The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter

TEXAS Master Naturalist
HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

Rare, Endangered, and Threatened in the Four Counties.

Texas horned lizard
Phrynosoma cornutum
Kendall County

...a character builder and a severe trial... page 5.

April 2011

Volume 9
No. 4

APRIL MEETING ... HAWKS OF TEXAS

The stately hawks of Texas, once seriously diminished by environmental threats, have enjoyed a healthy resurgence.

Their story will be told by **Gary and Kathy Adams Clark** at the April meeting.

Gary will describe hawks that live in or pass through Texas, how to identify them, their migration patterns, and the health of their populations.

The program will be illustrated with photographs by Kathy Adams Clark.

The Clarks have authored four books and have two in preparation combining their writing and photography skills.

Join us Monday, April 25 at 7p.m. in the UGRA Lecture Hall. Our fun social half-hour begins at 6:30p.m.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ... Phyllis Muska

Life Goes On. . .

It's been so dry for so long, it's hard to remember what spring is supposed to look like. This time last year rains were plentiful and our grasses were green and lush. Wildflowers that we hadn't seen in years popped their heads up, just begging to be admired and photographed.

Well, it's certainly not lush this spring, but I'm surprised that we have anything green at all. Our live oaks are going through their normal leaf exchange, putting out fresh new foliage. Cherry and hackberry and cedar elm trees are leafing out. We're fortunate to have lots of rusty blackhaw viburnum on our place, and they're putting on their usual springtime display of showy white blossoms and shiny new leaves. And our grasses are defying the drought to come back – Texas wintergrass, yellow indiangrass, switchgrass, little bluestem, Eastern gamagrass.

What a testament to the resilience of nature! I'm not sure what resources we're drawing on to have some semblance of spring, but apparently there are hidden stores of energy available to our forbs and grasses and trees.

Unfortunately, if dry weather continues, we will begin to realize a toll on our flora, and then our fauna as well. We can expect to go only so far without replenishing our resources. Most of our creeks and rivers are still flowing strong, or just now beginning to slow down. But with rising temperatures, our newly leafed-out trees will demand more moisture as they begin to transpire after being dormant for the last three or four months, and that demand along with the evaporation that comes with higher temperatures will create a drop in water and flow levels.

We all hope that our weather pattern will break before long, and we'll return

continued. page 2.

THIS MONTH WE HONOR

Milestones

250 Hours Bronze
Alexis McRoberts

500 Hours Brushed Silver
Sandy Leyendecker

2011 Recertification

Horned Lizard

Cynthia Burgin
Julie Clay
Virginia DeWolf
Cathy Downs
Ron Hood
Sandra Magee
Scott Magee
Ward Miller
Phyllis Muska
Stephanie Perry
Gene Smith
Jim Stanley
Priscilla Stanley
Gracie Waggener

Special First Year Recertification

Horned Lizard

Richard Adams

First Year Certification

Dragonfly

Richeanne Frauenberger
Robert Howell
Glenn Randow
John Sloan

I am the eagle, I live in high country, in rocky cathedrals that reach to the sky; I am the hawk and there's blood on my feathers, but time is still turning they soon will be dry; All those who see me, and all who believe in me, share in the freedom I feel when I fly.

John Denver

Do you know?

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 states it is unlawful to kill, capture, collect, possess, buy, sell, trade, ship, import or export any migratory birds, including their feathers, eggs, and all other parts. Permits are granted for research, rehabilitation, education, religious purposes, and falconry.

President's Message continued.

to "normal" rainfall – but "normal" shifts from one year to the next. Ultimately we may just need to adjust to the idea that our climate ain't what it used to be, and the vision of the Texas Hill Country that attracted many of us may be replaced by a different – not necessarily worse or better – vision.

***

And we have plenty of other signs of spring that are less dependent on the weather: lots of nature festivals and other activities this time of year. On April 16, Riverside Nature Center will hold its annual Earth Day Festival, with a native plant sale, a butterfly tent, presentations on rainwater collection and birding, and lots of crafts and fun projects for the kids.

Also on April 16, the Kendall County Conservation Expo in Boerne will have workshops for area landowners. Local experts will present topics on the most pressing natural resource management issues, including ecosystem management, brush management, native grasses, oak wilt, wildfire prevention, pond management, feral hogs, landscaping for wildlife, grazing management on smaller acreages, and tax valuation options.

And on April 29 – May 1, Fredericksburg Nature Center holds its first annual Wings Over the Hills festival, with presentations, exhibits, tours, and children's activities on birds, butterflies, bats, dragonflies and damselflies.

Be sure to take advantage of all that spring in the Hill Country has to offer – for more details on these events; see riversidenaturecenter.org, texasconservation.org/page.php?page=workshop, and wingsoverthehills.org/. Their success depends on our participation, and you can earn volunteer hours and/or advanced training credit.

ADVANCED TRAINING

AT 11-051 SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK
Friday, April 15, 9A-Noon, CNC, Members $20/non-members $25
Take an informative walk on CNC's Herff Farm property and learn about local wildflowers with renowned Texas field botanist Bill Carr of the Texas Nature Conservancy.
Registration: Required. Call 830-249-4616. Limited to 20.

AT 11-047 HILL COUNTRY FORBS ID
Wednesday, April 20, 10A-noon, RNC, free
John Huecksteadt will present an excellent opportunity to learn and/or brush up on knowledge of common woody plants. A practice identification walk through the RNC meadow will occur after class.

AT 11-054 BIRDING BY EAR WORKSHOP
Saturday, April 23, 8-11A, CNC Auditorium, Members $20; Non-members $25.
Able bird teachers Tom and Patsy Inglet play bird songs and explain how to use them to locate and identify our Hill Country breeding birds. Program also includes outdoor practice listening for and identifying birds by their songs. Program is useful to both beginning and intermediate birders.
Registration: Required. Call 830-249-4616.

AT 11-029 WINGS OVER THE HILLS LECTURES AND TOURS ATTENDED
Friday, Saturday, Sunday, April 29-May 1, Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park, Fredericksburg
This new festival is co-sponsored by the Fredericksburg Rotary Club and Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center, and feature lectures, demonstrations, and tours highlighting birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. wingsoverthehills.org for details and updates. Schedules: wingsoverthehills.org/wings_schedule.pdf

AT 11-043 ENCHANTED ROCK INTERPRETIVE TOUR
Tuesday, May 3, 9A-Noon, ERSNA
Carl Fabre's fabulous summit tour. An interesting overview of Enchanted Rock history, archeology, geology, plants and animals.
Reservations: Required. Email m.mial@wildblue.net. Tour is limited to 10 people.

AT 11-048 TREES AND SHRUBS ID CLASS
Saturday, May 7, 10A-Noon,RNC, Free
Jim Stanley will conduct a class on identifying Hill Country trees and shrubs. A great opportunity to learn and/or brush up on knowledge of common woody plants. The class includes a walk around the RNC grounds to identifying trees and shrubs.

AT 11-044 LLANO UPLIFT ARCHEOLOGY
Friday, June 10, 10:30-11:30A, ERSNA
An overview of Llano Uplift archeology with Texas Historical Commission archeologist, Dan Potter.
Registration: Required. Email m.mial@wildblue.net.

and
Native Plant Sale
April 16 8am - 3pm
Riverside Nature Center

native plants | birding
learn | butterfly tent
rainwater harvesting
family activities | it's free!

The Hill Country's most popular Spring Festival.

Fredericksburg NPSOT Thanks Chapter

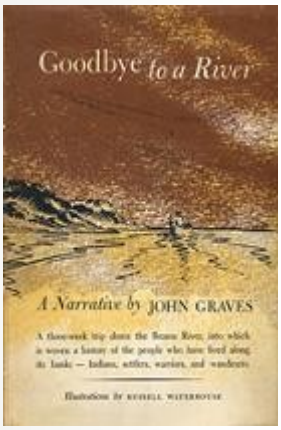
Fredericksburg Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas donated $30.00 to our chapter in consideration of the Forbs Identification class presented by John Huecksteadt on March 24. John says, "I really like to see the mutual support among area organizations with similar goals and missions."

npsot.org/Fredericksburg/news

partnership.
a relationship between individuals or groups characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal.

Nature of Reading

BOOKS FOR NATURALISTS



Goodbye to a River
John Graves
1960

The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.
Dr. Seuss

from Tom Collins

The 2011 Great Backyard Bird Count was held February 17-20.

A few of the results:

- 92,122 lists submitted
- 596 Species recorded
- 11,466,057 Individuals recorded
- Most frequently reported bird was the Northern Cardinal - 45,663 reports
- Eurasian Starlings were the most numerous species - 1,377,901 individuals

Local cities recorded these numbers of species:

- Bandera 22
- Boerne 52
- Center Point 59
- Comfort 15
- Fredericksburg 37
- Kerrville 43

Sometimes it's hard not to see a Northern Cardinal.

- Texas reported 328 species and 546,874 individuals.
- Texas lead the nation with the most species.
- Corpus Christi lead the nation in localities with 193 species.

Learn more at birdsource.org/gbbc/.

The birds richly repay you for the trouble you take in attracting them and looking out for their interests.
Joseph H. Dodson
Your Bird Friends and How to Win Them, 1928

WILL GROWTH AFFECT OUR WATER?

by Mike Mecke, Natural Resource Manager and Water Specialist, Retired

YES! It seems the destiny of Texas is to grow. We are exploding in population from within and from out-of-state - it is a serious picture. Texas, for the most part, has limited water resources. Much of the growth is occurring along or west of I-35/I-37, a region known for frequent and often severe droughts. The semi-arid Central Texas Hill Country is where vegetation and climate from the east meets plants and climate from the west and the deserts beyond. And now, where old, largely German or just pioneer-settled towns meets tens of thousands of newcomers... us!

A high percentage of Hill Country newcomers came from wetter regions or out-of-state. At least, that seems to be true in Kerr, Kendall, and Gillespie Counties. Many younger or new Texans did not endure the *drought of the fifties*. That intense seven to ten year (depending upon where you lived) drought was a character builder and a severe trial especially for Texas farmers and ranchers. Some turned to new irrigation afterwards. Many did not make it. A must read - the Texas "bible" for those times by the late, great Elmer Kelton, The Time it Never Rained. Elmer was at his best in that absorbing fifties novel of a family and a boy growing up and existing on a Texas ranch. He makes you feel that hot, dusty drought and see the social conditions – it will endure in your mind!

Growth and expanding population, home-building, and new businesses seem to be the main goals of most city officials, councils, and the development community. That viral disease has seized even small town Texas, and the Hill Country seems to be a major target due to its beauty, climate,

many rivers and springs, and convenient location to major cities. We seem to be in the process of sometimes killing or destroying what we came here to enjoy and appreciate in these quaint small towns with clear rivers, history, and peaceful rural life.

The Hill Country and many other areas of Texas cannot handle a lot of growth simply because there are not the water supplies to support increased populations, especially during prolonged drought. Many new residents want their homes and towns to resemble "*back home*" with large, lush green landscapes, parks, and golf courses. Years ago water was not an issue in most cities and towns. Now it is!

There is little or no understanding of a term that is familiar to ranchers called **"carrying capacity"**. On a ranch or in a pasture, carrying capacity means the numbers of animals, including livestock, deer, and exotics, which can be maintained without damaging the desired rangeland vegetation. In good years and in drought these numbers will be managed to fit the conditions. It is always limited by the production of desired forage and by rainfall.

Mecke on Growth and Water

I think towns, cities, counties, and regions also have a sustainable carrying capacity for people. Water is the limiting factor usually. There is a practical and ethical limit to how much water we can beg, borrow, buy, or steal from adjoining neighbors without damaging either them or the environment. These issues are now facing Texans from Amarillo to the

continued, page 6.

Water, continued.

Rio Grande Valley and from El Paso to Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston.

Many areas of the state are now beginning to realize that our groundwater – **aquifers** – do not exist along county lines, so geographic groups of counties utilizing the same aquifers are forming Groundwater Management Areas (GMAs). In Kerr County, we are in GMA-9. This is an improvement in groundwater management and protection. People work together to arrive at plans for water pumping and to derive a view of what they want their aquifer to look like in the distant future... maybe: the same as now, or wells averaging 20 feet lower, or other standards. These decisions are causing heartburn for people in neighboring counties or towns with differing goals for their groundwater and their area's growth. Some of us live in small towns because we like small towns. Others may want unlimited growth or financial rewards and would be happy to see a big city grow up in the Hill Country.

Too much well pumping affects groundwater levels and spring flows. This can be a disaster for springs, creeks, and rivers - especially in a lengthy drought. All Hill Country streams arise from springs. Downstream bays and estuaries would suffer from reduced freshwater flow and nutrients. It is all connected, isn't it?

Excessive growth is more and more important across the state as we continue to grow in often poorly planned or not well organized developments and communities. ***Get involved locally*** in water meetings. Texas needs to have **smart growth**. Water is **NOT** like any other "*commodity*" - there is no substitute! Truly, ***Water is Life!***

Congratulations, Tom.

2011 was Tom Collins' tenth year to recertify and his eleventh year as a Texas Master Naturalist. Only 13 chapters existed by spring 2002 and few folks have all 10 recertification pins. Tom organized the **Cradle of Texas** Chapter; it began in fall 2001-the year before pins were introduced. All 20 members of the first class certified before year's end and all recertified in 2002 receiving the Post Oak Leaf pin.

If you have also earned all ten recertification pins, please share the story of your achievement with us.

John Hueckesteadt

FFNC RECOGNIZES CHAPTER

The chapter helped the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center (**FFNC**) purchase and install a DOGIPOT dispenser.

FFNC was kind enough to post a sign recognizing our partnership.

Chapter members Jane Crone, Tom Hynes, and John Hueckesteadt installed the dispenser.

TWA/L.A.N.D.S. presented four classes to over 80 children at the KROC Center on Thursday, March 17. The kids learned about Skins and Skulls, Making Tracks, Oh Deer, and went on a Nature Hike.

Nine chapter members helped lead the classes: John Sloan, Virginia Sawin, Gracie Waggener, Nina Wagner, Martha Miesch, Cathy Downs, Guy Harrison, Mary Frances Watson, and Steve Clyburn.

iphone apps for naturalists

Label Lookup

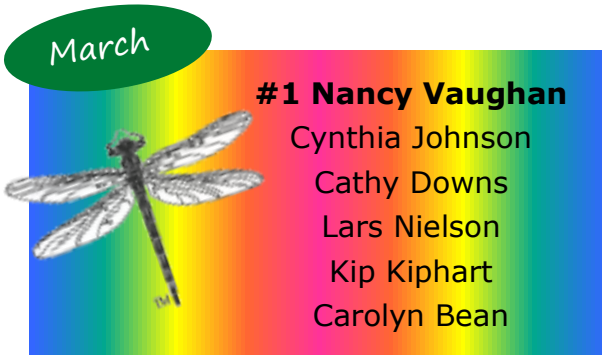
EarthObserver

Seafood Watch

What's your favorite app?
Share it at denbow@gvtc.com.

HEY, WHAT IS THAT ?

Be first to identify the image below and you will find yourself with the psychedelic dragonfly next month. BACK NEXT MONTH.



Micrograph of a Monarch Butterfly wing showing veins and scales.

from Tom Collins

I participated in a **Webinar** (Web Seminar) entitled Using Google Earth (GE) for Land Management. I have been a long time user of GE and picked up a few new tools that I tried on RNC. I created a GE folder on RNC then flagged the headquarters, outlined the boundary (not official), and mapped our weekly fauna census route. It turns out the route is about 0.68 miles long and GE allowed me to do a profile of the route as well.

from Floyd Trefny

Chapter Members exhibit at Green Show

The Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District and the Bandera County AgriLife Extension Service sponsored the Bandera County Green Show on Saturday, March 19. This annual event is geared towards educating on the importance and benefit of natural resource conservation with a emphasis on water conservation.

Karla and Jerry showcase the chapter at the Green Show.

Most visitors were local residents. Some were out-of-towners who had recently purchased area properties and were seeking assistance in land and water stewardship.

Karla recruits a new class member.

At the chapter exhibit table, Floyd Trefny, Karla Trefny, and Jerry Hjelmstad explained the Texas Master Naturalist mission and our chapter's training programs. They described typical volunteer activities, and promoted the Land Management Assistance Program.

Karla made packets of Indian blanket seeds as take-home gifts for attendees. The packets included information about the chapter. The team signed-up six prospects for the 2011 class.

Other exhibitors included: the Hill Country Master Gardeners, a native plant nursery, landscaping for water conservation services, residential wind energy equipment providers, and water conditioning system providers.

The Internal Revenue Service issued the 2011 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes. Beginning on Jan. 1, 2011, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 51 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 19 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rates.

Initialisms to Know

FFNC = Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center
KCPP = Kendall County Partnership for Parks
WMA = Wildlife Management Area
TWA = Texas Wildlife Association
ERSNA = Enchanted Rock State Natural Area
GRSP = Guadalupe River State Park
JKRB = James Kiehl River Bend Park
KCNA = Kreutzberg Canyon Natural Area

from Cynthia Burgin

COUNTRY DAY 2011

Country Day was held March 20 at **Last Chance Forever's** Muleshoe Farm. It was a wonderful experience for the approximately 250 attendees.

The day started with a Hawk Walk on the trail the volunteers have been working on. The trail runs from the farm house to North Creek.

Hawks, owls, and falcons were positioned on logs and branches along the trail allowing visitors to see the birds in a natural setting. Some, like the **Great Horned Owl**, were almost impossible to see in the trees without help from Last Chance Forever staff members. This setting demonstrated the birds' ability to blend into the surroundings. Children used telemetry to try to find stations placed in trees and around the property to show how raptors are tracked and studied.

Master Falconer John Karger, Last Chance Forever founder, gave a bird of prey demonstration.

Visitors got an up close look at the raptors. After the show, everyone was given a chance to hold a bird on their hand. This rare opportunity was extended to all. Watching expressions on the faces of young and old, one could see this experience would never be forgotten. Before this event, John was careful to keep the birds away from the public and had never let an audience member hold a bird of prey.

After seeing the reaction of Master Naturalists who had been learning to hold the birds, John felt the best way to encourage people to protect and preserve raptors was to create a truly personal connection between them and the birds. Once you have held a bird of prey on your hand, there is no comparison to just watching someone else fly or hold the birds.

John also gave a **falconry** demonstration and showed how falcons are used as hunters. He demonstrated how falcons are trained to hunt and return to the falconer. He explained the history of falconry which goes back to early civilization. John and his dog showed how a dog and a falcon work together hunting quail and pheasant.

The final and most memorable event of the

continued, page 11

day was the release of a rehabilitated **Red-tailed Hawk**. Chapter member Tom Hynes was chosen to do the release. Tom really deserved the honor. He dedicated himself to rebuilding the historic greenhouse and worked throughout the winter on the project.

Jim Burgin and Cynthia Burgin hosted a Master Naturalist information booth. We made many new friends and talked with prospective chapter members.

Tom Hynes with his Before and After greenhouse.

from Charles Smith

Lines Written in Early Spring
by William Wordsworth

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played:
Their thoughts I cannot measure,
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

Do you have data?

Dr. Wendy Gordon would like to locate data that might be used as an indicator of climate change in Texas.

Groups, associations, networks, or individuals may have local records, diaries, photographs, or other data that could be analyzed for this purpose.

Information ranging from notes of when a particular butterfly species has shown up in the yard or a particular plant has leafed out is appreciated.

Master Naturalists - if you are keeping nature journals with this type of information, your journal notes would be helpful!

Wendy says, "Thanks for your help."

Contact:
Wendy Gordon, Ph.D.
Program Leader, Nongame and Rare Species
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Wendy.Gordon@tpwd.state.tx.us
512-389-8741

Explore Online

Check out this powerful online tool that can provide all kinds of soil-related data. The NRCS **Web Soil Survey** at websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm. While you are online also visit casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/soilweb_gmap/ and see how the University of California Davis has combined soil, plant, and other data with Google Earth maps. The program defaults to California - just type in your location and explore.

PLANNING A TRIP?

Many nature centers, arboretums, botanical gardens, and other nature destinations all over the country share a reciprocal relationship. If you plan to visit one of these locations, ask your local Nature Center to check the reciprocal list. You may be able to receive some membership benefits at other places. Courtesy of RNC Executive Director Barbara Stidham

from Eileen Gotke

Chapter volunteers ready for this year's bat season at

OLD TUNNEL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA.

Bats are moving in from Mexico now, and by the time the official bat season kicks off on May 1, the summer colony should be in place.

Nyta Brown, Old Tunnel WMA biologist, and Old Tunnel volunteers (many are Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalists) will kick off the official bat season on May 1. Please come out and support Old Tunnel and enjoy the bat emergences from May to October. Beginning in May, call the toll-free number, 1-866-978-2287, to find out bat emergence times.

Myrna Langford and Warren Ferguson clean the upper viewing deck to prepare for the 2011 bat season.

Floyd Trefny takes a breather from preparing Old Tunnel for a great bat season.

Acronyms to Acquire

LMAP = Land Management Assistance Program
NPSOT = Native Plant Society of Texas
L.A.N.D.S. = Learning Across New Dimensions in Science
CoCoRaHS = Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network
FOER = Friends of Enchanted Rock
HIoN = Human Impact on Nature

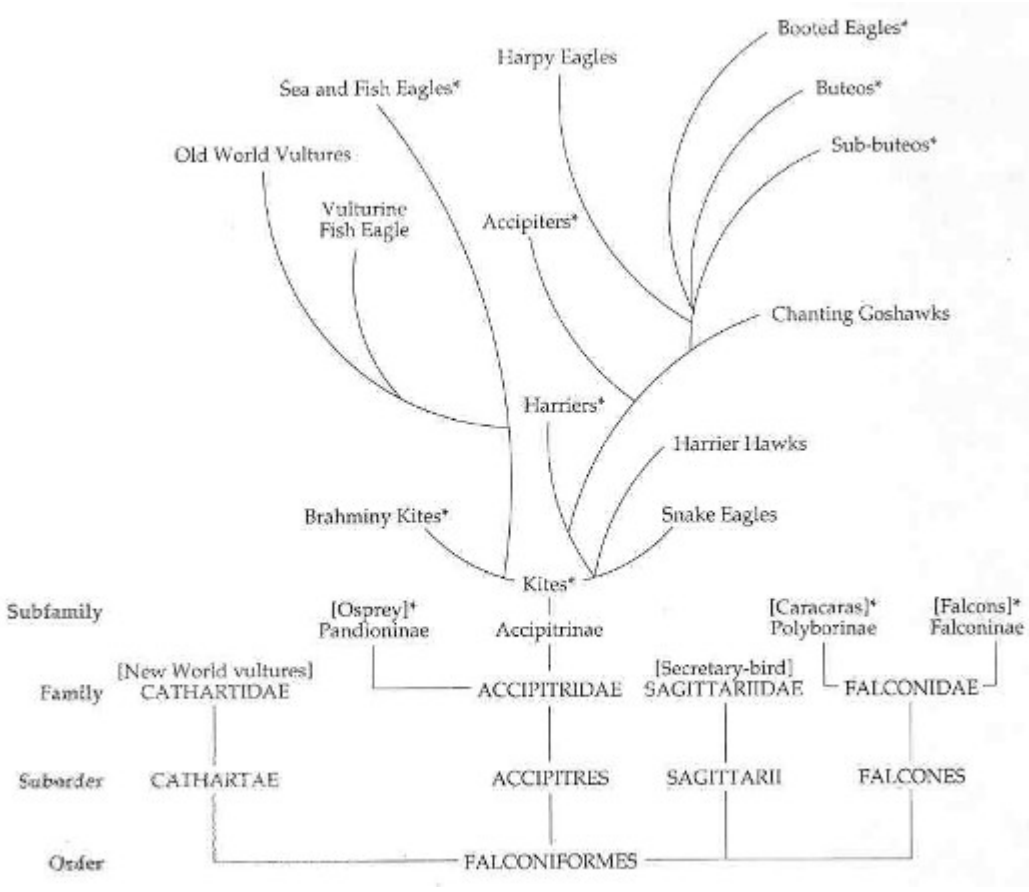
Submit your Activity Report at the end of each month to our database manager, Sandy Leyendecker, sandy325@windstream.net

About *Green Fire*

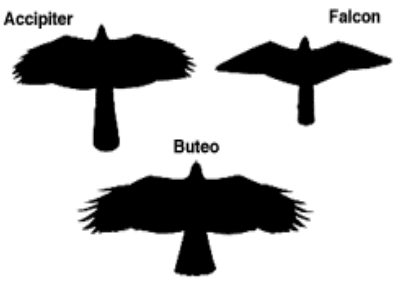
The first full-length, high-definition documentary film ever made about legendary environmentalist Aldo Leopold, *Green Fire* highlights Leopold's extraordinary career, tracing how he shaped and influenced the modern environmental movement. Leopold remains relevant today, inspiring projects all over the country that connect people and land.

Green Fire was produced in partnership between the Aldo Leopold Foundation, the Center for Humans and Nature, and the U.S. Forest Service. The film provocatively examines Leopold's thinking, renewing his idea of a land ethic for a population facing 21st century ecological challenges.

aldoleopold.org/greenfire/index.shtml



Classification tree with suggested evolution. Johnsgard, 1990



Buteos have broad wings with deeply slit wing tips that are used for extensive soaring flight.

These hawks have short, stout legs with short toes.

Buteos are found nearly worldwide in open country and some forested areas.

TEXAS Master Naturalist℠

Hill Country Chapter

a 501(c)(3) corporation

FIND MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE!

TXMN.ORG/HILLCOUNTRY

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Koy Coffer - Director of Membership

Reidun Hilleman - Director of Volunteer Service Projects

Vern Crawford - 2010 New Class Representative

John Hueckstead - Immediate Past President

Our chapter meets the fourth Monday of each month (excluding June and December) at 7:00p.m. in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehmann Drive in Kerrville.

We gather at 6:30p.m. for a fun social half-hour.

Please join us.

We welcome anyone interested in our program topic or the Texas Master Naturalist program.

Questions about our chapter?

Contact Koy Coffer

Director of Membership

kcoffer@texas-wildlife.org

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.

Texas Star
Lindheimera texana

The Texas Star 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, denbow@gvtc.com.

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TEXAS Master Naturalist℠

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System