc.com or 830 257 2094.

As a result of the *Kerrville Daily Times* article last month, we have had a number of requests for our Land Management Assistance Program. We have now visited a dozen properties ranging from 1 to 100 acres, involving a total of over 300 acres and 5 different Master Naturalists. We have requests for visits to another 6 properties.

On a personal note, Priscilla and I just returned from a week in Big Bend National Park. I have been going there for 40 years, but I have never seen it as beautiful as it was last week. It is amazing what a little rain can do to the desert!

DARK SKIES

If we could look back down at the earth from above, the night lights would no doubt make a spectacular sight. But the view from down here is dimming due to the abundance of artificial light. The “sky glow” from excess light is causing more and more of our stars to fade from view, and affecting natural rhythms and whole ecosystems.



Credit: C. Mayhew & R. Simmon (NASA/GSFC), NOAA/NGDC, DMSP Digital Archive

The problem of light pollution is growing rapidly. But unlike air pollution and water pollution, which can take decades to correct, steps taken to alleviate light pollution can have an immediate effect. The solution begins with awareness, and replacing a poorly designed light fixture with a well-designed one can improve visibility, safety, efficiency and security, in addition to helping preserve our night skies.

Bad lighting puts light where it is not needed, wasting energy and creating glare. In the US alone, over one billion dollars is wasted every year in unintentional lighting of the night sky. While the situation is worse in urban areas, we are seeing the problem in rural areas as well, as people move to the country and want to bring their city lights with them. Inefficient security lighting at home, street lights, and overlit businesses, such as gas stations, all contribute to the problem.

Guidelines for quality nighttime lighting include:

- Use only good lighting and quality design.
- Shine the light down, where it is needed.
- Use timers and dimmers to control the use of lighting.
- Use fixtures that minimize glare.
- Use the right amount of light for the task – more light is not necessarily better light. Too much light makes the transition from light to dark more difficult.
- Use energy efficient light sources, such as low pressure sodium lamps for security lighting.

Examples of what to avoid:

- The 175-watt dusk-to-dawn "security light". These fixtures are cheap, but use over 200 watts of power, with an annual operating cost of \$70 or more per year. Much of the light output is wasted, going up or sideways where it creates glare and does no good at all. It splatters light everywhere, alienating neighbors.
- Globes which shine light in every direction. Because they waste so much light, a high-wattage lamp is needed to get any light on the ground, resulting in a great deal of glare and waste.

See the International Dark-Sky Association www.darksky.org for additional information on light pollution and what we can do to improve the situation.

EARTH DAY AT RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER

Saturday, April 23 - A fun-filled and informative day for the whole family! Save the planet, start in Kerr County!

- Plant sale sponsored by Kerrville chapter of the Native Plant Society
- Special speakers such as Rick and Bruce from KVAC's *Organic Matters*.
- Children's crafts and activities
- Prizes and awards for local students' winning entries in the poster contest
- Raffle for a one-night stay at Canyon of the Eagles Lodge including two tickets for the Vanishing Texas River Cruise, a bottle of wine, \$100 cash and more! Other prizes include a day in San Antonio for four, a picnic at Kerrville-Schreiner Park, and wildflower seed from Native American Seed in Junction. Contact Sandy Peña for raffle tickets - \$10 each, or 3 for \$25.

WILDLIFE FIELD RESEARCH DAYS AT CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

Plan now for Cibolo Nature Center's Wildlife Field Research Days coming up on May 5, 6 and 7. This will be the twelfth survey, when the park will be closed to the public while about 85 – 100 people help with various citizen scientist projects. All help is very much appreciated and there is a volunteer appreciation dinner and guest speaker on Friday evening.

This year's Research Days projects will include:

- Prairie vegetation transects
- Prairie vegetation photo points
- Birds
- Aquatics
- Small mammals
- Fire ants
- Water snakes and reptiles
- Monarchs
- Riparian woody plants
- Weather Monitoring
- Food Preparation

Contact SuzanneY2@aol.com to sign up for a team.

NATURE QUEST RIVER ECOLOGY SERIES

Paddlers and river enthusiasts will be happy to know that it's time for the Texas Hill Country River Region's 6th Annual Nature Quest festival, April 26 – May 1. The festival is headquartered in Concan, Texas, with field trips, workshops, seminars, and evening programs all over the Hill Country area's scenic rivers, private lands, and parks. Expert instructors teach about birds, butterflies, dragonflies, insects, bats, wildflowers, native plants, big trees, reptiles, geology, archeology, and aquatic life.

This year on Friday, April 29, a special River Ecology Series will be held at Chalk Bluff Park on the Nueces River. From 1-2pm Jennifer Ellis of the National Wildlife Federation will speak on Keeping Texas Rivers Flowing (\$7), and from 2:30-5:30pm a hands-on River Ecology Workshop (\$9) that focuses on Texas native fishes and Invertebrates will be given by Sky Lewey of the Nueces River Authority; Chad Norris, aquatic biologist for TPW; and Dr. Gary Garrett of the Heart of the Hills Fisheries Science Center. For a small additional fee, a boxed lunch will be available at Chalk Bluff Park from noon to 1pm before the series begins.

This is a wonderful group of instructors assembled in a beautiful setting. You can also rent a cabin and put your paddles in the water, so consider making a week/weekend of it! To register, visit the web site at

<http://www.thcrr.com/quest.htm> where you can view descriptions of the events and download a registration form. You may also call 800 210 0380 for more information.

NEW CERTIFICATION RULE IN PLACE

Sandy Peña attended the semi-annual Volunteer Representatives Council in March, and a new policy regarding Master Naturalist certification was announced. New TMNs who get certified during their initial 15-month period may also earn that current year's pin *if* they meet a second set of requirements (40 volunteer hours and 8 AT hours) during that same period. This policy will be retroactive, so any members who meet the criteria and wish to earn a second-year pin should contact Sandy.

MASTER NATURALIST MILESTONES/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS/KUDOS

New certifications from the Class of '04 include **Virginia deWolf, Adele Junkin, Sandra Magee, and Scott Magee.**

Sandy Peña and **Jim Stanley** have not only recertified for 2005, but have reached the 500-hour milestone: That's 500 cumulative hours of volunteer service since becoming Master Naturalists! Sandy and Jim will receive their Silver Dragonfly pins at the State Meeting in October. **Jane Crone, Angelo Falzarano, Tracy Garofano, Ron Hood, Barbara Lowenthal, Jim Stanley and Priscilla Stanley** also recertified for 2005. Note that Ron is the first person to re-certify based on the new TMN State policy which requires a minimum of 80 hours of Volunteer service and 16 hours of Advanced Training within the first 15 months to achieve certification/recertification. Congratulations to all our newly certified and recertified members!

Thanks to **Barbara Lowenthal** and **Marilyn Murrman** for bringing refreshments to our March meeting. **Cheryl Griebenow** and **Wilma Teague** will be bringing refreshments to the April meeting.

CALENDAR

April 20: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter board meeting – 2:00pm at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville – chapter members may attend.

April 23: Earth Day – Native Plant Sale – 9:00am at Riverside Nature Center. Sponsored by the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas ([see above](#)).

April 25: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter monthly meeting – 6:30pm at Riverside Nature Center – **Overview of Central Texas Archeology and Prehistory** by **Dr. Grant Hall** ([see above](#)).

April 26 – May 1: Nature Quest – Full schedule of activities at various locations throughout the Hill Country ([see above](#)).

April 29 – May 1: 5th Annual Texas Songbird Festival – at Lago Vista on Lake Travis. Seminars and guided birding and butterfly tours. 888 328 LAGO for more information.

May 1 – 7: National Wildflower Week – various events at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and other locations. See <http://www.wildflower.org/> for details.

May 3: Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter – 2:00pm nature walk on the Live Oak Wilderness Trail at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park in Fredericksburg, led by trail guides from the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center. Carpool from Riverside Nature Center at 1:00pm, or meet at the park at 2:00pm.

May 11: Fredericksburg Garden Club – monthly meeting at 11:00am, Bobbie Schonaerts' home – a chance to see a great xeriscape with lots of native plants! Bring a salad or dessert to share. 1064 Triple Creek Road, Fredericksburg, 830 990 8379.

May 26: LBJ National Park monthly presentation – 7:00pm – Joe Haas, "The Beeman of Blanco County," will offer a program about these fascinating and beneficial insects. LBJ National Park Visitor Center, at the corner of Avenue G and Ladybird Lane, two blocks south of U.S. Highway 290 (Main Street) in Johnson City. For further information or specific driving directions, please call (830) 868-7128, extension 244.

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



Texas Star

Lindheimeria texana