The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter

JANUARY MEETING ... KRONKOSKY RANCH DONATION TO TPWD

Bandera and Kendall Counties welcomed the addition of more than 3,700 acres of ecologically significant land to Texas state parks in 2011. The Albert and Bessie Mae Kronkosky Charitable Foundation donated this rich resource, which contains a stand of lost maples.

Rufus Stephens, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Wildlife Biologist, will describe the rare and endangered plant and animal communities on the site. He will also discuss how TPWD might steward the property and opportunities for volunteer service. Stephens was instrumental in documenting the ecologically important features of the property during the assessment and documentation process.

Join us Monday, January 23 at 7p.m. in the UGRA Lecture Hall. Arrive at 6:30 to enjoy our social half-hour.

Questions regarding the program may be directed to Tom Hynes, 830-990-5750.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ... Priscilla Stanley

I hope you enjoyed wonderful holidays with family, friends, and of course, nature. With support of our members and our 2012 board members, we are looking forward to another successful year in our chapter learning more about our Hill Country flora, fauna, and ecosystems, and especially their beneficial management to further enhance our volunteer activities.

I want to thank our 2011 board members for their great work, especially those who are staying on, since continuity really helps. These members include Phyllis Muska as Past President, Anne Cassidy as Secretary, Steve Clyburn as Director of Advanced Training, Reidun Hilleman as Director of Volunteer Service Projects, and Roy Walston, our advisor from Texas AgriLife Extension, Kerr County.

New to our 2012 board are: Tom Hynes as Vice President, Floyd Trefny as Treasurer, Eileen Gotke as Director of Membership, Daneshu Clarke as Director of New Class Training, Paula Smith as Director of Communications, Sally Garrett as New Class Representative, and our advisor, Michelle Haggerty from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Our board member names, areas of responsibility, and contact information are available for your convenience on our website, **txmn.org/hillcountry**, under the "Member Area" tab, "Board officers, directors and advisors". If you don't remember the Member Area password, please contact your mentor, another member, or me at **jpbstan@ktc.com**. If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns this year please contact either the appropriate board member or me.

Now that we have looked into the new year, I would like to look back a bit and thank the folks that contributed to our chapter's progress and vitality.

I want to thank our previous presidents (Sandy Pena, Jim Stanley, John Hueckesteadt, and Phyllis Muska), as well as our previous boards and their

Continued, page 2.

TEXAS Master Naturalist™ HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

"I don't know, I have never seen anything like this before."

Page 5.

American Peregrine Falcon
Falco peregrinus anatum
Kerr County

January 2012
Volume 10
No. 1

THIS MONTH WE HONOR

Milestones

1000 Hours - Gold
Cynthia Burgin

500 Hours - Brushed Silver
Jim Burgin
Lloyd Hemmert

250 Hours - Bronze
Peggy Robinson

2011 Re-Certification

Horned Lizard
Jim Gardner
Peggy Robinson
Charles Smith
Nina Wagner
Floyd Walling

First Year Certification

Dragonfly
Rebecca Flack
Kathleen Mundy
Tara Randle
Ernest Smith

President's message continued.

committees for their productive management of our chapter to get us where we are today. I think that our chapter is really making a difference for many organizations and individuals by having many of our 250 members productively volunteering on a wide variety of projects.

Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) seems like a special organization to me since our members share many common values based on our love of nature. Thus, we all tend to have many good friends here that we really enjoy working with on our various projects to make a difference in our communities.

I would like to celebrate a few of the many 2011 highlights in our chapter:

1. Our members continue to fulfill our TMN mission by doing valuable volunteering on a wide variety of approved volunteer service projects.

2. Thanks to Koy Coffer's encouragement and Sandy Leyendecker's cheerful support, most members report their hours monthly. This enables our state office to obtain grants to help fund our TMN state program. Grant funding is especially important in these times of decreased state funding. Our chapter tends to have more volunteer hours than expected for a chapter of our size.

3. Koy Coffer, Cathy Downs, and Gracie Waggener brought the L.A.N.D.S. (Learning Across New Dimensions in Science) program not only to our chapter, but to teachers across the state, as well as involving many of our members in sharing the wonders of nature with school children.

4. Lisa Williams and her New Class Training Committee worked many, many hours to provide their excellent training classes.

5. Stephanie Perry developed the Junior Naturalist program to introduce young children to the natural world. She is now working to enhance and share this program by seeing what other chapters are doing to teach young children. Our members assisted her in the classes at Riverside Nature Center, which the kids really enjoyed as they learned.

6. Our Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP), which began in 2005, has conducted 300 site visits on more than 25,000 acres. Many owners develop a new pride in their property once they know what is on their property and its benefits. Thus they often become more interested in managing their land sustainably.

7. TMN has a milestone award for 5,000 service hours. It is noteworthy that our chapter, drawn from an area with a population of only about 100,000, now has six of these awards. *Kip Kiphart, Tom Collins, Ron Hood, Angelo Falzarano, Jim Stanley, and Priscilla Stanley.*

8. We all know that Kristie Denbow produces a very interesting and professional chapter newsletter. This year she received the recognition she deserved when her newsletter took first place in the TMN statewide competition. Congratulations, Kristie!

I believe that each member contributes to our chapter's success by working together supporting each other and learning together so we can then share what we know with others in our communities as TMN volunteers. I want to thank each of you for all that you have done and I'm looking forward to working together toward another successful year.

ADVANCED TRAINING

AT 12-004 WILDLIFE TAX VALUATION WORKSHOP

Saturday, January 14, 9a-1p, Cibolo Nature Center (CNC)
Wildlife Tax Valuation Workshop (3-part series) This in depth seminar is especially for owners with more than 20 acres and emphasizes wildlife management strategies that improve native habitat and increase species diversity. Our presenters will help you gain land management knowledge, understand the history of this Texas law and fulfill requirements to qualify for a wildlife management tax valuation.
Registration required: http://secure.cibolo.org/civicrm/event/info?id=39&reset=1

AT 12-005 WILDLIFE TAX VALUATION WORKSHOP

Saturday, January 21, 9a-2:30p, CNC
Session 2: Management Practices & Habitat Assessment

AT 12-006 WILDLIFE TAX VALUATION WORKSHOP

Saturday, January 28, 9a-1p, CNC
Session 3: WTV History and Update on the Law, Application Procedures & Putting It All Together.

AT 12-008 VOLUNTEER TRAINING FOR BATS

Saturday, March 31
Volunteers interested in serving for any length of time are invited to attend training. The training session covers volunteer opportunities, operations, and an in-depth introduction to the bats of Texas. Incentives for volunteering include field trips to various bat sites in Texas and a cumulative award system based on hours worked.
Email Nyta Brown, nyta.brown@tpwd.state.tx.us to sign up for the volunteer training session. Volunteers are required to fill out an application, sign a volunteer work agreement, and pass a criminal background check. Space is limited and advance registration is required.

INVADERS OF TEXAS TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Invasive plants are destroying precious ecosystems throughout the world. You can help protect and restore our ecosystem from the impacts of invasive plants by joining the Hill Country Invaders in our documentation and eradication efforts.

On Saturday, February 25, the Balcones and Hill Country Satellites of the Texas Invaders Program, along with Cibolo Nature Center, are sponsoring an Invasive Plants Advanced Training opportunity. The training will be held from 8:30a.m. to 4:30p.m. at Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne. Training will include classroom instruction on identification of invasive plants and trees.

The field experience segment will include plant identification, reporting, and recording findings in the texasinvasives.org database. At the completion of the one-day session participants will be certified as Texas Invaders Citizen Scientists.

Fee of $20 covers class materials and lunch.

Advanced registration is required. To register, go to https://secure.cibolo.org/civicrm/event/register?id=58&reset=1. Contact Phyllis Muska at pmuska@windstream.net for additional information. Training approved for advanced training hours, AT 12-003.

The 2012 recertification award pin is the Mexican free-tailed bat.

Earning the 2012 pin certifies that a Master Naturalist volunteer has completed the annually required 40 hours of approved volunteer service and 8 hours of advanced training.

Recertification pin designs are retired at the end of each calendar year.

Report your volunteer and AT hours at the end of each month in 2012 to earn your Mexican free-tailed bat pin.

The 2012 pin artwork was drawn by Jan Redden of the Gideon Lincecum Chapter.

It's easy to report your hours. Fill in the Activity Report form, electronically sign and date it, and email to Database manager Sandy Leyendecker, **sandy325@windstream.net**.

Spread the Word

Texas State Parks need $4.6 million to help keep parks open.

Let your friends and family know how they can help.

We've set up a new page to help **Spread the Word**. You can forward a YouTube video appeal, add an "I Love Parks" Twibbon wrapper on your Facebook profile photo, get buttons or banners for websites or blogs, download posters, and find other ways to share the message about helping our state parks.

More than $335,000 in generous contributions has been received since we appealed for help less than a month ago. But we still have a long way to go.

Thank you for helping us spread the word. We can't do it without you.

Kerrville River Walk Trail Project

Volunteer Project KR-02-H

by Judy Ferguson and Susan Longacre

Undoubtedly, you have read about Kerrville's plans for a River Walk Trail. Riverside Nature Center (RNC) is the natural place to begin or end a walk or ride along that trail. Members of RNC's board of directors have been meeting with city representatives to ensure the best interests of RNC, and to help develop a scenic, educational stretch over to Louise Hays Park. The trail has been a long time coming, so it is especially exciting to be involved in the initial phase.

If you are interested in getting involved in the preparations for the trail, call Susan Longacre, 830-367-5197, for current and planned activities.

Examples of "before and after" plant restoration after trail work.

Although plant rescue won't begin until we know the actual path of the trail (possibly in February) we are beginning to harvest plants from RNC's gardens and potting them up in preparation for installation along the trail next fall. There will be several 'rescue days' planned in the coming months; if you are interested in joining these group activities, and getting credit for your time, let Susan know to put you on the email list.

As plans for the planting progress and we get down to needing particular plants, we will put out a 'call for plants' that might need 'thinning' from your gardens.

Helping Native Plants Through the Winter Drought

While we have had some helpful showers in the last few months, we are still continuing in a severe drought. Stream flows and lake levels are still at record lows as is soil moisture. A frequently asked question is,"What can we do to take care of our plants during the winter?" When I have asked experts about what they think long-term consequences of this drought are likely to be, the answer I usually get is, "I don't know, I have never seen anything like this before."

I think we are all trying to feel our way through this extreme situation as best we can. So I am going to offer suggestions as to what to do to take care of your native trees and perennials, but be aware these are just one man's ideas of how to cope with something he has never seen before.

First, if you have a blackjack or Spanish oak, or box elder or any other tree that either lost its leaves or the leaves turned brown earlier this year, I would not assume it is dead. I would wait until next spring after all other trees have leafed out before declaring it dead, because it might come back in the spring. One thing for sure, if you think it is probably dead and you cut it down, you will certainly be right. Even if the main trunk is dead, its roots might be alive to produce root sprouts in the spring.

Do you need to water trees in the winter? My concern is that the soil is so dry that roots might die if we don't get periodic rains of three-quarters of an inch or more, so to be safe I would water trees every three or four weeks, wet enough to be able to push a screwdriver into the soil about six inches. Obviously, deciduous trees do not use water for photosynthesis once the leaves are gone, but the roots and the cambium tissue need to stay moist. Even live oaks are not undergoing much activity in the cooler weather and shorter days, but they still need some moisture.

Blackjack oak *Quercus marilandica*

Spanish oak *Quercus texana*

One consequence of this drought is that there is a lot more bare ground in places than there usually is. Bare ground is subject to greater temperature swings than ground under vegetation, and bare ground subject to periodic showers tends to become clogged at the surface and thus less permeable, so less of the water it does receive soaks in. Mother Nature has a solution for that in the winter, it is called leaving dead leaves on the ground. A layer of dead leaves under trees not only insulates the ground but holds moisture and maintains the soil porosity, all of which is beneficial for trees, and as leaves decay nutrients contained in them are returned to the soil.

I know that people feel they need to rake leaves off lawns, and certainly large amounts of large leaves on a lawn can cause mold and other problems. Small leaves such as from cedar elms are not much of a problem, and larger leaves can be chopped up by running a lawn mower (set very high) over them. Leaving a small amount of cut up leaves on the lawn will recapture the nutrients in them.

Continued.

It is best to delay any pruning of shrubs or cutting back of perennials until late winter/early spring (late February) for two reasons. First, if some shrubs are pruned too soon and we have a warm spell, the plant may try to put up new shoots, which will probably be killed by a subsequent freeze and the plant will have wasted energy.

Second, unpruned shrubs may have seeds or berries that can be used by the birds. Leaving seed heads on flowers throughout the winter gives birds a chance to find the seeds when they really need them.

My philosophy of growing native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers is very simple. First, notice what Mother Nature does when we are not around, because all native plants evolved to live here and have survived thousands of years without us. Second, think about how we can best mimic the conditions these plants are used to growing in. And third, try to mimic Mother Nature.

Until next time…

Jim Stanley is a Texas Master Naturalist and author of the book "Hill Country Landowner's Guide".
He can be reached at **jstmn@ktc.com**. His columns can be read at **hillcountrynaturalist.org**.

Hill Country Nature

a photography exhibit by Tom Schall

Kerr Arts & Cultural Center
March 8 through April 1
Public reception + March 10 + 1-3p

Tom Schall

I was born in the anthracite coal region of northeastern Pennsylvania. My dad was an avid outdoorsman. Gratefully, he passed that love of nature to me. I received my first bird, butterfly, and tree field guides at age six. Much of my youth was spent on a farm, fully immersed in nature. Soon after graduation, I joined IBM as a mechanical engineer and spent thirty-four fairy-tale years in their employment. Since retirement in 1996 I have devoted my time to the enjoyment of nature by traveling the United States, six of the seven continents, and fifty-nine countries of the world… often in pursuit of birds, but, also the cultural beauty of these marvelous countries, as well.

In 2006 we bought a ranchette in Tierra Linda and joyfully call Kerrville and the Hill Country our home. As the photographic revolution progressed into digital image capture, my interest increased dramatically. It is a rare day that I do not take 100-plus images. I have chosen many of my favorites in the hope that you will enjoy them as well.

All proceeds from the sale of my photos will be donated to Riverside Nature Center.

Thank you for taking time to view and enjoy *"Hill Country Nature"*.

Reidun Hilleman, Tim Lewis, Stephen Bishop, and Paul Pedersen received awards at our November meeting.

from Paula Smith

How do *you* learn about Master Naturalist projects?

Another member shares the fun and excitement of a project? You over hear two members discussing their volunteer work while shopping at HEB? Or do you read about projects in the newsletter?

Sometimes project leaders are shy about letting the rest of us know how much fun they are having. If you are a project leader and can send descriptions, schedules, and BEST OF ALL photographs of your project, you might find some new volunteers. When you send the material to Kristie, don't forget the deadline for inclusion in the newsletter is the 8th of each month, and don't forget to tell us who is in your photos and what in the world they are doing.

Chapter members are welcome to attend Board of Directors meetings.

Board meetings are held in the Riverside Nature Center Science Lab at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesdays before monthly chapter meetings.

Check the online calendar for dates.

Support your board members as they guide and grow the chapter.

Advanced Training Suggestions needed for State and Regional Trainings

The state office is seeking suggestions for Advanced Training topics that would help members be more successful in Texas Master Naturalist volunteer service efforts.

Please send Advanced Training suggestions to Michelle Haggerty, **mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu** by March 1.

handheld apps for naturalists

iTrack Wildlife is the most comprehensive digital field guide to animal tracks ever made. This definitive guide is filled with hundreds of track, sign, and animal photos; precise track drawings; and detailed track descriptions for 65 mammal species.

Three years in the making, this app was created by Jonah Evans, Texas Parks and Wildlife Diversity Biologist, and a certified CyberTracker Track and Sign Evaluator.

Jonah is the son of Brent Evans and Carolyn Chipman Evans, founders of Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne.

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

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to contribute to our chapter's newsletter.

We have a great newsletter because we have great members who contribute each month.

We are interested in what you are doing.

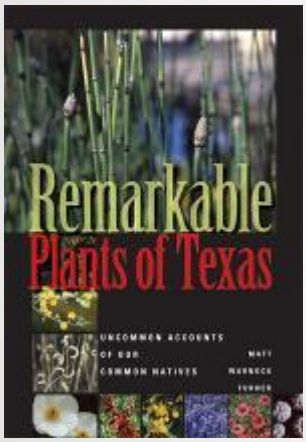
- Tell us about your experiences in nature.
- Send a terrific photo.
- Review a good book or new gear or gadget.
- Report on your projects.

You can help inform, educate, and amuse your fellow chapter members.

Email your contributions to Kristie at denbow@gvtc.com

Nature of Reading

BOOKS FOR NATURALISTS



Remarkable Plants of Texas
Matt Warnock Turner
2009

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

Newsletter Notes

- Deadline for newsletter submissions is the 8th of each month, excluding December. Please email articles, news, information, and photos to denbow@gvtc.com.
- The publication schedule does not allow mention of all AT and volunteer opportunities. Watch your email for announcements and check the calendar and project lists on the chapter's website, txmn.org/hillcountry.
- Current and past issues (back to 2003) of *The Texas Star* are available on our website.
- Our newsletter is not published in December.

from Jim Stanley

2011 LMAP Summary

We had 30 total requests this year, down from around 50 for each of the past three years… clearly the drought had a lot to do with less requests.

Of the 30, five were handled by phone - the only interest being saving trees from the drought. Two were mainly Firewise requests, although we did talk land management as well.

A considerably higher percentage came from Gillespie County this year, probably largely via John Huecksteadt, Fredericksburg NPSOT, and Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center.

We have a larger than usual number of people promising to call for a visit in spring… I guess hope springs eternal.

The 30 requests totaled 3,379 acres, six were on 100 acres or more.

The table shows our cumulative totals for the program. Whenever I mention these numbers to people they seem really impressed. I hope all of you are also.

I want to thank the LMAP volunteers very much for continuing to work on this program. I still believe it is one of the most important things we do, and something that sets our chapter apart from others.

Year	Number of visits	Cumulative number of visits	Number of acres	Cumulative number of acres	Acres/visit
2005-2007*	114	114	9362	9362	82
2008	46	160	1638	11000	36
2009	53	213	6424	17424	121
2010	49	262	4188	21612	85
	30	292	3379	24991	113

Feeling down?

Feeling angry?

Go outside, and head for the most wooded location you can easily reach.

Why?
A 2009 Japanese study found that people who spend time in forested areas experience significant reductions in feelings of hostility and depression.
Whole Living Daily 12/19/2011

State Office Acquires New Staff

Please help Michelle Haggerty welcome Mark Klym, Marsha May, and Lee Ann Linam to our TMN family.

Mark is the Hummingbird Round Up and Wildscapes Program Coordinator. Marsha and Lee Ann coordinate the Texas Nature Trackers programs.

In addition to their existing duties, half of their time will now be dedicated to the TMN program.

Fallen bigtooth maple leaves in a creek on the new TPWD property in Bandera and Kendall Counties.

Return of the buzzing dead

A mysterious phenomenon that has decimated honey bee populations could be linked to a "zombifying" parasitic fly, scientists believe.

Colony collapse disorder (CCD) is marked by the sudden disappearance of worker bees from a colony. It was first recognized as a serious problem by US beekeepers in 2006, but has also affected bee colonies across western Europe. In some of the recorded cases, bee losses have reached levels of up to 90%. Viral and fungal infections and toxic chemicals in pesticides have all been suggested as possible explanations for CCD.

The new theory involves the parasitic fly *Apocephalus borealis* which is already known to attack bumble bees. Evidence has now emerged of the fly targeting honey bees. The insect lays its eggs in the abdomens of bees, which start displaying "zombie" behavior, abandoning their hives en masse to congregate near lights. Finally they die, and the fly larvae emerge from their bodies.

Scientists noted that hive abandonment is a primary feature of CCD. Genetic tests also showed that both bees and flies were often infected with deformed wing virus and the *fungus Nosema ceranae*. Both infections have previously been cited as possible causes of CCD, suggesting a link.

Professor John Hafernik, from San Francisco State University, said: "We don't know the best way to stop parasitization because one of the big things we're missing is where the flies are parasitizing the bees. We assume it's while the bees are out foraging because we don't see the flies hanging around the bee hives. But it's still a bit of a black hole in terms of where it's actually happening." Resource Daily, Wednesday, January 4, 2012

Riverside Nature Center Weekly Fauna Census 12/30/2011

One of my better census days in a long time - 32 species.

I added two new species – Ring-necked duck and Gadwall.

It was also a great day for the Picidae and Emberizine family of birds. The two *Zonotrichia albicollis* and *Passrelella iliaca* (race Taiga) were a treat. Pictures of both Picoides - pubescens and scalaris.

A real butterfly was present – common/white checkered-skipper.

Tom Collins

Passrelella iliaca (race Taiga) Fox Sparrow. Taken about 50 feet above my head – unusual spot for a the ground dwelling fox sparrow, but my screech owl recording drove him and another fox sparrow out at the same time to see where the owl was.

Gadwall taken from over 120 feet away in low light -lucky to even get this shot.

Picoides scalaris - Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Picoides pubescens - Downy Woodpecker

T E X A S

Master Naturalist ™

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

Questions about our chapter?

Contact Eileen Gotke

Director of Membership

gotke@hctc.net

Texas Star
Lindheimera 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.

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.

T E X A S Master Naturalist ™

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

AgriLIFE EXTENSION Texas A&M System