

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter



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Texas Star

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T E X A S

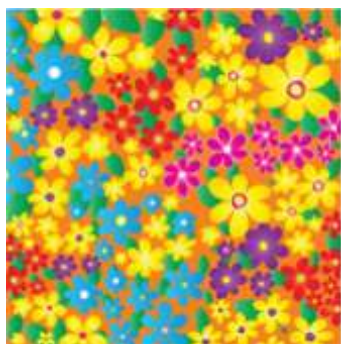
Master
Naturalist



Hill Country Chapter

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May 2009
Volume 7, No. 5

MAY MEETINGWater Quality

Ann Miller, Aquatic Education Coordinator and Angler Education Coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will discuss how to determine **water quality** of your nearby stream, river, or lake. Miller will explain a method scientists have developed for determining water quality by observing marine life, familiarize you with what to look for, and provide guidance on how to interpret your findings.



Miller received her Master's degree in Geography and Planning from Texas State University in 1997. She is a former science teacher specializing in water quality monitoring and has been with TPWD for 12 years.

Join us at 7:00 pm,
Monday, May 18 at Riverside
Nature Center in Kerrville.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGEJohn Huecksteadt

Vernal Succession and Neighbors

I had the good fortune when I was a college student to have a botanist for a neighbor. Jeff Schabillion is a paleobotanist who lived with his family in one of two upstairs apartments in an old ginger-breaded triplex in Iowa City. My wife and I rented the other. Frequently, when Jeff was taking his students on a field trip or just going for a walk in the Iowa countryside, he would knock on our door to see if I wanted to go along. Although not really into botany at the time, I found that Jeff was so knowledgeable and that this knowledge was so fascinating I always jumped at the chance to go along.

It was on one of these outings in early May, in an unattended acre or two of a city park, that Jeff introduced me to the

concept of "vernal succession."

The phrase refers to the manner in which shorter vegetation leafs out first in the spring, then the next taller layer of the understory, on and on, in succession, up to the local canopy. This way each plant species gets the sun it needs before being literally overshadowed by its neighbors. I was awed by the logic of it. The utter simplicity of nature's solution to sharing a limited resource, nature's time-division multiplexing, fascinated me then as it does today.

I wanted to draw your attention to this remarkable annual phenomenon, if you weren't already aware of it, so you, too, can enjoy it and share it with your neighbor.

THIS MONTH WE HONOR

Milestones

Gold 1000 hours

Cynthia Johnson

Brushed Silver 500 hours

Kristie Denbow

2009 Re-Certification

Salamander

Ginny de Wolf

Cathy Downs

Angelo Falzarano

Kip Kiphart

Myrna Langford

First Year Certification

Dragonfly

Bill Csanyi

Roger McRoberts

© kwd

A river is the report card for its watershed.
Alan Levere

Do you know?

There are 3,700 named streams and 15 major rivers that flow through 191,000 miles of Texas landscape.

TPW



Mark your calendar!

Hill Country Chapter Family Picnic

Sunday June 21 2-5 pm

Enjoy an afternoon of fun, fellowship, and great food on the Guadalupe River at James Kiehl River Bend Park.

Cook up you favorite dish to share at the Potluck Picnic.

Have fun talking with friends, walking the trails, fishing, and swimming.

RSVP by June 10

Watch for more details in the June Issue.

Contact Mary Frances Watson at panchyw@hotmail.com or Sharon Rodriquez at sharonrodriquez@gmail.com

ADVANCED TRAINING Your chance to learn more

- **Tree Identification AT 09-052**
 Saturday, May 16, 9am, RNC, Free.
 Presenter: Jim Stanley, Texas Master Naturalist
 A presentation on how to identify common Hill Country trees and shrubs
- **Upper Cibolo Creek Workshop II: "Is the Water Clean?" AT 09-058**
 Tuesday, May 19, 9am-12:30pm, CNC, Members \$15/non-members \$20, Pre-registration required Call 830-249-4616 Limit: 12
 Presenters: Dr. Kathy Ward, science educator and GLOBE trainer at OLLU and Dr. Nancy Klepper, retired faculty, UTSA Biology Department
 This mostly "outdoor, on-the-creek" workshop includes water chemistry tests, aquatic macro-invertebrate sampling, and an introduction to what these tests can tell us about "clean" water for different uses. We also will look at changes that are occurring in the Upper Cibolo Creek watershed and consider their impact on runoff, flooding and erosion.
- **Sustainable Concept House AT 09-054**
 Saturday, May 23, 9am - Noon, CNC, Members \$15/Non-members \$20, Pre-registration required Call 830-249-4616
 Presenters: Griz Adams, home owner and Stephen Colley, Build SA Green/US Green Building Council
 An onsite visit to the new green home being built by the Adams family in Tapatio Springs. See the work in progress! Ask questions of experts involved in this project.
- **Paddling the Guadalupe River AT 09-046**
 Saturday, May 30, 1 - 2 pm, RNC, RNC members \$3; non-members \$6.
 Presenter: Dr. Wayne H. McAlister author of *Paddling the Guadalupe, A Naturalist's Guide to Matagorda Island* and other books.
 An informal talk and slide show of a trip on the Guadalupe River from Hunt down to Guadalupe Bay. Social history as well as natural history of the river will be covered with opportunity for questions and answers. Dr. McAlister taught biology for 30 years at Victoria College and then worked 10 years as Environmental Education Specialist with US Fish and Wildlife Service developing a program for Matagorda Island NWR.

North American Butterfly Count dates for 2009

Please mark your calendar.

Each compiler is listed with the count and they will be looking for helpers as the count date approaches.

Kerrville – June 6 (Saturday)
 Tom Collins tomwh@hctc.net

Center Point – June 27 (Saturday)
 Bob Tanner bintense@hotmail.com

Guadalupe SP – June 12 (Friday)
 Craig Hensley craig.hensley@tpwd.state.tx.us

Boerne – June 20 (Saturday)
 Cathy Downs mzdowns@hctc.net



FOUR COUNTY FACTS

BANDERA

Enjoy nature and celebrate heritage. We love parades in the Hill Country!

Funtier Day Parade, May 23
RiverFest, June 27
4th of July Pet Parade, July 4
Celebrate Bandera, Sept. 4 -6

GILLESPIE

Crawfish Festival, May 22 – 23
Antique Tractor Show, June 2 - 4
Stonewall Jamboree, June 19 - 20
July 4th Chili Cook-Off, Parade, Fireworks, Living History
Night in Old Fredericksburg, Jul17-18
Gillespie County Fair, Aug. 20 - 23
Harper Frontier Days, September 5
Renewable Energy Roundup & Green Living Fair, September 25 - 27

KENDALL

Living History Festival , May 16
Abendkonzertes, June 2, 16, 30;
July 14, 28
Adventure Fest, June 6
Berges Fest Celebration and Parade, June 19 - 21
4th of July Celebration and Parade, Comfort
4th of July Fireworks, Boerne
Kendall County Fair, Sept. 4 - 6

KERR

Kerrville Folk Festival, May 21- June 7
Texas State Arts & Crafts Fair, May 23 - 25
July 4th Celebration on the River
Guadalupe River Parade, Aug. 15
Texas Heritage Living History Day, September 25
Kerr County Fair, October 23 - 25

Volunteer Projects

We have 63 opportunities for service available in our four county region.

5 projects in Bandera 10 projects in Gillespie
8 projects in Kendall 15 projects in Kerr
25 projects Chapter Support and Cross-County

THIS MONTH LET'S CATCH UP WITH KERR.



Gardens and minds flourish at the Kerrville Public Library. You can tend to both by lending a hand.

KR-01-A [Bob Ritchie](#)



Flutter on by and make a butterfly happy at KSP. Plant and tend to the garden for our fluttering friends.

KR-01-B [Cathy Downs](#)



Fun, science, and beautiful butterflies. Monitor monarchs at KSP.

KR-01-C [Ginny de Wolf](#)



Healthy habitats, healthy wildlife. Keep up the good work at KSP.

KR-01-E [Jim Gardner](#)



RNC needs you! Educate, assist and create. Volunteers are the life blood of nature centers.

KR-02-A [Priscilla Stanley](#)

We thank an anonymous donor for supporting our Chapter with a \$50.00 contribution.

Donations help the Chapter to carry out its mission and make our activities possible.

Interested in making a donation?
Contact [Martha Miesch, Treasurer](#)

Naturalist 101 - *"The devil is in the details."*

by Tom Collins

I am often asked to help a friend identify a species of plant or animal over the phone, at a party or when they hear I know something about nature. A typical discussion begins with, "Can you tell me what that little brown bird (birders call them LBJ's – little brown jobs) is sitting on my feeder. It comes every morning, sits there for 10 minutes and then disappears." So then I ask, "Can you describe it a little bit more?"

And so it goes, and goes and goes, as I try to pry some basic details like size, color, etc. Usually I end up asking them to try and take a digital photo and send it to me. I'm sure they go off saying, "That guy knows nothin' about birds." By the way, you can substitute any animal or plant name where I put "bird"; it probably will end up with the same result.

We should not expect our friends, or typical folks we meet along the way, to be able to have the skills to recall what they casually see in their backyards. However, they believe we should be able to identify their discovery with minimum

or no real details. As a Texas Master Naturalist each of us should develop or improve our skill to observe and record in detail.

So for those of you who would like to improve your field observation skills, here's a homework assignment: Let's pretend that today is the first time you have ever seen a male Northern Cardinal (Red Bird) and you get to see it for "30 seconds." Find one at your home or some place you can observe it for that time max. That's about the amount of time ones gets with a typical rare bird. Now, write down what you saw. Don't open a field guide or use any web links. Let's further assume that these details might be used to validate it as a North American record and thus you want to make sure you got them right. After you write up the details pass them on to a friend and see if they can identify the bird from your write-up.

Furthermore, let's see how you do when they get critiqued in the next newsletter. Sorry no AT for this one, just call it OJT and don't forget, "The devil is in the details."



Tom Collins's presentation on Hill Country Butterflies given at the April 27 chapter meeting has been approved for Advanced Training.

Please report it using AT code 09-062.

You are invited to join Kendall County Partnership for Parks
and the Kendall County Parks Department for

The Grand Opening of James Kiehl River Bend Park

A Memorial Day Ceremony

Monday, May 25 at 3:00pm

118 River Bend Road Comfort, Texas

kendallcountyparks.org



Army Spc. James M. Kiehl

Hill Country Birders Fieldtrip Report

Tuesday, April 14. James Kiehl River Bend Park and Old Tunnel WMA.

The "best" bird of the trip was the LeConte's sparrows. There were 17 birders and 44 species seen. KP=Kiehl Park; OT=Old Tunnel.



LeConte's sparrow

Ammodramus leconteii

Identification tips:

- Length: 4.25 inches
- Large, conical bill
- Large, flat head
- Short tail
- Orange face surrounding gray cheek
- Black eye line becoming T-shaped behind eye
- Black crown with narrow, whitish crown stripe
- Gray nape with purple streaks
- Buffy breast and sides
- Sides finely streaked
- White belly and undertail coverts
- Brown wing coverts
- Dark and light streaking on back
- Sexes similar
- *Found in marshes and fields*

Similar species: The LeConte's sparrow is similar to the Sharp-tailed Sparrows but has a white central crown stripe and purplish streaks on the nape.

Bell's Vireo 1--KP	Lark Sparrow 8--KP
Bewick's Wren 4--KP	Le Conte's Sparrow 2--KP
Black-chinned Hummingbird 4--KP, OT	Lesser Goldfinch 1--KP
Black-crested Titmouse 10--KP, OT	Lincoln's Sparrow 25--KP, OT
Black & white Warbler 2--OT	Loggerhead Shrike 2--KP
Black Vulture 8-KP, OT	Mourning Dove 6--OT
Brown-headed Cowbird 6--KP	Nashville Warbler 2--KP, OT
Cardinal 10--KP, OT	Orange-crowned Warbler 3--KP, OT
Carolina Chickadee 8--KP, OT	Osprey 1--KP
Carolina Wren 4--KP, OT	Red-shouldered Hawk 1--KP
Chimney Swift 2--KP	Red-tailed Hawk (on nest) 1--KP
Chipping Sparrow 15--KP	Rock Pigeon 4--OT
Clay-colored Sparrow 12--KP	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3--OT
Common Raven 3--KP, OT	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 6--KP
Crested Caracara 2--KP	Summer Tanager 3--KP, OT
Eastern Bluebird 1--KP	Turkey Vulture 15-KP, OT
Eastern Phoebe 1--OT	Vermilion Flycatcher 1--KP
Golden-fronted Woodpecker 1--KP	Warbling Vireo 1--KP
Green Kingfisher 1--KP	Western Kingbird 2--KP
Hermit Thrush 1--OT	White-eyed Vireo 3--KP, OT
House Finch 3--KP	Yellow-throated Vireo 2--KP
House Wren 1--KP	Zone-tailed Hawk 1--KP

Wild Country Retreat

Join us this fall at beautiful Guadalupe River State Park for camping and outdoor fun.

“Retreat” from Education, Perspiration, and Frustration
to Conversation, Relaxation, and Observation

Stay for the weekend or come for the day

Make your reservations now!

For information e-mail
Gracie Waggener at gg@bizstx.rr.com or
Cathy Downs at mzdowns@hctc.net

- birding
- fishing
- hiking
- nature photography
- paddling
- stargazing
- and more!

Friday OCT 9

Arrive at the Park. Check-in time is 2:00pm.

7 to 9 pm – Meet, Greet, and Sweets

Sweets provided by the event committee - Bring the beverage of your choice.

Saturday OCT 10

9 to 11am

Fly Fishing Fandango
Bird Tour
Butterfly Hike

11 am to 1pm

Lunch Break

1 to 3pm

Canoe or Kayak
Wild Walk Bingo
Nature Photography

3 to 5pm

Explore on your own and prepare your pot luck dish

5 to 6:30pm

Campfire Potluck Cook Off

Prepare your favorite campsite recipe to share with fellow campers in a judged cook off competition.

7 to 9pm

Stargazing with Craig

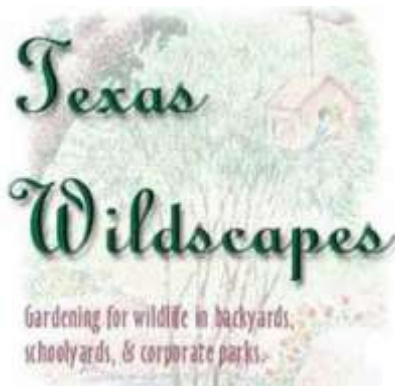
Sunday OCT 11

9am

Worship Service

From TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

New Wildscapes DVD Helps Gardeners Attract Wildlife, Add Beauty, Save Water



Texans are recognizing the value of wildlife-friendly gardening, and a new, free multi-media tool can now help them realize their dream gardens. The new resource is called "Texas Wildscapes, Gardening for Wildlife: An Interactive Guide to Creating Vibrant and Beautiful Wildlife Habitat."

This DVD combines short videos and color photos with a searchable plant database, "virtual tours" of demonstration gardens, customized plant shopping lists, and more. "Now is a great time to use the Texas Wildscapes DVD, whether you're doing spring gardening, or whether you want to help to design a garden that you plant in the fall, the best time to plant a wildlife-friendly garden," said Kelly Bender, an Urban Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. "Fall is the best time to plant your perennials since it will give them plenty of time to dig their roots in. Deep roots make your plants more drought tolerant and gives them the energy they need to bloom beautifully in the spring."

With this DVD, small-acreage property owners can:

- * Search for native plants and wildlife found in any region, view hundreds of Texas native plant images, and read all about their growing needs, ornamental value and wildlife value
- * Create and print customized plant shopping lists based on local soils, water, sun, desired wildlife, and more
- * Create and print fact sheets for favorite plants
- * Take a "Virtual Tour" of demonstration Wildscapes in Texas
- * Watch a Wildscaping episode from the PBS TV series Texas Parks & Wildlife
- * Read the award-winning book "Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife" (Damude and Bender 1999) in its entirety
- * Create and print a wildlife management plan with our exclusive Interactive Habitat Planning Guide for five-to-5,000 acres
- * Plan for Agriculture Tax Valuation, Wildlife option (1-d-1) (subject to current tax codes)

The DVD project was funded in part through the federal State Wildlife Grants Program. It was created by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in partnership with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the Texas Master Naturalists, Capital Area Chapter. For a free DVD, anyone can visit the Texas Wildscapes pages on the TPWD Web site, follow the instructions to order a DVD. <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildscapes>.

Chapter Members

If you order the new Wildscapes DVD, why not review it for the Chapter?
Let us know what we can apply to the Hill Country and what you learned.

Email your review to denbow@gvtc.com.

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Hill Country Chapter

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Hill Country Master Naturalist

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Kerrville, TX 78029-3972

WE'RE ONLINE!
grovesite.com/tmn/hcmn

We meet the fourth Monday of each month (excluding Dec.) at 7:00 pm at Riverside Nature Center
150 Francisco Lemos St. in Kerrville.
Our meetings are open to everyone.

Texas Master Naturalist mission:

To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

AgriLIFE EXTENSION

Texas A&M System

The Texas Star newsletter is a monthly publication of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program. News, comments, information, and ideas are always welcome. Please contact **Kristie Denbow**, Editor, at denbow@gvtc.com.