

THE TEXAS STAR

MAY 2006 VOL. 4, NO. 5



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

MAY PROGRAM

Our May program will be on *Roles and Responsibilities of Texas Cooperative Extension Agents* by **Roy Walston**. Mr. Walston will discuss the organizational structure and roles volunteers play in identifying issues, planning, and conducting educational programs in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H and youth development in Kerr County.

Mr. Walston currently serves as Kerr County's Extension Agent and is responsible for Agricultural and Natural Resources educational programming for Texas Cooperative Extension. He has served as a County Extension Agent for 18 years with assignments in Wise, Hall, San Saba, Crockett, and Kerr Counties.

Walston was recognized by his peers on a state level as Outstanding New Agent in 1987 and has received numerous commendation awards in the areas of mass media, as well as livestock and crop marketing. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Angelo State University and a Master of Science degree from Tarleton State University.

This meeting will be held on Monday, **May 22**, 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.

*Note that our chapter meetings are held the **fourth** Monday, not necessarily the **last** Monday of the month – so the May meeting falls on the 22nd, not Memorial Day (the 29th)!*

President's Message

by Jim Stanley

The Board voted to give anyone who attended Bill Ward's talk at our March meeting 0.5 hours of Advanced Training (AT). Those who also attended the field trip to Canyon Lake can count another 3 hours of AT for that. Please note that advanced training and volunteer hours should only be reported to the nearest half hour, not smaller fractions of an hour.

Applications are now being accepted for our next class which will start in late August. If you know anyone who may be interested in becoming a Master Naturalist, please have them e-mail Priscilla Stanley at jbstan@kctc.com with their name and mailing address so they can be sent an application packet.

We are looking for help in distributing flyers about our Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP), particularly in Bandera, Gillespie and Kendall counties. If you know of a good place where these notices are likely to be seen by small landowners (and where they won't contribute to the litter problem), and if you are willing to distribute them for us, please see me at our May Meeting, or e-mail me at jstmn@ktc.com.

Texas Hill Country Bats

Texas is home to more bats and bat species than any other state, and Central Texas hosts many millions of these flying mammals from spring to fall, sometimes as late as Thanksgiving. Here in the Hill Country, we are fortunate to have a number of caves, tunnels and bridges where we can view bat emergences. In most cases the bats emerge around dusk, so you should plan to arrive about an hour before sunset in most cases.

Here are some of the bat colonies in our area which are open to the public for emergences:

- **Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area** – Kendall County between Fredericksburg and Comfort, on the Old San Antonio Road. 2–3 million Mexican free-tailed and cave myotis bats. Call 866 978 2287 for current emergence time and details.
- **Eckert James River Bat Cave** – near Mason. Six million Mexican free-tailed bats. Contact the Texas Nature Conservancy at 512 224 8774 for more information.
- **Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area** – near Rocksprings. Tours Wednesday through Sunday by reservation. Call 830 683 2287 or visit www.devilssinkholetx.com.
- **Bracken Cave** – north of San Antonio. 20–40 million Mexican free-tailed bats. Owned and managed by Bat Conservation International; currently open to groups (such as Old Tunnel volunteers and Bat Conservation International members) by special arrangement.
- **Congress Avenue Bridge** – downtown Austin, Town Lake. Largest urban bat colony in the world – 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats.

The emergences can be spectacular whether viewed from a distance or up close. And for a truly unique experience, you can visit Old Tunnel at dawn and see/hear the bats returning to their home.

For more information on bats and bat conservation, visit **Bat Conservation International** at www.batcon.org.

Now Accepting Applications for the 2006 Class!

The Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program has just begun its 2006 membership application period, which will run through July 10. The classes will be held from August 28 through November 15, with thirteen classes scheduled primarily on Wednesday from 9am to 1pm, plus three Saturday field trips. The fee will be \$150, which covers all class materials, including two reference notebooks, and includes a \$50 deposit that will be returned to trainees who achieve certification by December 2007.

Many Master Naturalists have friends and spouses who share their enjoyment and interest in the natural world. If you know someone who might be interested in becoming a Texas Master Naturalist, please have them contact Priscilla Stanley at jpbstan@ktc.com or 830 257 2094 to receive more information. Include name, postal address and e-mail so that they can receive an overview of the Texas Master Naturalist program, our preliminary 2006 Training Schedule (including the topics to be covered), and an application form. We will also send them our monthly electronic newsletter so they can learn more about our Chapter activities.

A Page from the Herbarium

This month's plant: Dutchman's Breeches

Scientific name: *Thamnosma texana* Family: *Rutaceae* (Citrus Family)

by *Barbara Lowenthal*

This low, sprawling, loose clumpy plant is found in pastures and open grassy areas and on rocky slopes. **Dutchman's Breeches** is 6" – 12" (to 30 cm) tall; the stems are somewhat wiry. Its leaves are simple, 1/4" - 3/8" (5 - 15 mm) long and in an alternate pattern. The small, urn-shaped flowers are yellow (purplish-red in the form *purpurea*) and have four petals and four sepals. The common name refers to the shape of the fruit, which is inflated and in the shape of a pair of pantaloons. Crushed or bruised plants produce a strong lemony odor.



Photo by Sandra Magee

Dutchman's Breeches is one of several larval plants used by the Eastern Black Swallowtail butterfly. It is toxic to some livestock. For more information on its toxicity, see <http://texnat.tamu.edu/cmplants/toxic/plants/dutchmansbreeches.html>.

Locally, specimens can be viewed in both the Riverside Nature Center meadow and the Butterfly Garden at Kerrville-Schreiner City Park.

Barbara Lowenthal is a retired teacher, a Master Naturalist, a member of the Virtual Herbarium Project and a volunteer at the Butterfly Garden at Kerrville-Schreiner City Park.

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**.

Master Naturalist Milestones/Acknowledgments/Kudos

Guy Harrison, a member of our Class of 2005, has certified this month as a Texas Master Naturalist. He completed the three requirements for certification: all of the training sessions and field trips, forty hours of volunteer service (much

of it in teaching nature classes for children at HEB Camp, schools and Riverside Nature Center), and eight hours of advanced training. Guy will receive his dragonfly pin and certificate at our May meeting.

This month we have a "first" for 2006. **Lars Nielsen**, Class of 2005, has completed a special first year recertification which recognizes outstanding achievements. Lars completed the requirements for certification described above, and then he contributed an additional forty hours of volunteer service and attended another eight hours of advanced training. Lars will receive the recertification pin of the year, the lovely Texas Prickly Pear pin. Lars volunteers extensively at Cibolo Nature Center, and built the bluebird boxes for a bluebird trail.

Phyllis Muska of the Class of 2004 and **Bob Richie** of the Class of 2003 also recertified and will receive their Texas Prickly Pear pins. Phyllis edits our monthly electronic newsletter, traps cowbirds, and participates in the Colorado River Watch project. Bob is a long-time volunteer at the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area (the "Bat Tunnel") in Comfort where he explains the many virtues of bats to the visiting public. Bob is responsible for our excellent monthly programs. Both Phyllis and Bob volunteer in our chapter's Land Management Assistance Program.

Alice Bulechek of the Class of 2002 recertified as well. She is a long-time volunteer in caring for the Riverside Nature Center native plant display gardens.

Congratulations to all our achievers!

We are pleased to announce that we have a new member, **Thomas Collins**, who transferred to our Chapter from the Cradle of Texas Chapter. Tom is a seventh generation Texan, born in San Antonio. He and his wife, Sherry, are avid birders, and volunteered extensively at the Sea Center Texas, an inland Parks and Wildlife salt water hatchery near Lake Jackson. Tom is also a Master Gardener. He serves with Sandy Peña on the TMN State Advisory Committee. The Collinses live on 57 acres in Center Point which they manage for Ag Wildlife Valuation. Be sure to welcome Tom when you see him at our meetings.

Calendar

May 16: Kerr Cactus and Succulent Society meeting – 7pm, Butt-Holdsworth Library, Water Street, Kerrville.

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

May 18: Overabundant White-tailed Deer in Texas – 7:45am–5:00pm, Texas State University, San Marcos. Seminar on white-tailed deer impact on people, communities, and the land. Registration fee \$50. For more information or to register, contact **Helen Holdsworth** at the Texas Wildlife Association 1-800-TEX-WILD or 210-826-2904 X120.

May 20: Native Plant Population Assessment, Seed Collection & Storage – 9:00am to noon, **Cibolo Nature Center**, 1 City Park Road (off Highway 46, east of Boerne). Presentation by **Minnette Marr**. Admission: Members \$15/person and \$20/couple, non-members \$20/person and \$25/couple.

May 20: Hill Country Archeological Association meeting – 12:30pm at **Riverside Nature Center**, 150 Francisco Lemos Street, Kerrville. **Maureen Brown**, Archeologist for the Texas Historical Commission, will give a presentation on *An Archeological Study of Artifacts from a British Colonial Tavern Site in Port Royal, Jamaica*. Free and open to the public.

May 20: Kerr WMA Birding Seminar and Field Trip – 10am–evening at Kerr Wildlife Management Area. An ecosystems approach as it pertains to range management and conservation specifically dealing with wildlife habitat and neo-tropical migrant songbirds, including endangered species. Attendance is limited to 50 people. Reservations required. Call 830 238 4483 for more information or to register.

May 22: Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter monthly meeting – 7:00pm, **Riverside Nature Center**, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville. **See above for details.**

May 24-28: Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference – Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches. For more information, visit <http://pnpc.sfasu.edu>.

May 27: Hill Country Master Gardeners plant sale – Kerr County Market Days at Kerr County Courthouse, 9:00am–4:00pm. Drop by early for the best selection!

May 30: Fredericksburg Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting –7:00pm, Gillespie County Historical Society Building, 312 W San Antonio Street, Fredericksburg.

May 30-31: Hill Country Living 101 – 2-day course on various topics of Hill Country ecology, land, water, and livestock management. For more information call Kerr County Extension office at 830 257 6568.

June 6: Kerrville Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting – 2:00pm, **Riverside Nature Center**, 150 Francisco Lemos, Kerrville.

June 6: Boerne Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting – 7:00pm, **Cibolo Nature Center**, 1 City Park Road (off Highway 46, east of Boerne).

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



Texas Star

Lindheimeria texana