

THE TEXAS STAR

SEPTEMBER 2008 VOL. 6 No 9

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

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

SEPTEMBER MEETING

The Quality of Life in the Future

At our chapter meeting on Monday, September 22, Dr. Fred Stevens, Professor of Biology at Schreiner University, will discuss the main components of quality of life as we know it, and then he'll make projections about what kind of changes we can expect to our quality of life by the year 2100 if we don't make any changes. Also, he'll discuss his opinions about what kinds of changes we'll need to make to preserve our quality of life into the future. Some of the issues he'll consider include how we will relate to each other, whether our basic needs will be met, and whether there will be any nature to interact with.

Dr. Stevens specializes in population science and has been a member of Schreiner University faculty since 1977, chairing the Division of Natural and Professional Sciences from 1983 to 1990. He also established a major in Biology at Schreiner University. He received his BS in Biology from University of Wisconsin-Parkside and his MA in Zoology and PhD in Science Education from University of Texas in Austin.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m., Monday, September 22 at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville. As always, the public is invited, so bring a friend.



THIS MONTH WE HONOR...

TMN Certification

Jim Holt (Earned in May)

Jean Parreira

Sharon Rodriguez



AND THANK...

Two anonymous donors of \$50, and one of \$125.

ADVANCED TRAINING CREDITS

The talk given by Lonnie Childs on *Early Texas Naturalists* at our HCMN August Chapter meeting will qualify for one hour of Advanced Training. Please report this under AT code #08-081.

2008 Certification

William Lange

Barbara Noblin



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The 2008 class of trainees is now underway. It is our 7th training class and, with 34 students, our second largest. I hope the current chapter members will make an effort to become acquainted with the new members and the new members will do likewise with the current members.....you will all make new friends.

The Plant Sale with Riverside is coming up Oct. 3rd and 4th. Phyllis Muska and Dan Behringer will give one of the presentations on rainwater collection. As usual there are lots of things that need doing before and during these days. If you have not signed up to help, please call or e-mail Priscilla at 830-257-20-94 or jpbstan@kctc.com.

This year's Plant ID classes have been scheduled, all on Wednesday afternoons beginning at 1:30 at

the Texas Lions Camp. The schedule is: Tree ID, Jim Stanley, September 24th, Forb ID, John Huecksteadt, October 15, Grass ID, Jim Stanley, October 29. Any questions, give John or me a call.

The State Texas Master Naturalist Meeting is again at MO Ranch this year, October 24, 25 and 26. Registration forms are available on the state web site, <http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>, and click on "state registration". *Note that early registration deadline is September 28.*

Hope to see you all at these events.

Jim Stanley



ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES...LOTS OF THEM!

Date: Tuesday, September 23
Time: 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Topic: What Makes a Healthy Creek?
Place: Cibolo Nature Center, Boerne
Details: Cost - \$15 for CNC members, \$20 for others, limit 12. Contact 830-249-4616
AT Code: 08-087

Date: Wednesday, September 24
Time: 1 p.m.
Topic: Woody Plant ID
Place: Lions Camp
Details: Jim Stanley. Class will last 2-3 hours.
AT Code: 08-083

Date: Tuesday, September 30
Time: 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Topic: Is the Water Clean?
Place: Cibolo Nature Center
Details: Cost \$15 for CNC members, \$20 For others, limit 12. Contact 830-249-4616
AT Code: 08-088

Date: Wednesday, October 1
Time: 10 a.m. - noon
Topic: **Fall grasses workshop: CNC prairie grasses**
Place: CNC
Details: ***This is training for the Prairie Vegetation Team at this year's WFR (see story below).** Free. Limited to 25, Contact 830-249-4616
AT Code: 08-089

Date: Thursday, October 9
Time: 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Topic: Landscaping for Birds and Butterflies
Place: Cibolo Nature Center
Details: Free. Carpool from CNC at 8:30 to Kip Kiphart's property. Limited to 20,
AT Code: 08-090

Date: Wednesday, October 15
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Topic: Forb ID (weeds and wildflowers)
Place: Lions Camp
Details: John Huecksteadt. Class will last 2-3 hours
AT Code: 08-084

Date: Saturday, October 18
Time: 9 a.m. - noon
Topic: Rainwater Harvest Workshop
Place: CNC/Kight Home
Details: CNC members \$20 person/\$30 couple Others, \$30/\$40.
AT Code: 08-091

Date: Wednesday, October 29
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Topic: Grass ID
Place: Lions Camp
Details: Jim Stanley, class will last 2-3 hours.
AT Code: 08-085



MY FAVORITE VOLUNTEER PROJECT IS...

One of my favorite projects since becoming a Master Naturalist has been the twice yearly Wildlife Field Research weekend (WFR) at Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne. The first day I participated, three years ago I was hooked!

The Cibolo Nature Center is located on 100 beautiful acres, with four different habitats: woodland, riparian, marshland, and prairie. Over the years the nature center used various land management practices to preserve and restore the land. Then one day, someone asked the question "How do we know if what we're doing is making a difference?" And so they started the WFR, to monitor and study the environment to see if what they are doing really does have a positive impact.

Twice a year, Spring and Fall, people of all ages from 5 to 75 come to take part in field research/surveys. There are many different survey teams, from birds to grasses, bugs to water quality, invasive plants to small mammals. There is something for everyone.

Each team is led by an expert. You don't have to have any special skills or knowledge to take part in the research. Just come as you are and you will always be welcome. Critters being my number one passion, I spend most of my time on the small mammal (mice and rats) team and the snake/reptile team.

The small mammal team, led by Richard Heilbrun, a wildlife biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, sets between 100 and 125 live traps in four different habitats. Every morning we head out to check all the traps. When we find one that contains an animal we first look very carefully to see what kind of animal it is. You never know what could be in there! If it's a rodent we carefully remove it from the trap, identify what kind of mouse or rat it is, and whether it is male or female. Then we clip a small amount of hair from its rump to help with future identification, and release it. We usually catch cotton rats, pygmy mice and house mice. But last spring we had some surprises, including a baby cotton tail rabbit *Lorien Shupp checks a small mammal trap at Cibolo's WFR last year.*

and a baby opossum. Since mice and rats are an indicator species, monitoring their population can tell us a lot about the health and well being of the surrounding environment



The other team that I work on is the Snake/Reptile team led by Dave Barker, a well-known herpetologist. Dave is a wealth of information on all things relating to snakes and reptiles, and the snake team is very popular, especially with the younger crowd. You can get as involved as you want, whether you want to just walk along helping to spot critters or prefer to swim full speed after a fleeing diamondback water snake in an attempt to catch it. Whichever you choose, you're always welcome and will always learn a lot from Dave's wonderful stories. Personally I'm the spot-the-critter type, but I love watching once one has been spotted as a band of 5 or more boys (and sometimes adults too) rush headlong after it. And then at the end of the day hearing all their stories (kind of like fish stories) and seeing all their "battle scars" is always a lot of fun.

For the WFR weekend the Cibolo Nature Center park is closed to the public. All the volunteers are welcome to camp on the nature center grounds, but you don't have to camp to participate. You can come for an hour or the whole weekend if you want.

This years Fall Wildlife Field Research* is taking place **Wednesday October 1st to Saturday October 4th**. The theme is Oktober Field Fest (OFF). For more information, and to sign up, contact suzanny2@aol.com. You can also e-mail me at lionsntigersnbears@hotmail.com if you have any questions. I hope to see you at Cibolo.

Rebecca Shupp

[editor' note: What is YOUR favorite volunteer project, and why? Send your story to Editor, 431 Timber Ridge, Kerrville TX 78028, dsrasspc@kvc.com]





FIELD NOTES

After getting some long-awaited rain my two Labs and I decided to walk down to Spring Creek to see how much the water had risen and whether there was anything to chase. My Black Lab, Jack, loves the shallow part of the creek, where he chases minnows and other small fish into shore, never catching any, but nonetheless intense in his pursuit.



Funny, it never occurred to me, perhaps because of the lack of low branches over that part of the creek, to look for Green Kingfishers there, despite the multitude of minnows. We had often seen Great Blue Herons, even Green Herons, but only Belted Kingfishers there up to that time. Never having seen Green Kingfishers before coming to the Hill Country, they've become a very special treat.

On this morning, my Yellow Lab, Austin, was sighing chest-deep in the cool water and I was standing on the 8-foot high creek bank watching the bass and catfish when we both heard the most pleasant little "ploop." It wasn't a splash; it wasn't a plop. Rather, it was as though the roundest little stone gently, pleasantly, liquidly "plooped" onto the calm surface. Immediately, we both turned our attention toward the sound, thinking we'd see that a frog had leapt for cover. Instead, what we saw was a punk-haired Green Kingfisher, baby

Bream in beak, flying to a nearby Sycamore perch.

Fortunately I had brought my binoculars (but not my camera). Austin and I were then treated to a full five minutes of the best birding one could hope for. While the Bream squirmed uncomfortably, jutting out one inch on each side of a disproportionately large bill, the Kingfisher just waited patiently for the fish to calm down. Austin and I were in awe. The deep green, almost iridescent, wing feathers and haphazardly-banded chest of this female held us rapt. Finally, after some known-to-Kingfishers-only time, she gently, and I thought quite carefully, up-ended the fish and took it down, head first, in two gulps.

Austin, Jack, and I walked straight home through the last year's wet Bluestem. There was nothing more we cared to see or chase that morning.

John Huecksteadt

Don't Forget: *Down By the Riverside*, our annual Fall Festival and Native Plant Sale at Riverside Nature Center is coming! Because we are a co-sponsor, with RNC, of this event, our members will have an opportunity to purchase plants from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. on Friday, October 3, before the sale to the general public begins on Saturday, October 4. There will be lots of family activities going on all day, including a **BUTTERFLY PARADE** for the kids at 1:00, and special programs on **The Newly Discovered Canyon Lake Gorge** (with our favorite geologist, Bill Ward); **Rainwater Harvesting During a Drought** (with our very own Phyllis Muska and Dan Behringer); and **Hill Country Butterflies** (complete with a walk-through butterfly tent, presented by the one and only Tom Collins)!

And there's more! Once again, Paw-Paw's Barbecue will be on hand offering sandwiches and plate lunches. And this year for the first time, the Plant Haus will have pots, soil, garden art, and supplies.

Don't miss the fun!



HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR CHAPTER SHIRT?

This is a big Thank you to all those members who have placed orders for the new Chapter shirts. Every order you placed will help the Chapter's finances improve. Those of you who have not yet placed your order, the next opportunity will be at the September meeting. Cathy and Colleen will be manning "The Boutique", so be sure to see them.

For those of you who missed the newsletter last month, we are selling new chapter shirts, with the dragonfly logo, in assorted shades of beautiful blues and greens. There is even a burnt orange for all those Texas fans! Options include a T-Shirt, Polo shirts in men's and women's styles, and a Field shirt, all in 100% cotton to stay cool in the hot Texas weather. There are enough styles, colors and sizes for everyone. They will give the Chapter members a professional, easily recognized look. Join in--you do the work, so get the look.

Lastly, due to travels, jobs and schedules that do not meet, there will be one big order placed after the September meeting, instead of two small orders. So the shirts will be ready in October. I just couldn't make it work. Sorry for the delay.

Gracie Waggener



There is now a sign at the Fredericksburg Elementary School garden, donated by the Hill Country Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist. Thank you, Board, for keeping our name out there in the good green places. And thanks to our members and donors who make these things possible.



FAQ

When and Where do we meet?

Our meetings are held the fourth Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville. WE have a social time at 6:30 p.m. for visiting. We usually have a speaker on some nature-oriented topic. The public is always welcome to attend these chapter meetings. Occasionally we hold meetings at a different time or location, or have a field trip for members. The information on our meetings is always in the newsletter, and posted on our website:

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

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

**Editor, The Texas Star
431 Timber Ridge
Kerrville TX 78028**



Lindheimera texana: Texas Star