

THE TEXAS STAR

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T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

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

JULY MEETING

Woman the Hunter

The atlatl, a prehistoric tool for throwing darts long distances, is the subject of this month's meeting. In addition to the presentation, attendees will have an opportunity for hands on experience throwing the atlatl.

The presenter is Diane Dismukes, Cultural Resources Coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and member of the Society for Historic Archeology, Texas Archeological Society, Council of Texas Archeologists, and the Society for American Archeology,

Dismukes obtained a graduate degree in Anthropology from the University of Houston with a specialty in Zooarcheology. Then, for five years, she was president and CEO of BC & AD Archeology, a private consulting firm in Houston.

After that, she worked for TxDOT for three years and was then hired by TPWD where she conducts classes in Cultural Resource Law, site identification, policy, procedure, and field monitoring.

In addition to her formal education, Dismukes is trained and certified in ARPA Site Damage Assessment, Excavation Safety, and National Preservation Institute Federal Law Applications. She has extensive experience with shell middens along the Texas Gulf Coast, African American slave cabins, and historic cemeteries.



The meeting will be at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville, Monday, July 28, at 7 p.m. There is no charge, and the public is invited.



Nominations for 2009 Officers

Although it is just the middle of summer, the process of finding volunteers to serve on the 2009 Board of Directors will begin soon. As Past President, Phyllis Muska will chair the Nominating Committee. If you would like to be considered for the next Board, or if you would like to suggest another member for consideration, please contact Phyllis at 830 864 5747 or raindance@windstream.net.

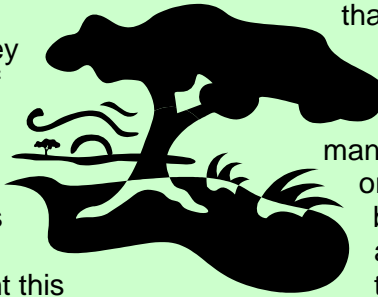


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From the beginning of January through September 4th of 2007, we received about 50" of rain at our house. From September 5th 2007 until July 10 of this year, we received a little over 11".

These numbers may be extreme, but they serve to illustrate an important feature of our climate, its variability. But the point I want to make is how resilient our native plants are. For the most part our native trees survived the heavy rains of last year with no ill effects and the same appears to be true with the drought this year. Certainly some species may be in some state of stress, which could make them more susceptible to some diseases (stress does not make oaks more susceptible to oak wilt), but they are showing few outward signs of problems so far.

The grasses and forbs made the most of conditions in 2007 and grew much larger than normal and most produced record amounts of seed. This year



many forbs simply didn't germinate or didn't bloom for lack of moisture and the grasses either didn't sprout or put up very little vegetative growth. But that is exactly what is supposed to happen...in times of drought seeds don't germinate, but the seeds are still there to respond to better conditions, and many perennials have gone semi-dormant in order to preserve their stored energy for better times. I can't think of a better argument for the benefits of native plants that evolved to survive under the varied conditions of our Hill Country climate and soils. But remember, until well established, even native plants need extra water to get started.

We are still taking applications for the New Class, so if you know of anyone who might be interested, please let them know.

Jim Stanley



THIS MONTH WE HONOR...

Rebecca Shupp – Bronze Milestone and 2008 Recertification
Gloria Costello – 2008 Recertification



Steve Dodge – 2008 Recertification
Bill Frodyma – 2008 Recertification
Kip Kiphart- 2008 Recertification

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES...

Rainwater Harvesting Seminar [AT code # 08-070.]

August 9 & September 13, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Location: CNC Auditorium, 140 City Park Road, Boerne, TX

This is the place to get the latest technological information and the most practical advice. Presenter John Kight, engineer and rainwater harvesting system owner, will teach about design and materials from 1st hand knowledge. The Kights' home is in a traditional development. They have no well or outside water source and their system comfortably supplies the most delicious water for all household and landscape needs.



CNC Member \$20/person and \$30/couple Non-member \$30/person and \$40/couple
Pre-registration required Call 830-249-4616 Limit: 30.

Wildscapes Workshop: From Dirt to Design-- Plotting Your Native Garden [AT code # 08-072

Saturday, September 20, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Fredericksburg United Methodist Church, 1800 N. Llano Street (Hwy 16 North). Sponsored by the Fredericksburg Chapter of The Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT).

HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA HOSTS ANNUAL TMN PICNIC

On Sunday June 22, 2008, thirty-six Master Naturalists gathered for their annual picnic and this time it was at the Hill Country State Natural Area location ten mile southwest of Bandera. Our picnic site was under the big live oak trees near the trail that goes along West Verde Creek. This was chosen for us by Park Superintendent Paul David Fuentes who is also a TMN from the San Antonio Chapter. After a short introduction to the park by our very own TMN and now Park Specialist, Leanne Beauxbeannes, class of '06, the entire group headed out on a wonderful nature trail. This riparian area is very rich in diversity. Lots of experts were along to help ID plants and other natural resources and teaching and learning were exchanged every few yards, making it an amateur naturalist's dream tour.

After an hour and a half on the trail everyone headed for the picnic baskets. Lots of lively and eco-interesting conversations were overheard at the six tables.

Near the end of the feast, Leanne talked about some volunteer opportunities at the State Natural Area [BD-04-A], including:

- Collecting seed, storing, and planting in disturbed areas near new headquarters
- Planning rainwater collection systems
- Removal of exotic plants (Japanese ligustrum) along West Verde Creek
- Conducting interpretive tours (birds, butterflies, geology etc)
- Removing small cedar
- Identifying old farm implements
- Developing a *diff-abled* trail

Please call Leanne to brainstorm and bring the family to the HCSNA to enjoy hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and camping. There are forty-five miles of trails and 5000 acres of the scenic Hill Country waiting for you.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE YOUR NATIVE PLANTS!

Planning has already begun for our annual Chapter fundraiser to support our program and project expenses. This year our Down By the Riverside Native Plant Sale and Nature Fair, jointly sponsored with Riverside Nature Center, will be on **Saturday, October 4th**. That is less than three months away, so now is the time to consider whether some of your native plants have reproduced or spread so well that you have some to share. If so, we ask that you pot them up soon so they will have time to fill their pot with roots, as their purchasers will expect.

For those of you who might not have potted up plants before, we have a few tips.

- It is easiest to dig the plants if you water them the day before, and then after they have drunk their fill overnight, dig the plants early in the morning when it is still cool.
- If possible, please use the regular one or two gallon standard-size nursery pots so your plants will look like those that we purchase from nurseries.



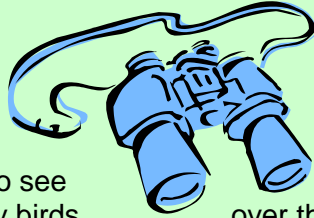
- **Some of these pots are available at Riverside Nature Center in the fenced cage in the back of parking lot near the tool shed.**
- After you pot your plants, water them well and put them in "bright indirect light", such as against the north side of a building to protect them from sun and wind stress. It also helps to cover the plant with cheese cloth as a mini-greenhouse to help it through transplant shock.
- In our summer weather, most pots will need to be watered every day or two.

We will be selling mostly native plants, but also some well-behaved adaptive plants and even a few house plant donations. If you have any questions about donating plants for our sale, please contact Priscilla Stanley at jpbstan@ktc.com or 257-2094. Thanks in advance for any donations.

FIELD NOTES

Too Close for Comfort!

By Sandy Peña



We live on a lovely hill at the end of a dead-end road out in the country. We feel lucky to see so many kinds of wildlife out here, especially birds. Among the birds we see nearly all the time are red-shouldered hawks (*Buteo lineatus*). [According to the [Sibley Guide to Birds](#), they are small forest buteos that hunt mammals, amphibians, and reptiles from perches.] These handsome hawks fly back and forth along the valley on the back-side of our hill, and they nest in the trees somewhere below us every year. This year is no exception, and we've been seeing and hearing them a lot lately (our nickname for them is "crybaby" because of their repeated high-pitched calls).

One afternoon I decided to head down to the bottom of our hill to get rid of some musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*) in the seasonal pond while it is still dry. I grabbed my grub hoe, put on my wide-brimmed hat, and made my way down along the forested trail. Emerging into the open meadow, I

began to head toward the pond. Suddenly, I heard a loud "WOOSH" just over the top of my head. Startled, I looked up and turned to see a red-shouldered hawk landing in the upper branch of a Texas Red Oak (*Quercus buckleyi*) about 50 feet up the slope from me. "That's odd," I thought, "that's never happened before." I continued forward, only to have it swoop over me a second time, just inches above my hat. Again I turned and watched it land on its tree perch. We sort of stared at each other for a minute or two, and then suddenly it flew straight at me, clearly intending to finish me off this time. At the last minute, I raised my grub hoe in defiance, and the hawk made an abrupt right turn and flew away. Was it defending a nest of chicks? Guarding its territory? Or did it really just dislike my hat? As I went to work destroying the musk thistle plants, I kept a wary eye out for my wild, beautiful foe. I think we would both agree that we were just a little too close for comfort!

Corleys Earn 'Wildscape' Honor

The Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post of Wednesday, June 18, carried a feature about our very own Ed and Sharon Corley. When they built their home on the Old Harper Road, they decided to "go native," and their property has now been recognized as a Texas Wildscape by TPWD. Ed said he read about the program in Texas Co-op Power magazine. They went to the website (http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/wildscapes/certification/tx_wildscapes/), downloaded an application, and "from there it was filling in the blanks, getting sketches and photographs together, and mailing it to TPWD."

The Corleys say that the sign they have been given to post designating their property as a *certified Texas Wildscapes Backyard Wildlife Habitat* shows their neighbors why their property doesn't have the usual "manicured" look.

In addition to a large number of different types of bird, including a nest of barn swallows on their porch, they have seen deer, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, lizards, and a few snakes. To control the large number of deer and give the other flora and fauna a chance, they have concocted a deer repellent brew they found on the internet that includes raw eggs, water, powdered milk and a couple of teaspoons of liquid dish detergent.

The vegetation that the Corleys have placed on their property includes: Texas lantana, Gregg's mistflower, Blackfoot daisy, several types of sages, bluebonnets, salvia, agarita, little bluestem, bur oak, cedar elm, live oak, bit-tooth maple, Spanish oak, Mexican oregano, and purple coneflower.

Sharon points out that while the TPWD requires at least 50 percent of the plants be native, their property has more than 80 percent natives.

Congratulations, Sharon and Ed!

Riverside Nature Center Fauna Project – 1st Year Results

By Tom Collins



In March of 2007, the Hill Country Master Naturalist Board approved a project to conduct a fauna (animal) census of Riverside Nature Center.

The goals of the project were:

1. Develop base line knowledge of the animal species using the center.
2. Create a Nature Checklist and other educational material that can be used by staff, RNC Board, docents, and visitors.
3. Through multi-year collection and analysis of census data, better understand how an urban nature center can be managed to benefit both the flora and fauna.

HCMN volunteers were given six different half day training session on how to conduct a census and information on the various Classes of animals to be studied: birds, butterflies, dragonflies, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.

At the end of the first year, an Annual Report was distributed to the RNC Staff and volunteers who helped with the census. Below is a summary of that report.

Field observation days: 45 (154 hours in the field)

Birds - 103 species recorded with over 1000 individuals.

Most frequently seen or heard species:
Carolina Chickadee and Carolina Wren 82%
Northern Cardinal 80% - highest individual count
29 species were seen or heard only once.

Butterfly

66 species recorded with over 1000 individuals.

Most frequently seen:

Pipeline Swallowtail 78% - highest individual count

Gulf Fritillary 60%

Bordered Patch 49%

19 species were seen only once.

2 new county records were added (Plus 3 from historical records):

Mimosa Yellow

Variegated Skipper (see page 6)

Dragonfly / Damselfly

17 Dragonfly / 6 Damselfly species recorded,

165 Dragonfly / 45 Damselfly individuals

Most frequently seen:

Widow Skimmer 36%

Swift Setwing 33% - highest individual count

Roseate Skimmer & Familiar Bluet 22%

5 species were seen only once.

Amphibian / Reptile (some prior history was included)

3 Amphibian / 13 Reptile species recorded,

68 Amphibian / 88 Reptile individuals

Most frequently seen:

Red-eared Slider 36%

Blanchard's Cricket Frog – 33% - highest individual count

Green Anole – 22%

9 species were recorded only once (All historical records)

Mammal (Some prior history was included)

12 species recorded, 114 individuals

Most frequently seen:

White-tailed Deer 53% - highest individual count

Eastern Fox Squirrel 44%

Cottontail, sp 22%

Records are also being kept on all **Arthropods** and **Mollusca**.

Volunteers continue to do weekly census work. Anyone interested in helping with the on-going census work should contact Tom Collins or Cynthia Johnson to learn more about how to assist.



Variegated Skipper - T H Collins
11/17/07 Riverside Nature Center

The Variegated Skipper is a Mexican species. It was a Kerr County record, the northernmost record for this species, and only the second time seen outside the Rio Grande Valley.

This butterfly was written up in the *Kerrville Times*, *The North American Butterfly Association* quarterly magazine and *The Southern Lepidopterist Society Technical Newsletter*.

There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. ...Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech." - Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

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Lindheimera texana: Texas Star