

# The Texas Star

## Newsletter of the Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter

APRIL MEETING ... WATER AND THE FUTURE OF THE HILL COUNTRY

**Andrew Sansom** will speak on the topic "Water and the Future of the Texas Hill Country." He will cover struggles between various entities for the valuable resource of water. Struggles brought on by population growth, drought, groundwater pumping, and economic issues. His comments will help paint a picture of what the region we call home may become under these stressful conditions. Mr. Sansom is the former



executive director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and current executive director of the River Systems Institute at Texas State University. He is a foremost authority on water in Texas and the Hill Country.

Join us Monday, April 23 at 7p.m. in the UGRA Lecture Hall. Invite friends and family to our fun, informative meeting. We gather at 6:30 to chat with members and guests.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ... Priscilla Stanley

### Native Plants Continue to Have a Spectacular Spring

Like many of you, Jim and I like to look at our native plants by walking around our yard, which is protected by a high-fence to avoid our natives becoming cow chow or deer chow. Last month I discussed how this has been an excellent wildflower year so far even though 2011 set a new one-year drought record in our area. We continue to have wildflowers not seen in years, as well as favorites that have spread over larger areas and even to distant areas. How is this possible? This year's rains must have come at just the right time to provide this very welcome show of optimism by our native plants. Since the Hill Country is a semi-arid region, one can wonder if our native plants share some gene with West Texas natives

that seem to be programmed to seize the opportunity after a rain to bloom and make seed as rapidly as possible in an effort to ensure the future of their species.

I am discussing the following Hill Country native plants because if they are in our yard, they might be in your yard or nearby. This is a really special wildflower year with so many species in bloom. If it stays hot and dry, these early bloomers might not be around long.

You have probably all marveled at the profusion of tiny yellow-flowered bladderpod plants *Lesquerella* sp. that painted roadsides and our yards a cheerful yellow this spring. Similarly, we had never seen such an abundance of pink mock vervain *Glandularia pumila*, a low-growing, annual cousin of prairie verbena, but with pink

Continued, page 2.

T E X A S



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

Western Burrowing Owl

...part of top secret  
Operation X-ray.  
Page 17.



Kendall County

April 2012  
Volume 10  
No. 4



THIS MONTH WE HONOR



<u>Milestones</u>	<u>2011 Recertification</u>	<u>Special Recertification</u>	<u>First Year Certification</u>
<i>2500 Hours - Silver</i>	<i>Mexican free-tailed bat</i>	<i>Mexican free-tailed bat</i>	<i>Dragonfly</i>
Gracie Waggener	Norma Brunns	Joan Broussard	Sharron Jay
	Cynthia Burgin	Ann Carabin	Ric McCormick
<i>1000 Hours - Gold</i>	Jim Burgin	Tara Randle	
<i>Floyd Trefny</i>	Eileen Gotke		
	John Huecksteadt		
<i>500 Hours - Brushed Silver</i>	Marilyn Knight		
Glenn Randow	Sandy Leyendecker		
	Diane McMahon		
	Lars Nielsen		
	Jim Stanley		
	Priscilla Stanley		
	Floyd Trefny		

**Now the Taps Are Dry: Environment Poem by Moses H. Barbu**

She told you to plant trees and you paid her no heed and now the taps are dry. They released a water rationing schedule today, a water conservation measure you say, because the taps are dry. You should have rationed your greed and paid her heed, when she told you not to cut down forest trees, but you did not see the wisdom of her pleas, and now the taps are dry. You thought that the price of food was high until you had to choose what to buy, Food or the liquid of life? Yesterday, someone had to explain to their daughter, that the choice was between food and water, Now that your taps are dry. Who would have thought that the day would come, when you would stand under God's glorious sun, and buy water by the gallon? You cannot say that you did not see it coming, because I gave you ample warning, that soon the day would be dawning, when you would wake up one morning, and find that your taps were dry. So now you are taking conservation measures, A little too late you are reclaiming your treasures that were squandered and plundered to suit the whims of a few. You lacked forethought, and you should have fought, just as I taught, to protect the liquid of life. You should have been as far-sighted as I who told you not to cut down trees, Then perhaps today you would not be crying over the fact that your taps are drying.



President's message continued.

flowers instead of purple and with less-deeply incised leaves. About eight years ago, we had both Dutchman's breeches *Thamnosma texana* and a fringed puccoon *Lithospermum incisum* growing in a natural part of our yard. When they stopped returning about five years ago, I was saddened to think that they had probably died. Amazingly, both came up this spring and bloomed. Prairie celestials *Nemastylis geminiflora* with their large light-blue flowers with a yellow and white center are a cheerful addition to any area. One plant appeared years ago. Gradually they increased here and there, but this year we have them all over the yard! Who would expect this after such a bad drought?

Blue-eyed grass, *Sisyrinchium chilense* with smaller darker-blue flowers also having six petals, naturalized in the yard more extensively this year. Both of these plants are in the Iris family and are monocots. Our large drifts of delicate, white-flowered peppergrass *Lepidium virginicum* are mixed with Texas toadflax *Linaria texana* with its pale blue flowers, which tower over the mini-understory of bladderpods and dwarf white asters *Chaetopappa bellidifolia* with their 1/4" pale lavender-tinged flowers only about two-inches high. I hope that you are all enjoying the wonders of your own wildflowers. One benefit of being a TMN is having so many friends who also know and care about their wildflowers, both great and small. \*Look for wildflower images on page 18.

## ADVANCED TRAINING

**AT 12-031 RIPARIAN GRAZING WORKSHOPS**

Thursday-Friday, April 12-13, San Angelo  
Registration: required, call 830-278-6810.

**AT 12-033 FORB ID CLASS**

Thursday, April 12, 9a-12p, RNC  
John Huecksteadt teaches forbs identification.

**AT 12-043 THE NATIVE PLANTS OF THE CANYON**

Sunday, April 15, 9A-Noon, [Government Canyon State Natural Area](#), San Antonio  
Thrill-A-Minute: The Native Plants of the Canyon with Bill Carr. Learn local plants and more.  
Registration: required, call 210-688-9055 ext.289 or email [reservations@friendsofsgc.org](mailto:reservations@friendsofsgc.org).

**AT 12-051 MEUSEBACH LECTURE SERIES**

Wednesday, April 18, [Hill Country University Center](#), Fredericksburg  
Pioneering the Grape in the Hill Country: Yesterday & Today with Dr. James Kearney, historian/rancher, independent scholar on German settlement in Texas.  
Registration: required, limited to 175, call 830- 990-8441 or register day of the event. \$25/public-\$20/ students or GCHS and NPSOT members. [www.pioneermuseum.net](http://www.pioneermuseum.net).

**AT 12-047 WILDFLOWER EXPLORERS' CLASSES**

Wednesday, April 18, May 2, May 16, June 6, June 20; 9A-10P; RNC  
12 classes beginning in April. On first and third Wednesday mornings, learn about 150 native wildflower species found in the Hill Country. Volunteers will meet to walk and talk through the gardens of RNC.  
Registration: e-mail Barbara Lowenthal, [beltex@ktc.com](mailto:beltex@ktc.com) or Julie Clay, [jbrazaitis@aol.com](mailto:jbrazaitis@aol.com).

**AT 12-044 KERR COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S ANNUAL FIELD DAY**

Friday, April 27, 9:30A-4:30P, [Kerr Wildlife Management Area](#)  
Kerr County Soil and Water Conservation District's Annual Field Day. Topics: FSA programs, drought, brush management, grazing, and other management tools.  
Registration: required, call 830-896-4911 ext. 3 or email [Deanna@kerrcountyswcd.com](mailto:Deanna@kerrcountyswcd.com). \$15/person or \$25/couple in advance, \$20/person at door.

**AT 12-048 WINGS OVER THE HILLS**

Friday, April 27, Fredericksburg  
Wings programs. Program schedule, maps, and tickets at [wingstx.org](http://wingstx.org).

**AT 12-050 HILL COUNTRY LAND USE EXPO**

Saturday, May 5, Cailloux Theater, Kerrville, Free  
All day educational event for landowners. Natural history of the Hill Country, water management, natural resources, oak wilt, and drought assessment, wildlife tax valuation, wildfire preparedness, brush control.

**AT 12-034 TREE AND SHRUB ID CLASS**

Monday, May 7, 9a-12p, RNC  
Jim Stanley teaches tree and shrub identification.

from Garry Speir



Riverside Nature Center's  
**Earth Day Celebration  
 & Native Plant Sale**

**Saturday April 28 8am – 3pm**

Volunteer Opportunities are available.

*Priscilla says, "This is a wonderful time to have friendly, helpful chapter members volunteering and wearing our caps, shirts, and badges.*

If you would like to volunteer or have questions, please e-mail Priscilla Stanley at [jpbstan@ktc.com](mailto:jpbstan@ktc.com) or call 830-257-2094.



**WINGS OVER THE HILLS NATURE FESTIVAL  
 APRIL 27-28-29**

A celebration of natural flight saluting the unique winged wildlife of the Texas Hill Country offering opportunities for education and entertainment for the whole family.

The last weekend of April 2012 marks the second annual Wings Over the Hills Nature Festival held in the beautiful Texas Hill Country at Fredericksburg.

**A Celebration of Natural Flight.**  
 The festival is an opportunity to experience the abundance of regional winged wildlife including birds, bats, butterflies, and dragonflies.

Enjoy educational presentations by noted nature specialists, a children's activity area, guided field trips on the park's nature trail and tours of the area. The festival trade show features the best products geared to birding, nature, and outdoor activities.

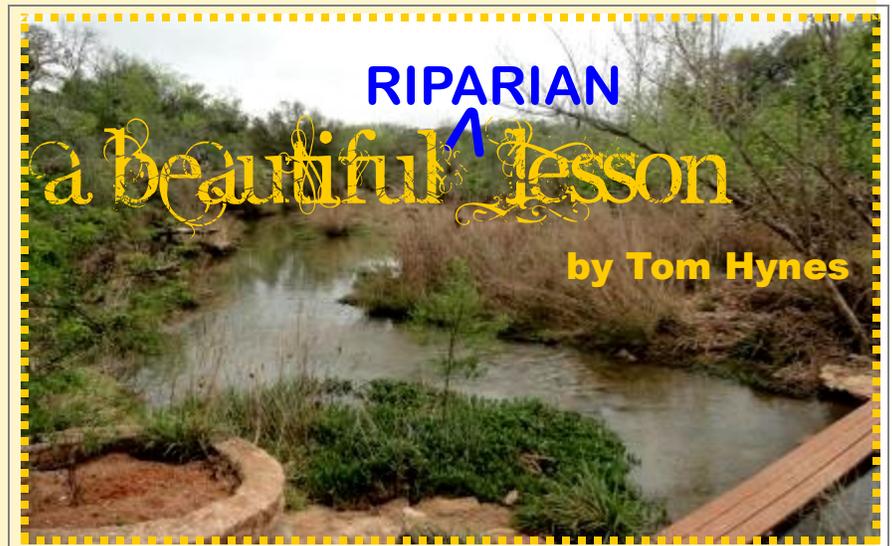
Purchase festival passes online at [wingsoverthehills.org/tickets.html](http://wingsoverthehills.org/tickets.html)

**Join us in Fredericksburg for a naturally wonderful weekend.**

Organized by Fredericksburg Rotary Clubs and Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center. Proceeds are returned to the local community in the form of civic projects and scholarships.

Lady Bird Johnson Park in Fredericksburg, once a repository for city waste materials, has become a premier destination for hikers, birders, wildflower and butterfly enthusiasts, and all manner of other outdoor enthusiasts.

It has also become an outstanding, functioning riparian area along a segment of Live Oak Creek. The creek is lined with lush, deep-rooted vegetation including switchgrass, yellow Indiangrass, bushy bluestem, and Lindheimer's muhly. Hickory, pecan, and bald cypress trees tower over scouring rush, sedges, and even some culprits such as Johnsongrass and Chinaberry. There are many, many other species.



The creek has been tested repeatedly - it has been flooded, beaten down, broken up, rearranged, and through it all returned to challenge the next event. And so it was as recently as mid-April when the parched Hill Country was blessed with around three inches of rain recorded at the park. Up-stream run-off into Live Oak Creek created a torrent of water. The usually placid stream was transformed into a swollen, raging flow of water and debris rising fifteen to twenty feet above normal.

Just as any other fighter, the riparian area has black eyes, a bloodied nose, and a few cauliflower ears. No gullies, no heavy washes, just silent sentinels standing cloaked in nature's recyclable waste. Cedar elm and sycamore trees are draped with dried grasses and limbs, matted against their trunks and branches. Grasses and saplings lay bent or buried under the tons of trees, limbs, litter, and other debris; an assortment of materials accumulated up-stream over the past few dry years. Over time, more rain, wind and the persistence of new growth will gradually degrade and dislodge most of the matted material.

A group of volunteers from the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center and Master Naturalists took action to do some remedial work. Large trees and limbs were reduced in size and stacked for the hoped for fire that would rid them from the area. They could become devastating missiles in the event of another flooded creek. Sure enough, that same day they were torched by park personnel.



Tom Hynes

Silent sentinel in the riparian.

*As I walked the ground and looked out over that stretch of riparian area, all the lessons from presentations I had heard from Sky Lewey, Steve Nelle, and others came sharply into focus. Here was the classic example of a healthy riparian area, having stood in the face of destruction, giving of itself to achieve its life purpose. And yet, already there were signs of new growth and renewal, preparing to meet the next challenge. I encourage you to visit Lady Bird Johnson Park and walk the near reaches of the Live Oak Trail and view the battlefield. It was a learning moment!*

**A Beautiful Riparian Lesson. Photos by Tom Hynes.**



Did something devastating happen here? It is hard to imagine looking downstream from the footbridge at Live Oak Creek.



Whose hole? Who can say for sure, but life goes on in the now tranquil riparian.



Debris at the footbridge, well above the normal level of Live Oak Creek.



Nature's creative handiwork, a pyramidal stack of debris.



Tons of debris captured and held in place as the water receded in the riparian area.



Exit right, where some of the diverted water returned to the south bound creek.



Cynthia Burgin

Hooray! Members receiving recertification and milestones at our March meeting were: Glenn Randow, Ron Hood, Joan Broussard, Harriet Warren, Norma Bruns (500 hours), Paula Smith (250 hours), Gracie Waggener, Steve Clyburn (250 hours), and Sandy Pena. 31 members recertified and/or earned milestones in the first quarter of 2012! Way to go, chapter!

Tara Randle found this sharp-shinned hawk at her bird feeder. Tara says, "I don't think he (or she) was there for the suet."



Tara Randle



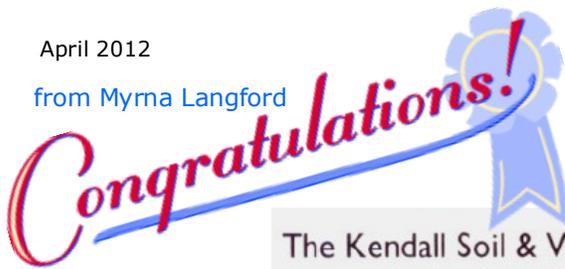
Tara Randle



Tara Randle

Tara also found this interesting and beautiful chrysalis. It is a variegated fritillary chrysalis on a fragrant sumac shrub. Thank you, Tara, for sharing this beautiful image.

from Myrna Langford



**2012 Texas Conservation Awards Program**  
Sponsored by the Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Texas

The Kendall Soil & Water Conservation District is pleased to announce the  
**Kendall County Conservation Ranchers for 2012**  
**Dusty & Norma Bruns**

In 2003, Dusty Bruns retired from his job as Training Area Manager for the 28,000 acre Camp Bullis, a military reservation outside of San Antonio. He and his wife, Norma, then began intensive management of the family ranch in Kendall County, south of Comfort. Cedar had always been a problem, but with a little more time on their hands and some used equipment, Dusty and Norma began a clearing program. The ranch is in rough country with steep canyons and flat-topped hills. The tops were cleared and the steep canyons left in brush for wildlife cover. About 220 acres were cleared of cedar. Old fields have been planted to Kleingrass and B. Dahl bluestem. Prescribed fire is used for cedar control in the old fields and in the rangeland. Norma is active in the Texas Master Naturalists, and plays a key role in shaping a selective brush control program as she knows important food plans for a variety of birds and other wildlife.

Exotics and overpopulation of deer is a ranch issue as high numbers can destroy plant resources. A portion of the ranch is leased for hunting while family and friends hunt the remainder.

In 2001, Dusty was recognized by the Texas Historical Commission for Archaeological Preservation Work at Camp Bullis. Protection of archaeological and historical resources continue to be a concern on the ranch. Indian occupation sites are present on the ranch, as well as what are believed to be late prehistoric gravesites. All known sites are protected from disturbance.

Along with a couple of helpers, Dusty replaced 10,000 feet of 75-year old perimeter fence and put in 5,493 feet of new cross fences. One of these cross fences was a requirement of the Conservation Stewardship Program, of which Dusty has participated with the NRCS since 2010. Dusty also voluntarily installed 2,610 feet of additional fence along two creeks on the ranch for riparian area protection. This livestock exclusion not only protects the water quality of the creek but also protects the riparian vegetation from heavy grazing pressure. The ranch and an adjacent leased property are partitioned into 19 pastures for a short duration grazing system. The ranch has 5,600 feet of water pipeline supplied by one well and three spring developments supporting the short duration grazing system.

Dusty volunteers time at the Cibolo Nature Center. He assists with prescribed burns in their tall-grass prairie, and helps teach a segment of an annual Land Management class regarding the importance of proper livestock grazing management. Dusty played a key role in the re-organization of the Hill Country Prescribed Burn Association. He has held many offices in the Burn Association and currently serves as director from Kendall County and secretary of that Association. Dusty served for six years on the Board of the Kendall Soil & Water Conservation District. He served as chairman for five of those six years.

Dusty & Norma haven't exactly found monetary riches in ranch life, but rather a richness in quality of life which they hope to pass on to their children and grandchildren.





## Lichens and Other Things that Grow on Trees

Lichens are composite organisms made up of a fungus and usually a green alga, or sometimes a cyanobacterium. Many different species of fungi and different species of algae may combine into a number of different shapes and colors of lichens. They can be found in rainforests, on the arctic tundra, and in deserts. They can be found growing on rocks, trees, soil, and even roofs.

Fungi are characterized as organisms that lack chlorophyll and thus cannot carry out photosynthesis. Think molds, mildew, mushrooms, and yeasts. Algae, on the other hand do contain chlorophyll and can convert carbon dioxide from the air into carbohydrates, but unlike higher plants, they do not have leaves, stems, or roots.

When this complex association is formed, the alga produce the carbohydrates needed for life for both partners, and the fungus surround the alga protecting it and helping to capture and retain water. The resulting lichen may then take on shapes, forms, colors, and characteristics different from either of the two partners.

Most of the lichens seen growing on rocks are flat, thin growths that sometimes can be mistaken for patches of paint, and they can be many different colors. Growths on tree limbs and trunks tend to look like flat wavy leaves, highly-branched fine hair-like bunches, or any of many different shapes and colors as well.



lichen on rocks at Enchanted Rock SNA



lichen on oak branch

Lichens need sunlight, but not necessarily full sun. They are not only able to tolerate extreme ranges of temperature, but also can survive being severely desiccated and then recover when wetted again. Lichens can be very long-lived. They are epiphytes, meaning they obtain all of their requirements from rain and the air and get no nutrition or water from the substrate on which they are growing. When growing on rocks, however, they may decompose small amounts of rock in an extremely slow process which can be the beginnings of converting rocks into soil. Their presence on tree trunks or limbs does not harm the tree in any way. When viewed close-up, some of them can be quite beautiful and interesting, and I think add character to our oak trees.

Speaking of epiphytes, the common ball moss found usually on the lower limbs of trees is another plant that does not get any nourishment or water from the tree. It likes areas with low sunlight, protected from the wind and areas of high humidity, which is why it is frequently found on the

lower limbs of oak trees. Many people see the ball moss growing on dead or dying lower limbs and assume the ball moss killed the limb, but this is a mistake of assigning cause and effect. Lower limbs of big trees are so shaded from the sun that the lower limbs frequently die from lack of sunlight, just as all of the limbs close to the ground when the tree was a sapling died.

Once you see ball moss growing on fence wires and telephone wires it is easier to understand that the plant does not get anything from the tree limb except a place to grow. Ball moss is not actually a moss, but a flowering plant. Spanish moss, its cousin, and some other bromeliads are also epiphytes.



ball moss on lower live oak limbs

Mistletoe, on the other hand, is not an epiphyte, but what is classified as a hemi-parasite. Mistletoe grows a root-like structure called a haustorium directly into the limb of a tree and absorbs water and some minerals from the host tree. However, it is also capable of making its own carbohydrates by photosynthesis, so it is not totally dependent on the host for all of its nutrients.



mistletoe growing on trunk, about \$25 worth!

Mistletoe has smooth, opposite, leathery, evergreen leaves. Male and female flowers are produced on different plants and the female produces white to translucent berries. The plant is poisonous to humans if eaten, but birds seem to like the berries, and then participate in dispersing the seeds.

While mistletoe can damage a limb to the point of killing the limb, it would be a very unusual event for the parasite to kill a whole tree. Just cutting off the green part will not necessarily kill the mistletoe; but cutting the limb off some distance from it will. **Do not forget to immediately paint a cut oak limb.**

This past Christmas season, I heard that because of the drought mistletoe was in short supply and was selling for \$25 for a little piece!

Until next time...

Jim Stanley is a Texas Master Naturalist and author of *Hill Country Landowner's Guide*. Email Jim at [jstmn@kctc.com](mailto:jstmn@kctc.com). His columns can be read at [hillcountrynaturalist.org](http://hillcountrynaturalist.org).



Report your  
volunteer and  
AT hours at the  
end of each month.  
Email your report  
form to [sandy325@windstream.net](mailto:sandy325@windstream.net).



Find us on  
**Facebook**

The Hill Country Chapter is now on Facebook!

[facebook.com/TMNHillCountryChapter](https://facebook.com/TMNHillCountryChapter)

Visit our Facebook page and click



from Tom Collins



## True Mushrooms

Fungi are placed in a separate kingdom, Myceteae. The fungi in the photo are true mushrooms. If a fungi cap shows gills that can be seen from below (in this case seen from above - translucent), then it is a mushroom. There is one exception, boletes which have a cap and instead of gills, have tubes. Both are in the Order Agaricales which has 13 families, 39 genus.

Chanterelles are in a different order. Fungi are identified by collecting a sample, letting it dry, and then

examining the released spores under a microscope. Generally, getting fungi into a family is as best as you can do without studying the spore prints. We didn't collect a specimen - this picture is all I had to study these mushrooms. They could possibly be in the family *Tricholomataceae*, genus *Marasmiellus*, but that is a guess just based on the cap appearance.

**New Bird Census  
in Kendall County!**

**< NEW DATE >**

**Join the Joshua Springs Park & Preserve  
monthly bird census.**

**Carolyn Bean leads this exciting new census  
on the fourth Thursday of each month.**

Contribute citizen-science data, improve your birding skills, and earn hours by observing and recording species in the 365-acre park and natural area.

Grab your binoculars and bird book and join the fun!

The next JSPP census is May 24.

Please contact Carolyn at [curione@yahoo.com](mailto:curione@yahoo.com) or 830-278-0233 to get involved.



from Mike Mecke

### Watch our new video, "Birding Warblers"

As the days lengthen, millions of warblers, each weighing less than half an ounce, are traveling northward. The anticipation builds

as bird watchers check the forecasts and wonder what new species they'll see each day. To help celebrate the imminent arrival of spring migrants, Jessie Barry and Chris Wood

from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology share their warbler-watching tips with you in a new video, "Birding Warblers."

To hear the songs of nearly 50 North American warblers, visit our [wood-warbler page on All About Birds](#)

[youtube.com/watchCornell+Lab+eNewsI](http://youtube.com/watchCornell+Lab+eNewsI)



## CLEISTOGAMOUS PLANTS – WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?

by Barbara Lowenthal

When a plant self-pollinates it is called cleis-tog-a-mous (klī-stōg'ē-mēs). The word origin is from the Greek word *kleistos* meaning closed. Scientists indicate that various factors such as insufficient pollinators and other environmental factors may play a role in this behavior. Some plants produce two types of flowers – open showy flowers (chasmogamous) and closed never opening flowers (cleistogamous). When this occurs both types of flowers may either be fertile (capable of producing fruit) or only the cleistogamous flowers are fertile.

According to research, this phenomenon occurs frequently in grass species, it also happens in wildflowers. Wildflowers in the genus *Lithospermum* have this characteristic. Species in this genus will often, but not always, produce a showy inflorescence, which may or may not produce a fruit, and later in the growing season, will produce smaller cleistogamous flowers (which look like small buds) in the axils of the leaves. These in turn produce small nutlets.

The puccoon *Lithospermum incisum* is one of our early wildflowers, blooming April to May. It is an upright to spreading plant between six and twelve inches tall. The leaves are linear and dark green and are covered in short hairs. The plant grows along roadways in mixed soils and in full sun to dappled shade.

Scientific name: *Lithospermum incisum*

Common name: puccoon, narrowleaf stoneseed

Photographer: Marilyn Knight



Chasmogamous flower



Cleistogamous flower



Nutlets



*Native Plant*  
OF THE MONTH

BY  
PRISCILLA  
STANLEY

## NATIVE PENSTEMON: Beautiful, Long-lived, and Easy-to-Grow

The performance of some wildflowers is understandably impacted by rain or lack thereof, or other weather conditions. The three species of penstemon in our yard however have been very rewarding with their dependable display of spring color and remarkable longevity. Penstemon are in the Scrophulariaceae Family (figwort family) which also includes other favorite natives such as cenizo, snapdragon vine, Texas toadflax and Texas (Indian) paintbrush. All penstemon may need deer protection in the Hill Country. Penstemon attract hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, native bees, bumblebees, and other nectar-seeking insects. All of the following penstemon species can either be grown from seed or purchased at native nurseries. Any of these penstemon could be an attractive addition to your wildscape or landscape.

We enjoy three native penstemon species which thrive in sun to part-sun in both our wildflower natural areas and our native perennial beds:

**Wild Foxglove** *Penstemon cobeia*, aka prairie penstemon, has large tubular flowers (1" wide x 1.5" long) covering over half of its one to two feet tall stems in April and May (and starting in April in this unusually warm year). The flowers open with a pink color that fades to pure white. This plant has attractive large, glossy, bright-green leaves, as well as woody roots to help make it more drought tolerant. A mature plant can have seven stems covered with blooms and will return dependably from the roots for many years.

Wild Foxglove is native to the Hill Country and extends up into the Blackland Prairie of North Central Texas. It is also reported to be a larval host for the dotted checkerspot butterfly found in South Central Texas, although I have never seen any larva or chewed leaves.

**Hill Country Penstemon** *Penstemon triflorus* is native to the Hill Country and endemic to the Edwards Plateau, meaning that the Edwards Plateau is the only place in the world where this plant grows in the wild. Hill Country penstemon has very showy one-inch long scarlet blooms on its one and one half to two feet stems in April and May, except it too began blooming in April this year.

Both of the above penstemons grow very well in our wildflower areas since they are Hill Country natives adapted to our climate and often dry soils. I collect seed when the stems and small, tough seed capsules are crispy brown, and scatter the seeds about to get more plants. Both species also grow very well in perennial beds.

Continued, next page.



Priscilla Stanley



Priscilla Stanley

**Gulf Coast (or Brazos) Penstemon** *Penstemon tenuis* is native to Southeast Texas where it grows in prairies and marshes, thus it will tolerate poor drainage and does best with some moisture. It grows very well in our perennial beds with an eastern exposure receiving only morning sun and occasional drip irrigation. These beds maintain a higher soil-moisture without the hot west or south summer sun. Gulf Coast penstemon blooms in the Hill Country from April through June with many 0.5" x 0.5" dainty bell-like, light-purple flowers arranged in spikes on one to two feet stems. It self-sows seeds which will grow readily in a moist perennial bed with a thin mulch so that the seeds can touch mineral soil. These entire plants are smaller and more delicate than the above discussed penstemon so I find a modest colony in our perennial beds even more attractive than single plants. We first saw Gulf Coast penstemon growing at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, where it is used as an attractive cut-flower in their Wildflower Café.



Priscilla Stanley

Chapter members created bird feeding stations and landscaped the habitat yards of the bird blinds at Kreuzberg Canyon Natural Area. Now birds, butterflies, lizards, rabbits, and visitors have beautifully designed, professional-quality habitats to enjoy, observe, and photograph!

Work-hardy, creative volunteers were: Paul Pederson, Garry Speir, Tara Randle, Bowen Randle, Stephen Bishop, Jim Clarke, Daneshu Clarke, and Reidun Hilleman (not pictured); Kristie Denbow took the photo.



Kristie Denbow



Kristie Denbow

Take a drive to [KCNA](#) and see the team's handiwork.



Kristie Denbow



# Attack of the Bastard Cabbage

from Paula Smith

[statesman.com/news/texas/leafy-bastard-cabbage-blots-out-texas-wildflowers-2280954.html](http://statesman.com/news/texas/leafy-bastard-cabbage-blots-out-texas-wildflowers-2280954.html)

from David Langford

[kxan.com/dpp/news/local/austin/bastard-cabbage-attacks](http://kxan.com/dpp/news/local/austin/bastard-cabbage-attacks)

from John Huecksteadt

[npsot.org/wp/story/2012/2300/#more-2300](http://npsot.org/wp/story/2012/2300/#more-2300)



**HELLO INVASIVE SPECIES.  
GOODBYE TEXAS.**

[texasinvasives.org/plant\\_database/detail.php?symbol=RARU](http://texasinvasives.org/plant_database/detail.php?symbol=RARU)

Comments from Bill Neiman

Some, including the media, could deepen their research just a little.

The seeds of bastard cabbage are NOT very small like rye grass. As far as seeds go, they are actually quite large and round ... they fit in the exact same size hole as wheat and cereal rye GRAIN on a seed cleaner. TxDOT uses these very low-priced cereal grains as a cheap cool season vegetation for erosion control on fall/winter-seeded roadside construction projects. It is specified in TxDOT standards for all 252 counties. They used it last fall to stabilize areas impacted by the Bastrop fires, for example.

Some cereal grain seeds that come onto the lowest-priced-ends of the market may have never been through a seed cleaner. Many farmers trade, buy, and sell "combine-run" seeds, straight out of their harvesting machinery. Many a contaminated wheat field exists in the blacklands. And the lowest priced bid is how the state purchasing offices rank the highest qualifying vendors. As long as TxDOT keeps funding the planting of contaminated cool season grains, we can expect more of this invasive weed into the future.

Bill Neiman

Native American Seed

solutions for eco-logical land mgmt

[www.seedsource.com](http://www.seedsource.com)

*A general internet search will return a plethora of articles and information on this culprit.*

From Kip Kiphart

*A report from Dr. Lincoln Brower who recently returned from a visit to the monarch overwintering site in Mexico.*

The data on the colony area occupied by all overwintering monarch colonies this 2011-2012 overwintering season (2.89 hectares) is the third lowest since systematic monitoring began 18 years go during the 1994-1995 overwintering season in Mexico, and is substantially below the 7.2 ha average. Thus the current data indicate a continuation of the downward trend in the total area occupied by the monarchs during the winter.

The international scientific community is baffled why it took so long for WWF and others to release the colony data for the current overwintering season. The long delay actually hampered research planning for important molecular studies by the scientific community.

The rationalization provided by WWF-Mexico that the decline is due mainly to weather and loss of breeding habitat ignores the fact that severe degradation of the Oyamel forest ecosystem has been and still is occurring. We laud the efforts of the Mexican government to halt massive illegal logging, but it is an absolute fact that severe degradation of key overwintering habitat still is occurring.

*Professor Brower, who has studied the overwintering sites for the past 35 years is especially concerned about recent severe degradation of both the Sierra Chincua and Cerro Pelon overwintering forests, two of the most important overwintering areas in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve (MBBR).*

**[ajc.com/news/nation-world/monarch-butterflies-drop-28-1386631.html](http://ajc.com/news/nation-world/monarch-butterflies-drop-28-1386631.html)**

From Kip Kiphart

**The current status of the monarch butterfly. And what we can do to help: PLANT MILKWEED.**

[monarchwatch.org/blog/2012/03/monarch-population-status-14/](http://monarchwatch.org/blog/2012/03/monarch-population-status-14/)

[umn.edu/news/features/2012/UR\\_CONTENT\\_378473.html](http://umn.edu/news/features/2012/UR_CONTENT_378473.html)





Garry Speir

A male eastern blue bird poses on the chapter-funded bluebird habitat sign at Kreuzberg Canyon Natural Area (KCNA). Garry Speir took this photo on March 30. The bluebird and his mate are nesting about ten feet away in one of eighteen nest boxes at the natural area. Kendall County Partnership for Parks (KCPP) installed the nest boxes. They are monitored by Reidun Hilleman. KCPP also maintains nest boxes at James Kiehl River Bend Park (JKRB). The first nestlings of 2012 are shown below. Ruth McArthur monitors the JKRB nest boxes.



Garry Speir



The United Nations has declared 2012 as International Year of the Bat  
A global species awareness initiative.

[yearofthebat.org](http://yearofthebat.org)

[batcon.org/index.php/get-involved/year-of-the-bat](http://batcon.org/index.php/get-involved/year-of-the-bat)

from Cynthia Johnson

During World War II, the free-tailed bat caves near San Antonio were guarded closely as part of top-secret Operation X-ray. The U.S. military attempted to train the bats to carry small incendiary bombs and release them in Japanese buildings. During one test, bat bomb carriers escaped and set fire to barracks and a general's car. The project was later scrapped.

From the President's Message - Wildflowers in Priscilla Stanley's yard.



*Lepidium virginicum*, white-flowered peppergrass



*Linaria texana*, Texas toadflax



*Chaetopappa bellidifolia*, dwarf white asters



*Lesquerella argyrea*, bladderpod



*Glandularia pumila*, pink mock vervain



*Lithospermum incisum*, puccoon



*Thamnosma texana*, Dutchman's breeches



*Nemastylis geminiflora*, Prairie celestials



*Sisyrinchium chilense*, Blue-eyed grass



I am not a lover of lawns. Rather would I see daisies in their thousands, ground ivy, hawkweed, and even the hated plantain with tall stems, and dandelions with splendid flowers and fairy down, than the too-well-tended lawn.

W.H. Hudson, *The Book of a Naturalist*, 1919



# NICE!

Natives Instead of Common Exotics!

Spring 2012 Plant of the Season

- MEALY BLUE SAGE -

*Salvia farinacea*

also known as: Mealy sage, Mealycup sage



Sally & Andy Wasowski

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Fragrant blue flowers and foliage - Lamiaceae (Mint family)

Nectar attracts butterflies, hummingbirds and native bees

2-3 ft. upright or sprawling perennial - low water - full sun

Blooms on and off throughout the summer (April-October)

Provides an attractive mass of color

Deer Resistant

Visit the following participating nurseries:

- ◆ Friendly Natives Nursery      1107 N. Llano St.      830-997-6288
- ◆ Dodds Family Tree Nursery      515 W. Main St.      830-997-9571
- ◆ Woerner Feed & Garden Supply      305 S Lincoln St.      830-997-2246

T E X A S



Hill Country Chapter  
a 501(c)(3) corporation

We meet 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.

Join us at 6:30p.m. for a fun social half-hour.

Everyone is welcome.

### 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.

### *Board of Directors 2012*

- Priscilla Stanley - President
- Tom Hynes - Vice President
- Anne Cassidy - Secretary
- Floyd Trefny - Treasurer
- Steve Clyburn - Director of Advanced Training
- Daneshu Clarke - Director of Class Training
- Paula Smith - Director of Communications
- Eileen Gotke - Director of Membership
- Reidun Hilleman - Director of Volunteer Service Projects
- Sally Garrett - 2011 New Class Representative
- Phyllis Muska - Immediate Past President

LEARN MORE ON OUR WEBSITE!  
[TXMN.ORG/HILLCOUNTRY](http://TXMN.ORG/HILLCOUNTRY)

*Questions about our chapter?*

Email Eileen Gotke,  
director of membership  
[gotke@hctc.net](mailto:gotke@hctc.net)



**Texas Star**  
**Lindheimeria texana**

*The Texas Star* is a monthly publication of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program. News, stories, comments, and ideas are welcome. Please contact Kristie Denbow, [denbow@gvtc.com](mailto:denbow@gvtc.com).

Hill Country Chapter does not recommend or endorse items of interest published in *The Texas Star*. Items of interest are for information only. Opinions expressed are those of the authors.

