

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter

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T E X A S



Master
Naturalist

HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER



OCTOBER 22ND MEETING . . . OIL AND GAS WELL DRILLING IN TEXAS

Texas and many other states are in play for the recovery of vast resources of oil and gas from shale beds. Carter Keairns, UTSA Graduate Teaching Faculty, will focus on this activity in the Eagle Ford Shale, which extends from south to east Texas. He will speak on how these areas were created geologically, why they are unique types of reservoirs, and why they require special development techniques. He'll also address how drilling sites are chosen, how wells are drilled (including horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing operations), how the wells are completed, and associated environmental issues. In short, everything you wanted to know about the Texas oil patch in today's world.

Everyone is welcome to join us on Monday, October 22nd, for our social half-hour at 6:30 and for Dr. Keairns' talk at 7:00 in the UGRA Lecture Hall (125 Lehmann Drive, Kerrville).

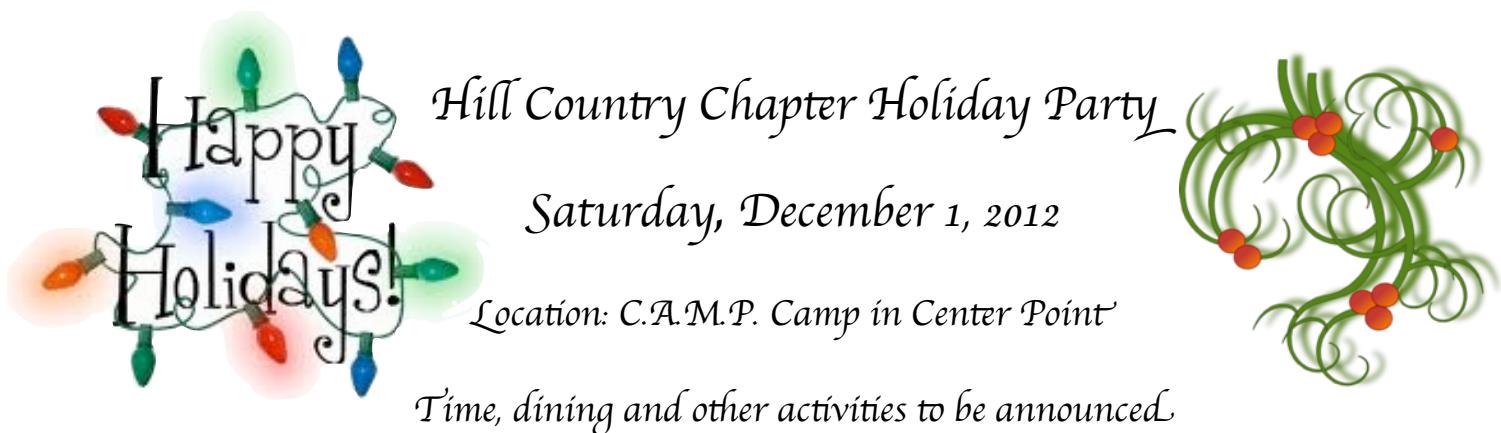
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . . Priscilla Stanley

I want to express my sincere appreciation to each of our 48 members who volunteered for our annual Down by the Riverside Native Plant Sale & Nature Festival, especially since many of you volunteered for two to four shifts or more. I hope that each of you enjoyed your volunteer work knowing that you are a part of this effort to share our love and knowledge of nature and native plants with the public, whether by giving presentations like Cathy Ward and Jim Stanley, teaching at the butterfly exhibits with Cathy Downs and Gracie Wagner, giving tours of the Nature Center like Angelo Falzarano and Ralph Behrens, or doing the many other tasks necessary to make this event a success. Our Texas Master Naturalist volunteers also included Julie Clay, Tim Lewis, Pat and Bill Perkison, Ward Miller, Phyllis Muska, Chuck Smith, Sandy Leyendecker, Steve and Betty Clyburne, Sharon Hixson, Fane Downs, Mary Frances Watson, Tom Riordan, Donna Oliver-Leep, Patricia Nelson, Darlene Funk, Maggie Tatum, Sarah Hilburn, Koy Coffer, Tom Schall, Sherry Egloff, Louis Giusti, Sand Meineke, Susan Longacre, Barbara Lowenthal, Marilyn Knight, Jane Crone, Adele Junkin, Mary Pressler, Patti Moore, Eileen Gotke, Margaret Carter, Melissa Seymour, Jack and Karen Millikan, Scott and Sandra Magee, Tom Hynes, Barbara Oates and Merrily LaBarthe.

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We are very proud of our Class of 2012 members who made substantial contributions to this volunteer effort. With all of the reading for their classes, and attending their classes and field trips, they still found the time to volunteer and make a difference.

We had many folks come to Riverside for this event, including some for the first time. I hope they will come back to see nature change through the seasons. Our chapter will have some financial benefit from this event, as will our partner, Riverside Nature Center. More importantly, this event aligned well with our Texas Master Naturalist Mission Statement: "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 in their communities." We can hope that we planted seeds of interest in our visitors for maintaining the natural world in the Hill Country so that today's youth can enjoy the same natural Texas that we have today. Many thanks for all that you did!



THIS MONTH WE HONOR . . .

2012 Recertification -- Mexican Free-Tail Bat

Thomas Schall

Paul Stafford

Milestones; All 250+ hours -- Bronze Dragonfly

Rheda Boardman Valeska Danielak

Sharon Hixson Lenore Langsdorf



Congratulations to members who received awards at the September meeting. From left: Bob Wiedenfeld - special recertification, Tom Hynes - 1000+ hours milestone, Daneshu Clarke - 500+ hours milestone, Koy Coffer - recertification, Debra Bond - recertification, Kristie Denbow - 5000+ hours milestone, Lenore Langsdorf – recertification, and Vern Crawford - 250+ hours milestone.

Kristie Denbow has the distinction of being the seventh member of the Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter to earn her 5000+ Hours Milestone Award. Kristie completed her Master Naturalist training in the Hill Country Chapter's class of 2008. She immediately began her tenure as editor of the Hill Country Chapter's monthly newsletter, *The Texas Star*, in December of 2008, and stepped down from that position in August 2012.

Kristie and *The Texas Star* newsletter won state recognition in 2011 by being voted the best newsletter at the 2011 Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting. As a founding member and current president of Kendall County Partnership for Parks (KCPP), Kristie has been extremely instrumental in the development of the Kendall County Park System and its three natural areas: James Kiehl River Bend Park, Kreutzberg Canyon Natural Area, and Joshua Springs Park and Preserve. Kristie has done everything from administering grants and managing construction to creating the KCPP website and leading volunteer groups in developing these new natural areas.



As one Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter member said, "Kristie is a stick of dynamite when it comes to working for these natural areas and *The Texas Star* newsletter!" Congratulations Kristie, wear your diamond dragonfly with well-deserved pride!

Feral Pigs: A Growing Problem in Texas

Back in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, it was common for sailing ships from Europe to bring along some domesticated pigs (or hogs if you prefer), both for food along the voyage as well as for food at their destination if, as was common, they had to stay some places for months until trade winds became favorable.

So it is not surprising that when Spanish explorers and settlers came to South Texas during this period, they brought pigs with them as well as horses, cattle, sheep and goats. During this earliest period of Texas settlement, animals were allowed to roam free until people needed meat and hunted them down. Thus began the first feral exotic animals in Texas.

While the other animals were also allowed to roam freely to graze, they could be rounded up or herded and moved and were therefore more "domesticated" and today we don't have any significant number of these other species as free-ranging feral animals.

Pigs, however are different. They are able to survive under more diverse and adverse conditions, they multiply faster than the other animals listed above, they are omnivores instead of strict herbivores and can eat almost anything, they are better able to survive injury and disease, and once they revert to the wild, they can be very wary of man. All of this has made the feral pig a very successful invasive animal.

Pigs (*Sus scrofa*) are in the Suidae family and differ from the other even-toed ungulates (cattle, sheep, goats and deer) in that they have crushing cheek teeth, upper incisors, and a simple stomach (thus they are not ruminants). By the way, the javelina or collared peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) is in the Tayassuidae family and is in fact not a pig.



The descendants of the escaped pigs of the early Spanish settlers, plus escaped domestic pigs from the eastern U.S. make up the feral pigs of Texas today. The range of feral pigs has gradually expanded from the south and east to the north and west, so that today they are known in virtually every Texas county. It is estimated that there are two million feral pigs in Texas, which is about half of the total population in the U.S.

Most adult boars weigh about 130 pounds, with sows weighing a little less, although larger individuals are seen. They are extremely good at reproduction. While it is an exaggeration, it is often said that feral pigs are born pregnant. They can breed as early as 6 months and produce two litters every 12-15 months of four to eight piglets each. They usually travel in groups of a few sows and their piglets of various ages. Boars are solitary much of the time.

Part of the problem with feral pigs is the same kind of problem presented by any feral exotic animal, from fire ants to nutria to axis and fallow deer and blackbuck antelope. They represent a rapid introduction of a non-native animal into a native habitat which introduces new competitors for food and shelter, new predators for native prey, and new consumers for native vegetation. In the case of feral

pigs, since all of the large predators have been eliminated or nearly so, there is no natural predator capable of significantly controlling the population.

Feral pigs can be very destructive to many crops as well as fences and other man-made facilities. They can disrupt the soil along riparian areas leading to enhanced erosion. Feral pigs are a serious threat to ground-nesting birds and small animals. They can also consume large quantities of feed landowners put out for livestock and deer. They have poor eyesight, but excellent senses of smell and hearing. They generally shy away from humans, but if cornered they can be dangerous.

Feral pigs also may harbor a number of serious diseases which can be transmitted to livestock, wildlife and humans. A partial list includes anthrax, brucellosis, campylobacter, leptospirosis, plague, and salmonellosis, plus a number of viruses as well. So having them around or handling them or their meat can be hazardous.

Since there are no natural enemies, as of now the only limitation on their number appears to be landowners trapping and/or killing them. Feral pigs can be hunted any time of the year or day, but a hunting license is required.

It should be noted that many people hunt them for the meat, which I hear is quite tasty, but you need to know what you are doing.

Until next time...

Jim Stanley is a Texas Master Naturalist and the author of *Hill Country Landowner's Guide*.

He can be reached at jstmn@ktc.com. Previous columns can be seen at www.hillcountrynaturalist.org.



Jacob Farris of BSA Troop 85 in Boerne built and installed eighteen bluebird nest boxes at Joshua Springs Park and Preserve for his Eagle project. His project started with a demonstration and hands-on construction with chapter member Lars Nielson, who constructs nest

boxes for Cibolo Nature Center. The nest boxes were placed in bluebird trails along woodlands and meadows throughout the park. The nest boxes will be monitored by Kendall County Partnership for Parks volunteers. Contact Kristie Denbow (Denbow@gvtc.com) if you know of scouts who need an Eagle project, are interested in monitoring the boxes at Joshua Springs, or would like further information on conservation projects in our parks.

--from Kristie Denbow

Advanced Training

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2012 10 A.M.-3 P.M. GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK

AT Code 12-151 Making of a Naturalist: Birding 101

The Friends of Guadalupe River State Park & Honey Creek present this five-hour workshop on the basics of bird identification, led by Park Interpreter Craig Hensley. You'll learn bird identification, test your skills, and then see several of our common species up close through a bird banding demonstration. Be sure to bring a sack lunch and drink.

Advance registration required (limited enrollment); \$5 fee payable to the Friends Group on the day of the workshop. Call 830.438.7653 or email Craig at craig.hensley@tpwd.state.tx.us.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2012 8:30 A.M. BRUNS RANCH, COMFORT

AT 12-096 Bruns Ranch Tour

The Kendall County Soil & Water Conservation District is hosting a ranch tour that includes speakers discussing spring development, brush sculpting, plant identification, prescribed burning, and riparian areas. If you do not drive a four-wheel drive vehicle, you'll buddy with someone who does. Wear walking shoes; bring walking stick, hat, and sunscreen. Cost includes coffee, snacks, and a covered-wagon lunch.

Cost is \$20.00. Advance registration required; call 830-249-2821.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2012 2:00 P.M. WILDBIRDS UNLIMITED, KERRVILLE

AT 12-146 Owls of Texas

Just in time for Halloween: Craig Hensley, who works for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and is an enthusiastic ornithologist, will speak on Texas owls.

Seating is limited; call 830-895-7393 for reservation.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2012 7:00-9:00 P.M. GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK

AT Code 12-152 Stories in the Stars

Join us for a fun-filled look at the night sky. We'll check out the constellations of summer and fall and learn about the stories of heroes, villains and princesses that adorn the night sky. We'll then head out to look at the moon and other celestial wonders through our telescopes. This program will begin at the amphitheatre behind the Discovery Center inside the park. Free with a TPWD Park Pass, or \$7.00 daily pass; children ages 12 and under are free.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2012 8:30 A.M.-12:00 P.M. GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK

AT Code 12-153 Honey Creek Bird Walk

Whether you are a beginning birdwatcher or seasoned birder, join Park Interpreter Craig Hensley for a bird walk along the trails of Honey Creek State Natural Area. We'll meet this month at the park headquarters parking lot and then drive over to the back side of Honey Creek. Bring binoculars, a field guide (we do have a few to loan), water and wear sturdy hiking shoes or boots. Free with a TPWD Park Pass, or \$7.00; children ages 12 and under are free.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2012 7:00 P.M. UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY (UGRA)

AT 12-163 Oil and Gas Well Drilling in Today's Environment

Texas and many other states are in play for the recovery of vast resources of oil and gas from shale beds. Carter Keairns, UTSA Graduate Teaching Faculty, will speak on this activity at the Hill Country Chapter monthly meeting. His focus will be on how the reservoirs of the Eagle Ford Shale area (which extends from south to east Texas) were created geologically, why they are unique types of reservoirs, and why they require special development techniques. He'll also address how drilling sites are chosen, how wells are drilled, how the wells are completed, and associated environmental issues. In short, everything you wanted to know about the Texas oil patch in today's world.

Free; call Tom Hynes, 830-990-5750, for further information.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2012 12:00 P.M.-1:00 P.M. FERAL HOG COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

AT 12-160 Control Techniques and Managing Feral Hog Populations

A webinar given by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in conjunction with Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Dr. Billy Higginbotham, Wildlife and Fisheries Extension Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, will speak. You can interact with experts and view the entire webinar from anywhere with internet access.

Go to <https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/feralhog>. Each webinar attended counts as one AT hour. Contact Jared Timmons, jbtimmons@ag.tamu.edu or 254-485-4886 for further information.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26-SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2012 CAMP ALLEN, NAVASOTA

AT Code 12-108 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting

AT credit will be given for hours in training sessions. Register for the Thirteenth TMN Statewide Annual Meeting at http://www.regonline.com/TMN_13th_annual_meeting On-Line. Spouses, significant others, and friends are welcome to register.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2012 10:00 A.M.-11:30 A.M. GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK

AT Code 12-154 Critters Big and Small

From the tiniest of insects to the largest of mammals, we'll examine the large and little critters that call the park home. We'll also head out for a hike to see who's out and about or has left signs of their presence. This program will begin at the amphitheater behind the Discovery Center inside the park. Free with a TPWD Park Pass, or \$7:00 daily pass; children ages 12 and under are free.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2012 7:00 P.M.-8:30 P.M. GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK

AT Code 12-155 Hooting for Owls

We're heading out to call and listen for the owls that inhabit the park. Join us at the amphitheater to first learn about owls and their amazing adaptations as well as who's who among the owls of Texas. Free with a TPWD Park Pass, or \$7 daily pass; children ages 12 and under are free.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2012 7:00 P.M.-8:30 P.M. GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK

AT Code 12-156 Walk Under the Full Moon

Join us for our monthly series as we walk under the full moon. We'll head out along one of our trails and enjoy the night sights and sounds. We'll even view the moon through one of our telescopes at hike's end. We meet at the Guadalupe River State Park headquarters parking lot for this walk of approximately one mile. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes, bring a flashlight and water. This hike will be along a fairly level trail with some rocky spots. Free with a TPWD Park Pass, or \$7.00 daily pass; children ages 12 and under are free.

NOVEMBER 3, 2012 9 A.M. – 3 P.M. RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER (RNC)

AT 12-144 Project Wild Educator Workshop

Do you teach Art, Environmental Ed, Math, Music, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, or PE? Would you like to learn hands-on activities to include in your class that will help emphasize the importance of Environmental Education, conservation, and how it directly affects Texas water, wildlife, and natural resources? Upon completion of the class educators will receive six hours (TEEAC) and a certificate. Cost is \$30.00; includes registration, activity guide, drinks, and snacks.

Advance registration is required by October 23 so that materials can be ordered. Seating is limited; call 830-257-4837.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 10:00 A.M.-3:30 P.M. RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER (RNC)

AT Code 12-164 Texas Stream Team – Advanced Training

Training for water quality testing, including E. coli, nitrates, phosphates, and stream flow. Class size is limited; preference is given to those certified in the Stream Team Core Training Program.

Advance registration by November 3 is required; enrollment is limited. Email Floyd Trefny, ftrefny@dishmail.net .**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2012 12:00 P.M.-1:00 P.M. FERAL HOG COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

AT 12-161 Feral Hog Disease Issues

A webinar given by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in conjunction with Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Dr. Joseph Corn, Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia, will speak. You can interact with experts and view the entire webinar from anywhere with internet access.

Go to <https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/feralhog>. Each webinar attended counts as one AT hour. Contact Jared Timmons, jbtimmons@ag.tamu.edu or 254-485-4886 for further information.**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2012 12:00 P.M.-1:00 P.M. FERAL HOG COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

AT 12-162 Current and Future Feral Hog Research

A webinar given by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in conjunction with Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Dr. Tyler Campbell, Feral Swine Project Leader, USDA APHIS, National Wildlife Research Center, Florida Field Station will speak. You can interact with experts and view the entire webinar from anywhere with internet access.

Go to <https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/feralhog>. Each webinar attended counts as one AT hour. Contact Jared Timmons, jbtimmons@ag.tamu.edu or 254-485-4886 for further information.

THE NEWSLETTER'S PUBLICATION SCHEDULE DOES NOT ALLOW ALL AT EVENTS TO BE LISTED IN EACH ISSUE. CHECK EMAIL MESSAGES FOR AT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CHECK THE CHAPTER CALENDAR ON OUR WEBSITE FOR AVAILABLE AT.

Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend and contribute to Board of Directors meetings. The board meets on the Wednesdays prior to the monthly chapter meetings at 1:30 PM at Riverside Nature Center.



Keeping the
Hill Country
Native!



Our Incredible Native Plants

by Priscilla Stanley

You already know that there are many reasons to grow our native plants. They grow well in our alkaline soil. They survive our summer heat (106 degrees in the sun) and the occasional 13 degree winter days and nights, as well as our recurring long droughts. Most notably, they are incredibly resilient and usually get through our toughest growing conditions. They might defoliate, but don't give up on them.

You might have seen movies of the desert plants blooming profusely after a thunderstorm, making seeds and dispersing them, all in a few days. It seems to me that our native plants can also "seize the moment" in a similar way. Our buffalo grass-blue grama lawn grown from seed becomes straw-colored without rain. We don't water it since it has been growing for 11 years. A mere 0.2 inch of rain causes a perceptible green color for a day or two until the wind and heat again make deep cracks in the redland clay soil. A recent 1.1 inch rain caused all of our native grasses to burst forth with so-far sustainable growth due to the deep watering and put up seed heads. Our yellow indiangrass is blooming with attractive yellow flowers. Post oaks, blackjack, live oaks and cedars put out three inches of new growth on their branches--complete with leaves or needles--in just a few days.

Our spring rains had our native perennials growing and blooming. As the drought conditions returned, the plants coped by dropping lower leaves, and eventually some plants became mostly to totally brown. Over the years I have learned that Mother Nature knows best, and I try not to interfere with her plans. Thus I left my formerly-lovely five foot tall scarlet leatherflower and native common sunflowers with their brown crispy flowers, leaves, and stems. When the next rain came, both of these species rapidly put out tender new green growth from those apparently brown, lifeless stems. We still have lovely scarlet leatherflower blooms and abundant cheerful native sunflowers because I didn't "cleanup the garden." Mother Nature is not always neat, but she certainly is functional.

We have a river stone driveway, rather than an impervious paved driveway, to try to capture all we can of any rain we might be fortunate enough to receive. Thus, silver bluestem (a tall native grass), croton (aka doveweed), coreopsis, and other wildflowers are here and there on the driveway. It hadn't rained in so long and had been so hot that the doveweed (with its abundant large seeds appealing to doves, quail and turkeys) had gone from bright green blooming plants to very low, shrunken, brown, crispy critters. Our native plants have finally taught me patience, so I just watched them. Eventually it rained and the croton recovered completely in about a day! If you weren't familiar with our native plants, you might think that you had seen a miracle. They are still looking just fine! The retama tree went from a few blooms to lots of yellow and orange orchid-like blooms. Retamas are so xeric that they can lose all of their leaves and survive by photosynthesizing with the chlorophyll in the bark of their branches. That is a very useful adaption for living in a semi-arid region like the Hill Country.

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Kidneywood is a fast-growing, graceful, open, airy, multi-trunk shrub reaching up to 10 feet tall with fragrant white blooms periodically from May to October and with good drought resistance. The drought caused our largest kidneywood to stop blooming and develop some yellow leaves, getting ready to drop its leaves to conserve moisture if the drought continued. After the rain, it put out lots of new growth and blooms very rapidly and now looks terrific. Kidneywood might need deer protection. We are very fond of our one-acre homestead high fence for us and our plants.

All of the above remarkable survival tales assume that gardeners have done their part by understanding where each of their plants would grow in the wild, and planting them in their landscape accordingly. This knowledge can be acquired by years of hiking in Hill Country state parks and natural areas, or by going to the website of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (which is a part of the University of Texas at Austin) at www.wildflower.org. Click on the “Explore Plants” tab and enter a common or scientific name. You can learn about many aspects of your selected species, including where it grows best: in sun, shade or dappled sun, and well drained or wet soil. You can also learn its mature size, when it flowers and much more.

Our bluebonnets have begun to come up after our recent rains from the seeds dropped by last spring's abundant plants. You might have some bluebonnet rosettes too, so be careful where you step.

One of the joys of being a Texas Master Naturalist is that you can observe your native plants and learn a lot about them and how they grow, even if you don't know their names. If you want a plant identified, you can bring a reasonable-size piece of your mystery plant with a bloom, if present, to a chapter meeting in a re-closable plastic bag containing a wet paper towel. This mini-greenhouse will keep your plant specimen looking just as it was when it was on the plant, making it much easier to identify. Any season in nature can be exciting for those who observe closely.

Common sunflowers
revived by rain



Scarlet leatherflower
after a rain



Croton before the rain



Croton after the rain



Post oaks grew new branch tips
and leaves after September rain.

From Eileen Gotke

Texas Parks and Wildlife is having a State Parks of Texas Geocache Challenge starting on October first. State parks throughout Texas will have geocaches for Texans to find for prizes. More information is available on the TPWD website, www.tpwd.state.tx.us, or Google “tpwd geocache challenge.” For more information on geocaching, go to www.geocaching.com and browse the “Learn” section. TPWD will offer Geocaching 101 workshops; check the TPWD events calendar on their website.



Here is a photo of Hill Country Master Naturalist Chapter members (from left) Nyta Brown, Cynthia Burgin, and me getting ready to start geocaching at Old Tunnel Park, where Nyta gave a geocaching lesson last month. This is an interesting and fun activity that can be combined with hiking, camping, and boating at our state parks.

From Mike Mecke

Tubing trash from tubers, kayakers and others who think "over the side and into the water - who cares?" could well become a factor on our portion of the Guadalupe River.

City: River trash down 78%

By Greg Bowen, New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung, October 4, 2012

NEW BRAUNFELS — TrashFest scuba divers plunging into the Comal River on Saturday might have a hard time filling their litter bags, if river litter collection estimates released this week by the City of New Braunfels are any indication. The amount of litter recovered from the Comal and Guadalupe rivers during the premiere summer of the “can ban” was down an estimated 78 percent.

(http://herald-zeitung.com/news/local_news/article_e17a63c6-0e96-11e2-91db-001a4bcf887a.html)

Lawyer: City loses bid to kill ‘ban’ suit

By Greg Bowen, New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung, October 4, 2012

NEW BRAUNFELS — The Third Court of Appeals has “signaled” that it will reject an appeal filed by the City of New Braunfels in the “can ban” case, Austin attorney Jim Ewbank said Tuesday. Ewbank is representing local tourism interests seeking to overturn the municipal ban on disposable containers in the city’s popular tubing zones.

(http://herald-zeitung.com/news/local_news/article_6bd9b9c2-0d07-11e2-9683-0019bb2963f4.html)

“Like” Camper Clinic II and Help Texas State Parks

Posted on Camper Clinic, *American RVLife*, by G. Elaine Acker, September 24, 2012

Last February's issue of *Texas Parks and Wildlife* magazine made it clear: the state parks need our help. "We've had a season of record drought and devastating wildfires, and all of that has caused declines in state park visitation and revenue," said Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department executive director. "For most of us, this is the drought of a lifetime, and we've seen very, very substantial effects on our parks."

Because we at Camper Clinic II love our parks – and watching the incredible wildlife that live there – we're excited to launch a new campaign. We're spreading the word about how people can get involved, and from now through the end of October, we're donating \$1 for every new "Like" on our Facebook page.*

Here are four ways you can help right now:

1. Go to the Camper Clinic II Facebook page and click "Like."
2. Share this post with friends. Anyone, anywhere, who loves the outdoors can make a difference right now with a "Like!"
3. Send us your photos from your visits to state parks, and of the wildlife you've seen, whether in your backyard or along your favorite hiking trail. Be sure to tell us more about the locations you've visited and the critters you've seen. We'll share these in a future photo gallery so we can all take a mini vacation!
4. Plan a visit to a state park. Fall is prime camping season, and there are lots of activities on the park calendars as well! We'll share links and suggestions throughout the month of October, and if you hear of any fun events, be sure and send us a note about those as well!

By the way, when you email us YOUR wildlife and park photos, we'll enter your name in two drawings for FREE Texas State Parks Pass! We're looking forward to spending the month with you, going camping, birding, hiking, stargazing... you name it! We'll cook outdoors, build campfires, and finally, spend Halloween in the parks. Thanks for tagging along!

* Camper Clinic II is donating \$1 for every "like" up to \$1,500! Thanks for sharing and helping us reach our goal!

The Thirteenth Texas Master Naturalist Statewide Annual Meeting and Advance Training will be October 26-28. Register online at
[http://www.regonline.com/
TMN_13th_annual_meeting](http://www.regonline.com/TMN_13th_annual_meeting)

Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter . . .

news about their current volunteering projects from some members of the Class of 2012

From Margaret Carter: I had the opportunity to participate as a beginner in the September Bird Count at Kreutzberg Canyon Natural Area. Another class member and I met up with an experienced team at Kreutzberg. We walked through the area and saw a remarkable variety of birds, which we identified by their sounds and chirps as well as flight patterns. The leader of the group recorded observations into a voice recorder and later transferred the data to an electronic record. We observed several cardinals and chickadees, a titmouse, many doves, and a ladderback woodpecker. The first lesson of this bird walk was that identification requires a great deal of experience in giving close attention to the details of nature, in order to learn the birds' habits, sounds, and movements. For more information, contact Tara Randle (tmrandle@swbell.net).



From J.D. Clarke: Love Creek Preserve is a 2000-acre pristine natural area located 10 miles west of Medina and accessed from Elam Road off of Highway 337. It is in the care of the Texas Nature Conservancy and is not open to the public—but is an ideal volunteering site for Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalists looking for a "rougher fare" in their conservation and preservation work. You must bring your own water and accommodations are nonexistent: no accessible electricity or facilities and sporadic cell service. The preserve is a birders' paradise; it contains over 100 GPS-mapped listening stations that are in the process of implementation. There is an accessible trail to the creek; sturdy shoes, walking sticks, and patience is recommended. Master Naturalists Tom Collins, Bob McKinley, Glen Ransom, and

Ken Weber are great sources of information for current and upcoming projects, which include trail maintenance, "rough-in" trail construction, dismantling of the old ranch fencing, and removal of small cedar. For more information, contact Rebecca Flack (rflack@TNC.org).

From Jim Clarke: Last Chance Forever Bird of Prey Conservancy and Muleshoe Farm and Ranch Trust is located three miles north of Comfort on Highway 87. Volunteers at the Muleshoe Farm work on three primary projects: nature trail maintenance, water catchment, and native plant gardens. They are presently planning on putting in a native herb garden. The farm has a rock house (built in 1890) and numerous barns and out buildings. A Country Day Celebration is annually held in late spring or early summer and a Christmas (German style) celebration is held the preceding weeks before Christmas. For more information, contact Cynthia Burgin (cburgin@omniglobal.net).

From Sarah Hilburn: The main goal of volunteering in the Butterfly Garden, which is located in the Kerrville-Schreiner Park, is maintaining the garden through planting, pruning and lopping. That provides a great opportunity to learn to identify butterflies and native forbs, scrubs and a few trees. The main goal of this project is to maintain the garden, which is a monarch way station--so we get to learn about these amazing butterflies and their migration. We wear our favorite garden attire and bring pruning shears, gloves and/or loppers, but volunteers don't need to buy those tools if they don't have them. This is a fantastic group of knowledgeable individuals who are eager to teach new volunteers. For more information, contact Cathy Downs (mcdowns@hctc.net).



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From Donna Oliver-Leep: I volunteer at Riverside Nature Center where I learned to glean wildflower seeds. It has helped me to learn more about the different wildflowers that grow in the Hill Country. At our last gleaning session, we got to take some seeds home. What a treat. I hope to make seed balls with them and broadcast them in our front pasture in Junction. For more information, contact Barbara Lowenthal (beltex@ktc.com).

From John Walker: From the day I took my first walk through the diverse habitats of Cibolo Nature Center I knew I would get involved with volunteering there. The first opportunity that attracted me was the blue heron rookery monitoring which began in early February. At a meeting at CNC, observation and recording of data was explained.

Each group of three observers was lead by an experienced monitor. The rookery consists of multiple nests situated in a tall sycamore tree on Cibolo Creek in the 600 acre preserve next door to CNC. The monitors sit in a large mobile blind and observe activity in and around the nests. Two powerful scopes permit close observation, which enables monitors to record hatching, feeding, fledging, and adult behavior. The two hours spent in the blind goes by fast with all the activity going on. Perhaps the most fun and fascinating volunteer activity at CNC is the bird box monitoring. Citizen scientists pair up and observe nesting behavior at CNC bird boxes at Herff farm and Boerne Lake. The observers go out at least once a week starting in late February and until the last birds fledge in August. Data is recorded and sent (by Donna Taylor) to the Cornell University Department of Ornithology. Watching and recording the adult birds pair up, build the nests, lay eggs, and fledge the young is both captivating and eminently satisfying. I looked forward with eager anticipation to my weekly monitoring and took lots of pictures. By mid-summer I felt like I had almost bonded with my "flock." For more information, go to www.wildfieldresearch.org or contact Ben Eldridge (ben@cibolo.org).

From Kathy Ward: I started volunteering with the Nature Box project at Cibolo Nature Center when they wanted a native plant box; we now have three among the 30 boxes that we take to the schools. We start working on new boxes and refining those in use during meetings every other Monday, beginning in August. There were two presentations last week: one on water cycle/clouds (second grade; five classes) on Wednesday in one school and one on bats/nocturnal animals, on Thursday in a different school (first grade; four classes). The docents have a good time presenting the boxes; the children enjoy them and we do not have to worry about discipline.

We will be doing experimental design with seed balls with fifth grade classes. Some docents volunteered at Cibolo's Science Day with the compost/worm box and will do the same at the Herff Farm Day. I used parts of two boxes for my presentation on what fossils tell us about limestones at Riverside Nature Center on September 29th. For more information, contact me (kathyollu@aol.com).

How to Take Better than Average Nature Photos by Tom Schall

There are many ways for photographers to improve their technique. We often do that by studying the large number of texts that are available. Camera clubs provide a wealth of information during meetings, and from the association with other like-minded folks. But, it is workshops that can really focus on a subject in which you may have particular interest. I recently attended two that were outstanding in presenting techniques specific to capturing outstanding images of hummingbirds and dragonflies.

The Hummingbird Workshop was part of a series of photography workshops sponsored by the magazine Arizona Highways. They are known for the outstanding photos they have had for many decades. I recall looking at it when I was a child during the 1940's. Our Texas Highways and Texas Parks and Wildlife compares favorably with the high photographic standards they maintain. A plus with this workshop was the location at which it was held, the fabulous Madera Canyon, south of Tucson, Arizona. This is a mecca for birders and is well known for the variety of unique species that can be seen there. In addition to hummingbirds, the elegant trogon, red-faced warbler and Crissal's thrasher are often seen.

The workshop was led by Bruce Taubert, a well known professional nature photographer. He often contributes to Texas Parks and Wildlife and has been developing his technique for many, many years. The uniqueness of this system is his lighting set-up that can be erected in the outdoor environment, so that you essentially create a photo lab in the field. Hummingbirds are attracted to the setup by feeders or native flowers enriched by sugar water. Two flash units were positioned on the right and left sides, and a third below to illuminate the throat (gorget). A fourth flash illuminated a softly printed backdrop. The camera and telephoto lens were mounted on a tripod, and the shutter is released by a remote cord or control. Bruce taught us how to pre-focus on the area of the feeder where the bird will be. Interestingly, there are feeders available with only a single feeding floret opening. Check Amazon.com and go far down the list of feeders presented to find one of them.

Each of us was assigned a feeder and shared it with another photographer. We took turns and chatted during the periods when a bird was not present. This may seem to limit photo ops, but in reality it works out well. I set a "personal best" with 700 images between breakfast and dinner time! Using the same flash set-up, we alternated between using the hummingbird feeder and a nectar-enriched native flowering plant. The plant was placed in a glass and Bruce's assistants filled the flower with the normal nectar mixture with very tiny droppers. This produced a very natural looking image, but it did not provide as many shooting opportunities. When using the feeder set-up, we included a photo of a native flower against the same background as the feeder. The object was to be able to merge the bird and flower using Photoshop Elements, or equivalent, at a later computer session. To maximize our shooting time, Bruce gave us instruction on the photographic processes and critiqued our photos during our breakfast and lunch times when we were all together. The camaraderie was very enjoyable and the instruction invaluable.

Information on the available workshops, dates, and costs can be found on the Arizona Highways website (www.ahpw.org/). In my next article I'll tell you about the Dragonfly Festival and the dragonfly photo workshop I attended.



Rufous
Hummingbird



Black-chinned
Hummingbird



Broad-billed
Hummingbird

KERR COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S

NATIVE TREE SALE

Date: Saturday, November 10, 2012

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Location: Kerr County Ag Barn

**ALL TREES SOLD HAVE BEEN GROWN LOCALLY
AND ARE NATIVE SPECIES.**

QUANTITIES LIMITED, COME EARLY!

SPECIES AVAILABLE :

BURR OAK	ANAQUA
LACEY OAK	BUTTONBUSH
CHINKAPIN OAK	SPICEBUSH
MONTERREY OAK	MEXICAN PLUM
ROUGHLEAF DOGWOOD	DESERT WILLOW
CEDAR ELM	BIGTOOTH MAPLE
KIDNEYWOOD	TEXAS REDBUD
ESCARPMENT CHERRY	CAROLINA BUCKTHORNE
BLANCO CRABAPPLE	

Plant Native, Drought Resistant Trees!



For More Information Please Contact:

Kerr County Soil & Water Conservation District

Deanna Pfeffer, Technician

deanna@kerrcountyswcd.com or

830-896-4911 x 3



T E X A S



Master
Naturalist

We meet on the fourth Monday of most months at 7:00 PM. in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehman Drive in Kerrville.

Join us at 6:30 for our social half-hour.

Everyone is welcome.

HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

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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T E X A S



TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

