

# THE TEXAS STAR

**MARCH 2007** VOL. 5 No 3



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

Chapter Website: <http://www.hillcountrymasternaturalist.org>

## MARCH PROGRAM

Carolyn Vogel, Executive Director of Texas Land Trust Council, will be the speaker for the March meeting of Texas Master Naturalist-Hill Country Chapter. The program will be *"Land and Water Trusts in Texas and the Texas Land Trust Council"*.

The meeting will be held at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville, Monday, March 26 beginning at 7 pm.

Although Texas still evokes the image of wide-open spaces, the reality is that 85 per cent of all Texans live in heavily populated urban areas. The state's population is estimated to double by 2050. Such rapid population growth is quickly encroaching on rural areas and fragmenting wildlife habitat.

Texans have repeatedly passed bond elections to acquire land for public protection, but 94 per cent of all land in Texas is privately owned. Land and water trusts can offer creative answers to the land conservation challenges faced by these owners.

Texas Land Trust Council, which Ms. Vogel heads, is the service program for 48 non-profit land and water trusts that collectively have protected over 1 million acres in Texas.

Ms. Vogel is part of a five-generation farming and ranching family in Gillespie County, where she still "fills in" when assistance is needed at Vogel Orchards. She began her career with Texas Parks and Wildlife working summers in state parks and graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in Parks and Recreation in 1976. She has held various positions in a number of communities in Texas including Asst. Superintendent at LBJ, Parks Regional director in LaPorte, and Chief of Operations for the State Parks in Austin. After 31 years with TP&W she retired to work with the Texas Land Trust Council. In recognition for her work she received the State of Texas Unsung Heroes award from the Texas Public Employees association in 2005.



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### TAX TIME TIPS

Remember that volunteers may deduct certain unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses, including gas and oil, that are directly related to giving services to qualified charitable organization. One may not deduct the value of the volunteer's time or services. This information comes from [www.PointsofLight.org](http://www.PointsofLight.org). For more specific information about travel expenses, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY PHYLLIS MUSKA

Water, water everywhere . . .  
Well, not quite, but so far this year it seems that everywhere we turn, someone is *talking* about water. As the population of Texas grows, our water demands are growing exponentially. Particularly in the Texas Hill Country, where it seems we've never had enough water, more and more people in our area mean ever greater concerns with managing our resources more conscientiously. Mark Twain is reported to have said, *Whiskey is for*

*drinking; water is for fighting over*, and we may see the day that water becomes more precious than either whiskey or oil . . . .

The theme of the Holistic Resource Management conference in February was *Catching Raindrops* and covered topics such as soil improvement and livestock rotation to take better advantage of what rain we do get. Legislative issues on this year's agenda were also addressed.

Walter Cronkite hosted a special presentation on Public Television on the status of Texas springs. This documentary addressed the current issues that directly impact spring flow and what can be done to save these vital resources. Visit <http://www.texasstateofwater.org/help.phtml> for ideas and opportunities.

The Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center has hosted presentations by the Texas

Commission on Environmental Quality on *Surface Water Quality Monitoring*.

Environmental Defense is sponsoring a conference in Austin on protecting and restoring Texas springs. With the majority of our state's springs located on private property, the landowner and the local community must act as stewards, caretakers and advocates, so this conference will address the history and diversity of Texas springs, regional and state-level groundwater management efforts, and how these can affect spring flows. See [http://www.texaswatermatters.org/conference\\_springs\\_march30-2007.htm](http://www.texaswatermatters.org/conference_springs_march30-2007.htm).

And coming up in April at Riverside Nature Center, the annual Earth Day celebration this year will feature a number of water- and rain-related presentations and demonstrations. Our Hill Country Master Naturalist display will include a demo of the 'rain machine' to show the effects of rainfall and runoff on various types of terrain.

As Master Naturalists, we can make a difference in how these water issues are addressed by staying informed and setting an example as good stewards ourselves. Be sure to take advantage of some of these opportunities to learn more about protecting and managing this vanishing resource.



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## AWARDS

Congratulations to the members who have achieved these milestones recently:

1<sup>st</sup> Year Certification – *Warren Ferguson & Martha Miesch*

1000-Hour Milestone Pin (Gold Dragonfly) – *Sandy Pena*

2007 Recertification – *Thomas Collins, Cathy Downs, Colleen Everson, John Huecksteadt, Cynthia Johnson, Phyllis Muska, Sandy Pena, Priscilla Stanley, Jim Stanley, & Bob Tanner*

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# WILDFIRE-PREPAREDNESS COURSE SPONSORED BY OUR CHAPTER

At the request of the Texas Forest Service, our Chapter sponsored the "Citizen Wildfire Ecology Specialist" (CWES) course for our area. This 30 hour course was held in Fredericksburg for three full days in February. We had 31 trainees, 26 of whom completed all the course requirements for certification to speak on wildfire-preparedness on behalf of the Texas Forest Service for one year. Trainees who missed a class can make it up when the course is given by the Hayes County and Lindheimer TMN Chapters later this year.

It was noteworthy that even though this course was advertised to the public as well as TMNs, 28 of our 31 trainees were TMNs from six area chapters, including Hayes County, Highland Lakes, Alamo, Lindheimer, Western Edwards Plateau and of course our Hill Country Chapter. The fifteen course participants from our chapter included Colleen Everson, Warren Ferguson, Kathryn Harrison, Lloyd Hemmert, Cynthia Johnson, William Lange, Scott and Sandra Magee, Annie Rendon, Rebecca Shupp, Jim and Priscilla Stanley, Bob Tanner, Nancy Vaughan and Walter Workman.

The CWES course provided an in-depth understanding of the changes in the Hill Country since the European settlers which caused us to have the dense cedar brakes now characteristic of this area, the role of fire in our ecosystem and the behavior of wildfire under different weather conditions and over different topography. It also

included a Fire Department's view of triaging homes in advance of a wildfire, how this information can be used in our communities and practical experience at a ranch in recommending changes to make a home area better prepared to withstand a wildfire. Trainees had two weeks off to prepare a Special Project on some aspect of the course that interested them. The instructors were impressed with the originality of topics, the usefulness of the projects and the incredible amount of work completed by some trainees.

Co-chairs Jane Crone and Priscilla Stanley appreciated the \$250 grant from our Chapter that covered the daily refreshments that kept our trainees alert and learning during the three 8 to 9 hour classes and other class expenses. The \$50 registration fee for the class went directly to the Texas Forest Service for their expenses.

Jane chaired our Hospitality Committee which included herself, Sharon Corley, Diane McMahon and Nina Wagner. Jane also made the class graduation especially festive with a much-photographed cake bearing the full-color Texas Forest Service logo. We already know of several ongoing projects from this course that will educate the public about wildfire-preparedness and will make several communities safer for their residents. Thus we are well pleased with the results of this course.



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## COMING UP...

### MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**Monday, March 26, 6:30 p.m.**

**Hill Country Master Naturalist** chapter meeting at Riverside Nature Center. (See p. 1).

**Tuesday, April 3, 2:00 p.m.**

The **Native Plant Society of Texas** meets at the Riverside Nature Center. Elizabeth Drozda-Freeman, Conservation Landscape Specialist with the Lower Colorado River Authority will speak on *Conservation Landscaping with Native Plants*.

**Saturday, April 21**, 8:00 a.m. --- 4:00 p.m. **Earth Day Celebration & Native Plant Sale** at Riverside Nature Center. The theme is "**Water... Our Future...One drop at a Time**," how we use, store, collect, and conserve water---and more. Scheduled speakers include: Mike Mecke – forecasting future water demands; Feather Wilson – where we get our hill country water; John Kight – how he has learned to live without the need for a public water system; and Jim Stanley – Managing your land to better capture, retain, and conserve rainfall, and enhance spring flow and groundwater.

## ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**Friday, March 23, 8:30 am – 2:00 pm**

**Land Stewardship in the Texas Hill Country** at Cibolo Nature Center. The cost of \$20 per person, \$30 per couple, and \$10 per student includes lunch and handouts. Space is limited. Call Lissie Schneider, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, Monday through Thursday at 830-249-2821.

**Tuesday, March 27, 9:00 am – 3:30 pm (Registration deadline -- Friday, March 23)**

**Monarch Larval Monitoring Project Training** at Riverside Nature Center (RNC) and Kerrville-Schreiner Park (KSP). Kip Kiphart, who leads the MLMP at Cibolo Nature Center, will teach a two-part training course on this citizen scientist project.

The program is free. To register contact Betty Gardner (896-5117; [bkgardner@stx.rr.com](mailto:bkgardner@stx.rr.com))

**Saturday March 31, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm**

**Wildscape Workshop** at Cibolo Nature Center

Topics include native plants, deer resistant plants, exclosures, bird feeders, nest boxes, water needs, and basic design for a wildscape. Fee: \$35 (plus box lunch option for \$8.00 or bring your own). Space is limited. To register, call 830-249-4616.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**The Fourth Tuesday every month, 8:30 am – noon**

Work day at Kerrville-Schreiner Park. Our help is needed because the entire Park's ecosystem is being challenged. Initially, we will cut down small cedar. Later, we will cage small hardwood saplings, rebuild hiking and biking trails, and improve the grounds around the park Headquarters. **Bring:** your favorite pair of loppers, gloves, water, hat, etc. Please let Jim Gardner know if you will be able to volunteer for this project:

[jimg@mccollom.com](mailto:jimg@mccollom.com) 830-896-1122, or 830-285-22129

## AND A CHANCE TO GET BOTH TRAINING AND VOLUNTEER HOURS...

The popular **Spring Wildlife Field Research Program** at Cibolo Nature Center is coming up. We'll have more details in the next newsletter, but for now please note the training and data collection will begin on **Monday, April 30**, and go through **Saturday, May 5**. On the first two days, there will be training sessions, *which will count as AT hours*. Beginning Wednesday, May 2, teams will participate in volunteer bird counts, butterfly surveys, riparian habitat assessment, and other census activities, which will *qualify for volunteer hours (KL-02-B)*

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## TAKE PRIDE...

Take Pride in America is seeking nominations of individuals, companies or civic groups that have demonstrated a commitment to stewardship of America's public lands. Every year, Take Pride presents the National Awards to individuals and groups who have volunteered their time and talent to our federal, state, and local public lands and waterways. Nominations are due by the end of April for projects dating from June 2006 through April 2007. There are 10 categories, including Youth, Schools, Public/ Private Partnerships and Local or State Governments. Anyone may submit a nomination; self-nominations are accepted and encouraged! Visit [www.TakePride.gov](http://www.TakePride.gov) to complete the National Awards application form and for detailed information. Applications must be submitted online.

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### FROM THE HERBARIUM

#### ***Amsonia ciliata* Walt.**

**Blue funnel lily, Blue-Star, Fringed bluestar**  
[Apocynaceae \(Dogbane Family\)](#)

Fringed bluestar is a long-lived perennial grown for its handsome foliage and spring flowers. The multi-stemmed clumps, to 3 ft. tall, are crowded with smooth, narrow, light-green leaves giving the plant a fine-textured, delicate appearance. Steel-blue, tubular flowers, the rim flaring to a star-shape, appear in loose clusters at the tips of the stems. The thin seedpods and golden fall foliage are additional attributes.

#### **Plant Characteristics**

**Duration:** Perennial

**Habit:** Herb

**Flower Size:** 1 inch, 3 inch head, 4 inch head

**Height (in feet):** 1-3

#### **Bloom Information**

**Bloom Color:** Blue

**Bloom Time:** Mar, Apr, May, Jun

#### **Growing Conditions**

**Water Use:** Medium

**Light Requirement:** Part Shade

**Soil Moisture:** Dry

**Soil Description:** Well-drained, sandy loam or limestone.

**Conditions Comments:** This plant becomes aggressive in rich, garden soil. It does need some summer water. To keep blue star erect and bushy, cut it back after it has flowered. Blooms attract butterflies and deer don't particularly like it.





*Lindheimera texana*: Texas Star

Hill Country Master Naturalist  
Newsletter Editor  
431 Timber Ridge  
Kerrville, TX 78028