

THE TEXAS STAR

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HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

MARCH PROGRAM

Our March program will be a presentation on the *Geologic Setting of the Canyon Lake Gorge* by **Dr. Bill Ward**. Dr. Ward will discuss the Cretaceous paleogeography in the Texas Hill Country, the accumulation sequence of Cretaceous rocks, where the Glen Rose formation fits into the picture, and why so much of the Glen Rose is limestone. In addition, he will discuss how the Edwards Plateau came about. These topics provide the backdrop for the rocks that are now exposed in the Canyon Lake Gorge, which was cut during the flood of July 2002.

Dr. Ward is Professor Emeritus of Limestone Geology at the University of New Orleans. Since retirement he moved to the Texas Hill Country and has been very active with the Cibolo Nature Center, the Native Plant Society of Texas, and writes a column on plants for the *Boerne Star*. Dr. Ward continues his studies of the Glen Rose Formation, a thick unit that directly underlies the Edwards formation, a major aquifer in the region.

In conjunction with this informative and interesting presentation, Dr. Ward has offered to lead a field trip to the Canyon Lake Gorge for Master Naturalists from our chapter. The field trip will be held on April 1, and there will be a sign-up sheet at the meeting. *Due to space limitations, this field trip will be open to chapter members only.*

This meeting will be held on Monday, March 27, at 7:00pm at 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

After having been out of town for ten days, we were anxious to see the changes that were occurring in the flora around the house, now that spring is almost upon us. We were interested in the number of woody species already beginning to turn green, and recorded the following list: Spanish oak, blackjack oak, rough-leaf dogwood, hop tree, cedar elm, possumhaw, Texas persimmon, gum bumelia, fragrant sumac, Eve's necklace, false indigo, spicebush, Mexican plum, creek plum, Mexican buckeye, red buckeye, anacacho orchid, elbowbush, and the volunteer peach tree coming up in the compost pile. Even the mesquite is beginning to show a little green, and the Monterrey oak is beginning its leaf exchange. In addition, the Mexican redbud was in bloom, as were the agarita, coral honeysuckle, and fragrant sumac.

We should soon be at the time when the light green of the Spanish oaks brings life to the surrounding hills in contrast to the darker green of the live oaks and cedar. We are also entering the time for the live oaks to begin leaf exchange, where last year's leaves fall off and the new ones emerge. This is the time when many folks worry that their trees have oak wilt. While dropping leaves can be a symptom of oak wilt, if it occurs in live oaks between now and the first half of May, it is almost certainly leaf exchange, and it is almost impossible to diagnose oak wilt during this time. So don't worry, unless the new leaves start falling.

One of the best ways to learn what time of the year this or that change takes place is to keep records, and I strongly encourage all MNs to keep a notebook. Record any and all observations you make about anything in the natural world around you, and you will be glad you did. After a lifetime of scientific research, I can assure you that failure to record information frequently leads to disappointment or worse, but no one ever regrets having written something down.

A PAGE FROM THE HERBARIUM

THIS MONTH'S PLANT:

TEXAS BETONY

(Stachys coccinea)

BY SANDRA MAGEE

Texas Betony is native to the Trans Pecos and to areas further west, but also grows very well here in the Hill Country. A member of the Mint family, the plant is highly aromatic. Spikes of red, tubular, salvia-like flowers bloom from March to October; however, blooms decrease during the height of the summer heat. Flower spikes may reach 18" in height. The plant is drought tolerant and grows in sun to part shade.



Texas Betony is a favorite plant for hummingbirds and an excellent nectar plant for butterflies. It is also deer resistant! This perennial is readily available at native plant nurseries.

Sandra Magee retired and moved to Medina in 2002.

She is a graduate of the Hill Country Master Naturalist Class of 2004.

The Texas Hill Country Virtual Herbarium is a project dedicated to creating a photographic database to be used for identification of plants native to the Texas Hill Country area.

For more information, contact [Barbara Lowenthal](#).

REPORTING YOUR HOURS

Our chapter data manager, **Nyta Hensley**, sent our members an e-mail on March 1 with some requests for how to report our hours. Here are some of the highlights:

Please send your Volunteer and Advanced Training (AT) hours to Nyta by e-mail at nytahensley@hctc.net or by mail to Nyta at 519 Waring Welfare Rd, Boerne TX 78006. Hours cannot be accepted by phone. The new Activity Reporting Form with Nyta's e-mail and mailing address is on our Chapter website www.hillcountrymasternaturalist.org toward the bottom of the homepage under "More Quick Links". You do not have to use this form, but you do need to include all the same information in the same order.

Please submit your hours by the fifth day of the month to receive your award at that month's meeting. Hours reported after that time will be considered for the following month.

If you have a copy of the Activity Form, either from our website or our monthly meeting, it has the key points of the rules. Two rules seem to be causing some confusion:

1. For Volunteer hours, you can count your "travel time". For AT, you cannot count any travel time.
2. First year members can count their hours for certification from October 1 of their class year through December 31 of the following year (15 months). All hours for certification or re-certification in successive years must be earned between January 1 and December 31 of that year.

If you have any questions about the State TMN rules on hours reporting, you can contact **Priscilla Stanley**, Membership Director, at jpbstan@ktc.com or 830 257 2094.

PLANT COACHES: PARTNERSHIP WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Last year, our chapter began working with **Habitat for Humanity** to help new Habitat homeowners plan the landscapes around their homes. **Riverside Nature Center** (RNC) supervises the improvements in the landscaping and driveway, funded by a grant from the **Cailloux Foundation**.

A "Plant Coach" from our chapter meets with a Habitat family at RNC looking at plants on the grounds to make selections and get an idea whether they really want to commit to gardening, or just want a low-care landscape. By having the opportunity to select their favorite plants for their landscape, the homeowner takes ownership of the landscape and is more likely to be interested in caring for it.

The Plant Coach has no further responsibilities, other than reviewing the landscape plan drawn by the contract landscaper to see if the plan includes the plants selected by the Habitat family. The landscape is installed by the contract landscaper, who helps the owner understand the watering and upkeep requirements. Our role is to provide expertise on native and adaptive plants. We have no maintenance responsibility or long term role.

With the arrival of spring, we will need several more coaches so that we have enough people available to meet with Habitat owners when they visit the RNC grounds for plant selection. If you have any questions, or if you would like to be a Plant Coach, contact [Priscilla Stanley](mailto:Priscilla.Stanley).

MASTER NATURALIST MILESTONES/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS/KUDOS

Gene Smith of the Class of 2003 has completed requirements for his first certification and will receive his dragonfly pin this month.

Ron Hood reached his 1000-hour milestone – 1000 cumulative volunteer hours since becoming a Master Naturalist – qualifying him for his **gold dragonfly** pin. And both **Ron** and **Jane Crone** have recertified for 2006, since they have already completed forty volunteer hours and eight hours of advanced training this year. Ron and Jane will each receive the Master Naturalist pin of the year, a handsome Prickly Pear.

Priscilla Stanley was named Volunteer of the Month at Riverside Nature Center and was the subject of a very complimentary write-up in the February *Riverside Nature Notes* newsletter. The same issue had a very comprehensive article on Texas Master Naturalists and our chapter's mission and partnership with Riverside Nature Center.

Master Naturalist volunteers at Old Tunnel WMA recently attended water quality monitoring training conducted by *Texas Watch*. Receiving partial and full certification were **Ron Hood, Myrna Langford, Wanda Mattarocci, Diane McMahon,** and **Bob Richie**. Assisting in the training was **Nyta Hensley**. Water quality monitoring will begin at Old Tunnel this spring. The training was arranged by **Amy Sugeno**, Texas Parks & Wildlife Manager of Old Tunnel WMA.

Congratulations to all our achievers!

CALENDAR

March 18: Nature Photography Symposium – 8:30am-5:00pm, TMI, The Episcopal School of Texas, San Antonio. Images for Conservation Symposium for Landowners and Photographers. \$75 per person including lunch. Contact [Sam Mason](#), 956 381 1264. See www.imagesforconservation.org for more information.

March 20-25: Solar Electric Design and Installation Workshop – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin. Sponsored by **Solar Energy International** and **Meridian Energy Systems**. See www.solarenergy.org for details.

March 21: Land Management Assistance Program basic training – 9:00am, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville. Preparation for chapter members who wish to participate in LMAP. *AT hours available.*

March 22: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter board meeting – 2:00pm at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville. Chapter members may attend.

March 24 and 31, April 7 and 8 – *Life under the Microscope* class sponsored by Texas Tech Lifelong Learning Community and taught by **Kent Rylander**. For more information on Texas Tech Lifelong Learning Community offerings, see <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/oes/TTLLE.asp> or call Wanda Merchant at 830 990 2717 X232. *AT hours available.*

March 25: Medina Birders monthly bird walk – 8:00am. Contact Richard Redmond at 830 460 7801 for more information.

March 25: Hill Country Archeological Association meeting – 12:30pm, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville. **Bryant Saner, Jr.** will speak on *Archeological Investigation at the Burkhalter-Witters Historic Log Home in Gillespie County*. Free and open to the public.

March 27: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter monthly meeting – 7:00pm, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville. *See above for details.*

March 28: Pond Management Field-Day – 4:00pm-6:00pm, Stablewood Springs Ranch in Hunt. Sponsored by the Kerr County Extension Service. **Dr. Michael Massey**, Extension Fisheries Specialist from College Station, will present topics including weed control, fertilization, renovation, and stocking. Free and open to the public. Contact the Kerr County Extension office at 257-6568 for directions and registration. *AT hours available.*

March 28: Fredericksburg Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting – 7:00pm, 312 W San Antonio Street, Fredericksburg. **Mike McBride** will speak on *Plants of the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area*. Contact [Lonnie Childs](#) for more information.

March 29: Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center – 7:00pm, 312 W San Antonio Street, Fredericksburg. Presentation will be a special program on bluebirds. Free and open to the public. For more information call *Jane Crone* at 830 669 2639.

April 1: Mostly Native Plant Sale – 9:00am-3:00pm, Cibolo Nature Center, 1 City Park Road (off Highway 46, east of Boerne). Sponsored by Boerne Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas.

April 4: Kerrville Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting – 2:00pm, Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville.

April 4: Boerne Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting – 7:00pm, Cibolo Nature Center, 1 City Park Road (off Highway 46, east of Boerne). Presentation on Kew Gardens Seed Bank Project by **Minnette Marr**, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center native seed collection specialist.

April 8: Kerr County 150th Birthday Celebration – Various activities at locations in Kerrville and surrounding area. Riverside Nature Center offers *Kerr County at 150 - A Natural Cause to Celebrate* from 10:00am to 3:00pm, featuring speakers and activities for the whole family. See <http://www.protopage.com/kerr150> for details.

April 8: Home & Landscape Show – 10:00am-2:00pm, Bandera Show Barn. Sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension and the Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District. For additional information, contact [Warren Thigpen](#), Bandera County Extension Agent, 830 796 7755.

April 8-9: Old Tunnel Volunteer Training – Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area. Contact [Amy Sugeno](#) for more information or to register. AT hours available.

April 8-9: Wildflower Days Spring Plant Sale & Gardening Festival – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin. See www.wildflower.org for details.

April 15: Bandera County Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas – 2:00pm, Medina Community Library Meeting Room. Contact *Susan Tracy* 830 589 7124 for more information.

April 22: Earth Day – Native plant sale, informative programs, star party and other activities at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville.

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



Texas Star
Lindheimeria texana