

The Texas Star



Newsletter of the Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter



MAY MEETING ... DRAGONFLIES: 300 MILLION YEARS OF PREDATION



Bill Lindemann will cover physiology, behavior, and life history of a natural design that has survived for 300 million years. Dragonflies are one of nature's most voracious predators. Throughout their larval and adult stages, they use their swimming



and flying skills to quell their insatiable appetites. Bill will also showcase the beautiful colors and designs of South Texas' common dragonflies and close relatives, damselflies.

Join us Monday, May 21 at 7p.m. in the UGRA Lecture Hall. We gather at 6:30 to chat with members and guests.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ... Priscilla Stanley



Thanks and How to Help Save Your Trees During Drought

I want to thank the more than forty Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalist volunteers who made a huge contribution to the success of the recent Earth Day Native Plant Sale and Nature Festival at Riverside Nature Center. Many of you worked multiple shifts on several days, including the native plant buying and setup, as well as during the event. Every plant docent working during this two-day event was a chapter member! I know that our volunteers have done so much already, but I am asking you to do one more thing. **Please report your hours under KR-02-A for Youth/Adult Education at Riverside Nature Center.** If you did not report these hours in April, you can report them in May.

Since funding for most state agencies, including our TMN program sponsors, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas AgriLife Extension, was substantially reduced last year, it is more important than ever for each of us to report hours so our TMN program office can continue its current level of support for our statewide program. TMN's do so much good helping folks appreciate their natural resources and introducing children to Mother Nature's many wild wonders. Our volunteer hours count as matching funds to obtain grants to help fund our TMN office.

I was pleased to see some of our members attending the Hill Country Land-Use Expo in Kerrville on May 5. All eight presentations were excellent. A presentation of interest to everyone was given by Dr. David Appel of Texas AgriLife Extension. Dr. Appel is the leading researcher at Texas A&M University on oak wilt and other diseases that impact our trees.

continued.

T E X A S



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

...oh, did I mention, a lot of time was spent working with rocks? page 6.

Kerr County



Spot-tailed earless lizard

May 2012

Volume 10
No. 5



One of his most important messages was that it is prudent to give ailing trees, and even completely defoliated trees, time to sort themselves out before you cut them down, especially after last year's record drought, or any bad drought. He showed a slide of a large live oak without any leaves, and then that same tree one year later with a full canopy of leaves, because someone had the patience and faith in the tree not to cut it down prematurely. He did note that some of the interior branches had died, however the photo showed a live oak that anyone would be proud to have in their yard, especially since they couldn't begin to grow another live oak as impressive-looking in their lifetime.

Dr. Appel also detailed the impact of drought on large trees and how you can mitigate some of these adverse effects. Even a **mild drought**, which occurs each summer in Texas, stresses your trees. The trees respond by converting some of their stored carbohydrates in the roots to sugar and growing normally, but with depleted reserves. In **moderate drought**, your trees use more of their stored carbohydrate reserve. More significantly, their photosynthesis process is shutting down. Your trees might compensate by growing smaller leaves or having shorter internodal distances (less branch growth). Your trees might even show no external evidence of stress, but will suffer detrimental effects for the next few years. Moderate droughts cause "predisposing stress" in your trees that can allow pests and diseases, such as hypoxylon, that would normally do no harm, to damage your trees. In **severe droughts**, as in 2011, your trees will use their stored carbohydrates, but might still show wilting, scorching, premature defoliation, twig and branch dieback and death. Severe drought weakens your trees. In their starch-depleted condition, trees are unable to respond to pests and pathogens that normally do no harm. Even secondary weak pathogens such as cankers, root rots, wood borers and insects can kill your weakened trees.

Tree diseases are expected to increase in Texas as a result of drought. These include hypoxylon canker on oaks, "native elm wilt" on cedar elms, root rots and bacterial leaf scorch (which can look like oak wilt in Red Oaks). For trees near your home, you can give your trees some help in avoiding many of these problems by watering them when the soil is so dry that you cannot insert a six-inch screwdriver blade into the soil under your tree's dripline (the outer edge of the leaf canopy). Your trees are sufficiently watered when you can insert the screwdriver blade fully into the soil easily. Over-watering is detrimental to your trees and will waste water as well. **Never fertilize stressed trees, or trees suffering from drought.**

Any tree species can be damaged by drought, but some species, such as our Hill Country natives, tend to be more drought tolerant than many exotics or native trees from east of here. In 2011 on the Leakey hillsides, cedars died because they couldn't get enough water, since they continued losing some water through their evergreen needles. On those same hillsides, live oaks, and even some Spanish oaks, survived because they could lose their deciduous leaves to minimize their water loss.

We are so fortunate to have both state and federal agencies in the Hill Country that work together to bring high-quality natural resource presentations on topics such as this that can really help us do better in managing our trees and our land. As Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalists we can also share this information with others in our communities.



THIS MONTH WE HONOR



<u>Milestones</u>	<u>2012 Recertification</u>	<u>Special Recertification</u>	<u>First Year Certification</u>
<i>1000 Hours - Gold</i>	<i>Mexican free-tailed bat</i>	<i>Mexican free-tailed bat</i>	<i>Dragonfly</i>
Stephanie Perry	Richard Adams	Sally Garrett	Dan Carabin
<i>500 Hours - Brushed Silver</i>	Anne Cassidy	Kathleen Mundy	Louis Giusti
Eileen Gotke	Julie Clay		Anne Graves
<i>250 Hours - Bronze</i>	Stephen Clyburn		Jan Grimes
Stephen Bishop	Gloria Costello		Merrily Labarthe
Debra Bond	Sharon Hixson		Ken Weber
Daneshu Clarke	Thomas Hynes		
Timothy Lewis	Cynthia Johnson		
	Myrna Langford		
	Susan Longacre		
	Martha Miesch		
	Jack Millikan		
	Karen Millikan		
	Stephanie Perry		
	John Sloan		



The Hill Country Chapter celebrates ten years of education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within Bandera, Gillespie, Kendall, and Kerr Counties.

The Class of 2002 included thirty adventure-seeking future Texas Master Naturalists

Alice Bulechek	Sandy Peña
Phil Byers	Edna Platte
Julia Campbell	Barbara Quinby
Ann Creel	John Quinby
Jane Crone	John Rogers
Dusty Gilliam	Jim Stanley
Kathryn Harris	Priscilla Stanley
Holly Houston	Maggie Tatum
Gwynn Jackson	Wilma Teague
Jack Jackson	Betty Thomas
Karen Johnson	George Tinsley
Michael John Son	Tami Weaver
Patrick Klein	Kim Whitaker
Myrna Langford	Kay White
Barbara Lowenthal	Betty Winningham

Look for photos, facts, and stories as we celebrate our 10th Anniversary as Texas Master Naturalists!

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

Wednesday, May 16, June 6, June 20, July 4, July 18, August 1, August 15; 9a-10a; [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 or Julie Clay, jbrazaitis@aol.com.

AT 12-051 MEUSEBACH LECTURE SERIES

Friday, May 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.

AT 12-070 TWA L.A.N.D.S. TRAINING

Saturday-Sunday, May 19-20, HEB Camp, Leakey, \$35 per person includes: lodging, meals, materials
 L.A.N.D.S. Teacher / Volunteer Workshop
 Email Koy Coffey, KCoffey@texas-wildlife.org.

AT 12-071 RAINWATER MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Saturday, May 19, 10a-4p, Quiet Valley Ranch, Kerrville
 Adams Kirkpatrick (www.sunflowerdesign.net) will discuss why berms and swales are important to stormwater management. Participants will create them using simple tools and locally available materials.
 Registration required. Call 830-257-3600.

AT 12-057 INVASIVE PLANT AND PEST WORKSHOP

Saturday, June 9, 9a-4p, Texas Tech University Llano River Field Station, Junction, FREE
 Calling All Pest Detectives. The Invaders of Texas program is conducting a workshop to train citizen scientists to identify and report invasive pests of regulatory concern.
 Contact Dr. Tom Arsuffi for more information and registration. Call 325-446-4011 or email tom.arsuffi@ttu.edu.

AT 12-068A-E CANYON GORGE DOCENT TRAINING CLASS

Friday, August 31, September 7, September 14, September 21, September 28; 11a -5p; Community Resource & Recreation Center; Sattler
 Gorge Volunteers Needed! An intense training that includes half day in the gorge. All five classes must be completed to qualify as a docent.
 Registration required. Contact Jaynellen Ladd, 830-964-5424 or tours@canyongorge.org.



The Hill Country Chapter is now on Facebook!

facebook.com/TMNHillCountryChapter

Please LIKE us!

Visit our Facebook page and click



Mark your calendar!

Chapter Picnic
 June 23

Muleshoe Farm and Ranch Trust
 Comfort



Chapter Slogan/Tagline Contest!

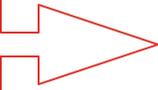
The chapter needs all 'wordsmiths' and other creative folks to come up with taglines or slogans that describe the chapter and what we do. We need to brand the chapter with something short and sweet.

You've probably heard these famous lines:
"Got Milk?", "Reach out and touch someone",
"Things go better with Coke", "Have it your way",
"Where's the beef", and "Think different".

Now, we need a famous line and it's up to you!

A special grand prize that any Master Naturalist would covet will be awarded!

Submit your ideas and suggestions!



The board will vote on submissions.

Winners will be announced at our picnic on June 23.

We will use our new slogans in our publications and on our merchandise.

Sally Garrett and Merrily Labarthe are coordinating the contest, and Kristie Denbow had the idea. Please send your thoughts to Sally at sally@earthlightenergies.com or Merrily at merr@mindspring.com. Deadline is June 19. **Have fun!**

Storm and *Wildfire* seasons are upon us. If you must evacuate your home please remember the 5 Ps.



5Ps BEFORE YOU LEAVE

1. People and Pets – and other livestock, too.
2. Papers – important documents.
3. Prescriptions – medications, eyeglasses, hearing aids.
4. Pictures – irreplaceable memories.
5. Personal Computer – information on hard drives, sticks, and disks.

Master Naturalist Items Make Great Gifts

Looking for something special for Mother's Day or a Master Naturalist friend? The AgriLife Bookstore is here to help with our Master Naturalist merchandise.

Check out our products and order on-line today at agrilifebookstore.org.

Click "Browse the Shelves" then click "Master Naturalist"





WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?

by Rebecca Flack and Karla Trefny

AS spring came to the Hill Country, Love Creek Nature Conservancy welcomed its usual roster of migratory visitors. This year there was a new and exotic species that appeared on site. These creatures came with tents, picks, shovels, and a fierce desire to transform a raw hillside into a well-constructed hiking trail. They are known as the Central Texas Trail Tamers, and they mean business!

The Trail Tamers are an informal, non-profit, not-political group who takes leave from their everyday lives and donates their time in parks and wilderness areas. Their impressive project resume includes Rocky Mountain, Guadalupe Mountains, and Big Bend National Parks, Gila Wilderness, Indian Creek Conservancy, Bamberger Ranch Preserve, the Continental Divide Trail, and The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains and Love Creek Preserves - just to name a few. The group's mission is "to relieve some of the burdens faced by government agencies who oversee our public parks, preserves, and forests by working on approved trail construction and maintenance projects that enhance public access to and enjoyment of these special places."

This "rock and roll" dance went on for a week, rain or shine!

The Tamers, using experience and GPS for the design layout, routed a scenic trail that links the two separate sections of the Love Creek Preserve. The trail begins on the Elam Creek side (where the "loop road" makes its turn) and zigzags for half a mile descending 300 feet.

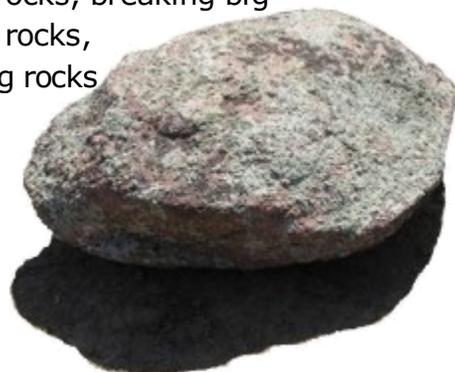


Bob McKinley, J.D. Clarke, and Glenn Randow

Rebecca Flack, chapter member and Southern Hill Country Project Director for The Nature Conservancy, Texas Field Office, describes a typical workday,

"This was incredibly tough terrain to work in, and much time was spent marching up and down the hills with heavy tools and supplies, raking and digging out new sections of the trail, trimming and cutting branches and trees, all the while, looking at rocks, shopping for rocks, moving rocks, picking up rocks, tripping over rocks, throwing rocks, contemplating rocks, digging out rocks, cursing rocks, stacking rocks, raking rocks, kicking rocks, breaking big rocks into smaller rocks, flipping over rocks, staring at rocks, rotating rocks, rotating rocks back to their original alignment with

encouraging remarks such as, "ok, one last time" offered up from those nearby, silently judging rocks, and, oh, did I mention, a lot of time was spent working with rocks? In spite of everything, everyone was extremely positive and we got a tremendous amount of work done!"



This "rock and roll" dance went on for a week, rain or shine!

continued

REbecca also thanks, "all of the Trail Tamers who openly shared their trail building expertise with us and taught some of us newbies a few trail building tricks which we will use as we progress on this project."



Building the retaining wall. Warning! Rocks in photos are heavier than they appear!

Jeff Stephens, and Dustin and Rebecca Hindman. Thelma Montoya brought her nephew, a San Antonio boy scout. Also representing TNC were Aaron Tjemeland, Kirk Fuerbacher, Ray Guse, and John DeLeon. Stephan Kieval, a recent graduate of Texas A&M University who interned with TNC last summer, participated and brought his girlfriend, Lynette Ramos, to join in the fun. The REATA Real Estate Service, L.P. group consisted of Whit Jordan, Charlie Aycock, Will Fawcett, and Colby.

What a time we had!



Mitch, Karla and Mae - admiring their trail building handiwork.

The Central Texas Trail Tamers (CTTT) who participated on this project were George Madding, Martha Davies, Charlie Grant, Vick Hines, Mitch and Mae Lopez, and Andy. Find out more about CTTT by browsing their web site at trailtamers.org

Many other individuals and groups volunteered their time and muscles at the Preserve during this workweek. They included chapter members: Rebecca Flack, Ken Webber, Glenn Randow, Bob McKinley, Tom Collins, Tara Randle, and Karla Trefny, plus J. D. Clarke (Daneshu Clarke's son) and his friend, Annie Pena. From the Texas chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) came Margaret Leak with husband, Carey King, and friends,



Now what? Ken, Glenn, George, and J.D.



J.D. Clarke and Annie Pena.



Monday crew. Back row: J.D., Annie, Martha, Bob, Ken, Charlie, and Glenn. Kneeling: Mitch, Tara, Mae, and George.



Mae, Mitch, and J.D. Clarke on an easy stretch.



Friday crew. J.D., Glenn, Annie, Aaron, George, Andy, Stephan, Charlie, and Lynette.



Sunday crew . George, Vick, Aaron, Dustin, Rebecca, Jeff, Margaret and Carey.



"If we break off that little piece, it should fit perfectly after we rotate it!"



Congratulations! Members present at our April meeting to receive awards and milestones were: Floyd Trefny (1,000 hours), Eileen Gotke, Sandy Leyendecker, Gracie Waggener (2,500 hours), Jim Burgin, Cynthia Burgin, Tara Randle, Sharron Jay, Glenn Randow (500 hours), Norma Bruns, Lars Nielsen, Joan Broussard, and Ann Carabin.

PERRY AND KIPHART RECEIVE CNC AWARD



Cibolo Nature Center celebrated Earth Day this year with its Second Annual Stewardship Awards Reception. Honorees are recognized for their contribution to stewardship of the community's natural resources. Each of the award recipients has excelled in their commitment to preserving and protecting the natural heritage of the Hill Country.

Stephanie Perry is a "homeschool mom and volunteer", who developed a Junior Naturalist Program at Kerrville's Riverside Nature Center. With a Child Development Associates Credential she has coordinated with the Texas Master Naturalist state office to lead a group called the Texas Junior Naturalist Task Force, that is working toward creating a reproducible model for Texas Junior Naturalist/Junior Master Naturalist programs to be used state-wide.

Stephanie is a Texas Master Naturalist, and has worked on Girl Scouts badge programs, staffing education programs, wildlife census, Town Creek Restoration project, planting, Earth Day Celebrations and Cibolo's Wildlife Field Research.

Dr. "Kip" Kiphart is a retired thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon. Kip's photography has graced the Cibolo Nature Center calendar for many years. He is a Texas Master Naturalist, receiving the President's Volunteer Service Award from the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation for volunteering more than 10,000 hours.

Kip is also active with the Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Texas Parks and Wildlife, North American Butterfly Association, Monarch Larval Monitoring Project, Monarch Watch, Journey North and other environmental organizations.

He is a CNC trail guide, NPSOT member, and participated in surveys for prairie vegetation, butterflies, Monarch larvae, and native milkweed.

Jim Stanley's
Hill Country Naturalist



Bugs: We Couldn't Live Without Them

I know, folks might be saying to themselves right now, "Well, I could certainly live without them." It is interesting how much animosity we have toward some of the smallest critters in our world. It has even crept into our language. When something bothers us or gives us some concern, we don't say that it "birds us" or "fishes us", or "mammals us", we say that it "bugs us".

So, let me try to set the record straight about bugs, or more properly, insects. There are an estimated

30,000 species of insects in Texas. With so many species, only a professional entomologist would be able to identify many insects down to the species level, and in fact most people are happy if they can identify the order of the insect, or possibly the family, and they don't worry so much about the genus or the species. Depending on the book and when it was written, there are over 30 orders of insects and similar invertebrates.

In spite of how some people think about them, insects perform exceedingly important services for mankind. The most obvious is pollination.

While some plants, including many trees, are fertilized by wind-borne pollen, the majority of blooming plants require pollen to be spread by an animal, and most of this is done by insects. And a very wide variety of insects indeed, including not only the bees, but many wasps, flies, beetles, moths, butterflies, and ants can transfer pollen from one flower to another. Without pollination, most of our fruits and vegetables could not be produced, as well as most wildflowers and flowering shrubs. Adequate pollination is so important to agriculture that a whole industry has developed to bring bee hives to farmers' fields at considerable costs.



Jim Stanley
 Eastern swallowtail
 on mountain laurel.

Perhaps a less obvious benefit to having insects is that they provide food for so many other animals. Frogs, toads, lizards, snakes, fish, armadillos, skunks, and most other small mammals including foxes and coyotes eat insects for at least part of their diet. With few exceptions, all birds, except raptors, need insects as at least part of their diet. All songbirds including hummingbirds and seed eaters, need insects to feed their young. Without insects, many species of higher animals would not exist, and all of these animals are in fact food sources for other predators. So for a large part of the animal world, insects represent the initial harvesters of photosynthesized food sources and are the base of the food chain.



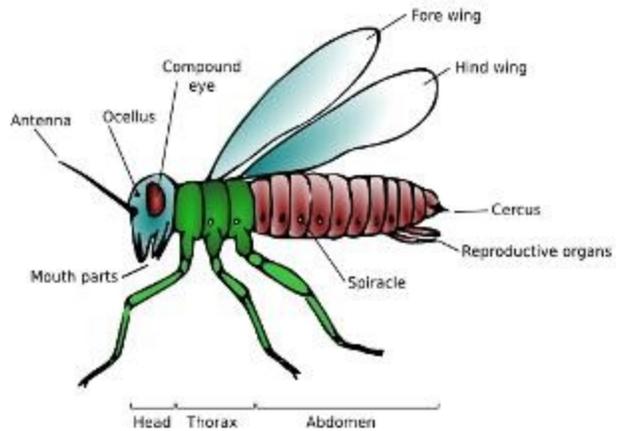
Purple martin catching a dragonfly lunch.

Finally, it is also true that many insects feed on other insects, and therefore help to control the numbers of the prey species. This is especially beneficial to humans when the prey species is a pest that damages our crops and garden plants.

continued.

Soil-living insects help to contribute to the fertility and porosity of the soil.

Some of the more common orders of insects include: dragonflies and damselflies, mantids and walkingsticks, grasshoppers and crickets, cicadas and aphids, true bugs (Yes, there is an order called true bugs), beetles, butterflies and moths, true flies, and wasps, bees and ants. The definition of an insect is that they have three distinct body parts (head, thorax, abdomen) and six legs. There are a number of insect-like invertebrates that are not true insects, and these include spiders, ticks, chiggers, scorpions, centipedes, millipedes, and pill bugs. They all have eight or more legs.



For such small critters, insects can have very complicated life cycles. Many insects such as butterflies have a larval stage that looks totally different from the adult, then a pupal stage where a complete metamorphosis takes place before emerging as an adult. Other insects skip the pupal stage, and still other species hatch from an egg looking like a small adult.



Given the importance of insects to our world as we know it, I would suggest we all try to limit the use of insecticides as much as possible, at least outside of our homes. We can keep insects out of our homes without killing every one on the lot, and the flowers and the birds and the lizards and the frogs and the toads will thank you very much.

There are two field guides to insects I would recommend: "A Field Guide to Common Texas Insects", by Drees and Jackman, and "Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America", by Eaton and Kaufman.

Until next time...

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



WORTH *Reading*



from Kip Kiphart

World's Longest Dragonfly Migration

sundaytimes.lk/111106/News/nws_09.html

from Paula Smith

Springs of Texas - Spring Owner's Guide

texaswatermatters.org/pdfs/spring_owners_guide_2007.pdf

So Much Life on a Little Patch of Earth

...Yet out of that window - actually on the window - I saw a creature that I would later learn had never before been seen alive anywhere in North America...

nytimes.com/2012/04/24/science/counting-species-on-a-little-patch-of-earth.html?_

* If you enjoy the article, you may want to read, *Life On A Little Known Planet* by Howard Ensign Evans.

- Kip Kiphart

THE CHAPTER IS PLEASED TO WELCOME TWO NEW MEMBERS.

Anne Dietert of Kendall County transferred from the Alamo Area Chapter and Randy Ersch of Gillespie County transferred from the Tierra Grande Chapter.

Randy Ersch was raised in San Antonio and attended twelve years of school by the River Walk (before it was cool).

In his teens, Randy taught canoeing, swimming, and pioneering at the now closed Indian Creek Boy Scout Camp in Ingram.

He graduated from Texas A&M University in 1979 and worked at Big Thicket National Preserve as a summer seasonal, then joined Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at Mustang Island State Park. Randy spent eight years in the 1980s as operations manager of Aquarena Springs in San Marcos, when it was still the #3 tourist attraction in Texas. Later he became a contract road warrior for the Texas Department of Transportation Tourism Department traveling the country talking people into visiting Texas.

Randy moved to Fredericksburg, and says,

"Both parents were born there, so I am related to most of the county."



President Priscilla Stanley welcomes new member Randy Ersch.

He picked up his tool pouch from his high school and college days and started building things. His last two "really fun projects" were the South Plaza and the butterfly/chrysalis habitat at Wildseed Farms in Stonewall.

Randy had a chance to help manage a historical resort ranch in West Texas... "couldn't pass that up." He spent a year and a half at Cibolo Creek Ranch in Shafter. He kept 200-year-old

adobe forts from melting, and lead guests on ranch, mountain, and wildlife tours. He loved West Texas, staying in Alpine for five years, and becoming a Tierra Grande Chapter member in 2007.

Randy's limestone Hill Country roots drew him home, so "here I am."

We'll meet Anne Dietert next month...

PUBLISHED

Merrily Labarthe has been published! She and a co-worker submitted a manuscript to Native Plant Journal. The manuscript detailed their work in the tissue culture lab at the Atlanta Botanical Garden.

Read the abstract.

npj.uwpress.org/content/13/1/56.short



KERRVILLE CHAPTER
OF THE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS
June Meeting

Texas Tough: How to Maintain Turf and Ground Covers through Drought, Freezes, and Humans

Tuesday, June 12, 2012
Social at 4:30p Meeting at 5p
Riverside Nature Center



INSECT OF THE MONTH

by
**PRISCILLA
STANLEY**

Can You Help Save Our Red Harvester Ants?

The Red Harvester Ant *Pogonomyrmex baratus* is found in the Hill Country in open areas, and even on the hillside above the river at Riverside Nature Center. Harvester ants do not invade homes or structures and are reluctant to sting. Folks who are unfamiliar with this relatively large ant (0.25" – 0.5") tend to be afraid of it and want to kill all of the ants in any nest they find. When we first moved here these ants attracted my attention since we had three nests near our home. Fortunately Jim had grown up with red harvester ants in West Texas and knew that they are docile unless you try to harm them. That seemed like reasonable behavior, so we and the harvester ants have lived peaceably in close proximity for twelve years now. These ants are the principal food of the threatened Texas horned lizard (aka the beloved horny toad) and I continue to hope to attract one.

Even though I work in our yard for hours on most days, digging here and there, tromping through tall grass etc., I have never been stung by a harvester ant, even though I have had one occasionally crawl on me. I can't say the same about fire ants.

Harvester ants are truly remarkable social creatures. We seem to have improved their habitat choices when we built four large raised beds for perennials and two large raised beds for cacti and succulents on what had been open pasture land. They now prefer nesting in these beds among the very large rocks that



A lone female red harvester ant drags a grasshopper back to the nest.

edge the beds. They continuously patrol on and between the plants looking for insects or seeds to harvest. They are also fond of the sugar solution dripping from the hummingbird feeders onto the concrete porch as the day warms. They make a perfect circle around a sugar-solution puddle, ant touching ant, as they suck up the sugar solution either as a meal or to take to their nest to share.

Before we arrived they had to carry the insects and seeds that they harvested through grass and forbs. Now they have some routes back to their nests using our gravel paths and even our breezeway sidewalk (an I-10 for harvester ants). Thus I often see them working cooperatively with six ants carrying a caterpillar or some other insect many times their size back to their nest and down into its subterranean rooms.

Harvester ants are not as common as they once were for various reasons, including habitat loss from land development and from being poisoned by folks who don't understand how mellow and interesting they are.

Also even well-meaning folks might not realize that most pesticides are not selective. If it kills fire ants, it will kill harvester ants as well. This applies for all the insecticides registered to kill ants, including baits, powders, liquids and sprays. We have found that we do not need any pesticides in our gardens or yard. Left to her own devices, Mother Nature does a good job of keeping



Red harvester nest, note trails.

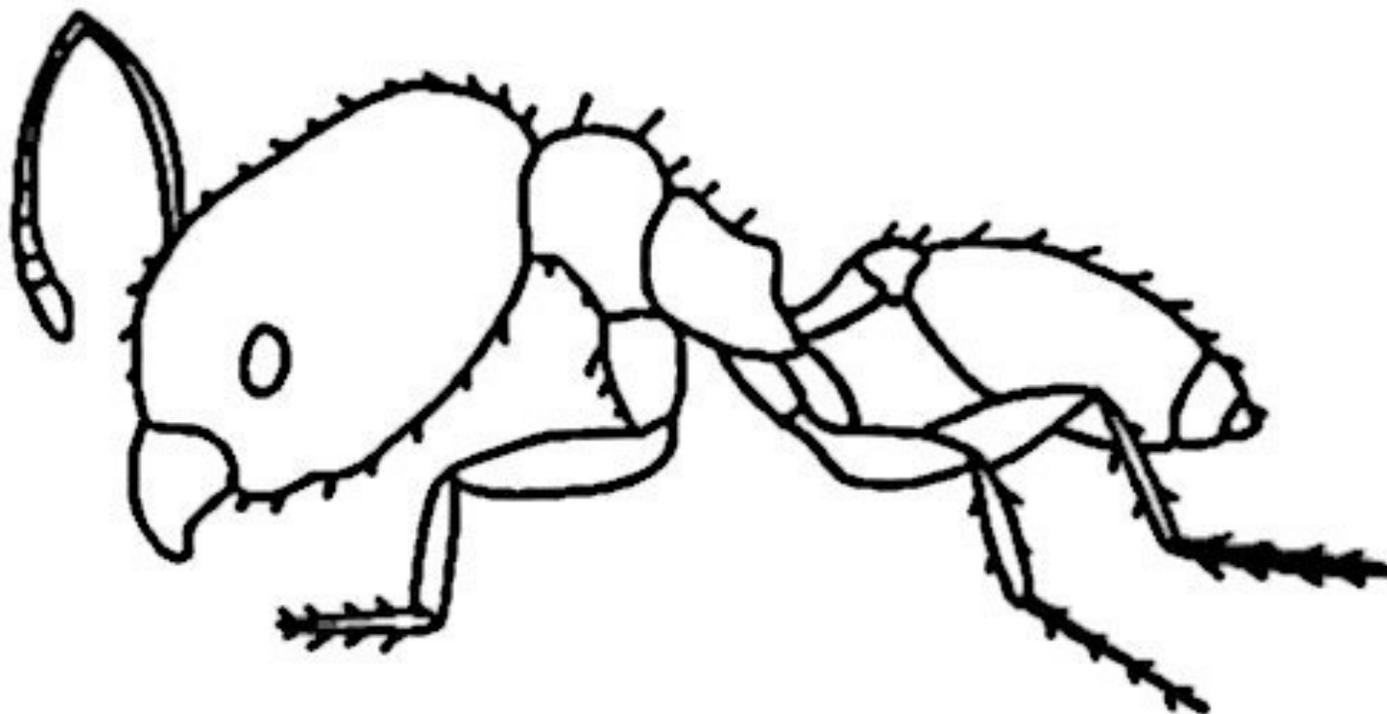
things in balance. Yes, some species like genista caterpillars occasionally take more than their share, but Mother Nature, the insects and our native plants have co-existed successfully for eons before we came here to help her. If you have the

opportunity, you might share information with others about the peaceful nature and interesting behavior of red harvester ants, and how easy it is to unintentionally do them in with pesticides for ants and other insects.

For more information go to insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide/cimg361.html and urbanentomology.tamu.edu/ants/red_harvester.html.

A harvester ant for the kiddoes to color. Just print this page.

Harvester Ant



**Drawing by Mary Cordell
Indiana State Parks & Reservoirs**

Spring, in all its beauty, brings a special treat for nature photographers... birds! The mystery and mystic of spring migration is here, bringing us feathered friends we have not seen in awhile. They return in their finest plumage to attract mates and continue their legacy. In haste to find the perfect mate and the perfect northern breeding ground, they often return in large and somewhat predictable numbers. Migrating birds have traveled distances almost unimaginable, and they are always hungry. These factors tip the scales in favor of the photographer permitting excellent opportunities to record the birds' beauty.

We have an excellent location to view and photograph our spring visitors in nearby Junction. South Llano River State Park is one of my favorites, and I highly recommend it. The benefit of this park is four bird blinds. These blinds provide outstanding opportunities for close views of birds. And, they are constructed with photographers in mind. The 'hides' provide seating and good viewing areas. The nearby feeding and watering stations are very natural-looking and provide very natural-looking photo backgrounds. Some of my best bird photos have been taken at South Llano.

South Llano is a fee area. Entrance is modestly priced and discounted for seniors. An annual pass for all Texas State Parks is available and provides entrance by the car-full. The visitor center is staffed by extremely knowledgeable rangers who gladly provide maps and directions to the blinds.

Review the park at tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/south_llano_river/.



Yellow-breasted Chat

©Tom schall

HOW TO TAKE BETTER THAN AVERAGE NATURE PHOTOS

by Tom Schall

I suggest bringing several types of camera tripods/rests. These will increase the quality of your photos. Each hide area is different and may require a different tripod/rest set-up. A full size tripod can be a bit bulky. A table top or 'Gorilla' grip may serve best. Bean bags are a huge help. The best source for 'bean' bags is HEB's dried food section. I am a bit partial to lentils. You will amuse many shoppers as you check each type of bean by depressing the bag with your hand held vertically to form a 'pocket' in which to cradle your camera. Reinforce the plastic bags with bags of a thicker material or make cloth bags. If you make cloth bags, keep the beans in the original plastic bags. As the beans wear they give off dust - not good around optical devices.

Make plans to arrive at the park as early as reasonable. Birds like to feed soon after sunrise. Also, bring along a large portion of patience. There is usually enough bird activity to keep you amused while waiting for that one special shot!

Good luck and drop me a line with your experiences or questions at tschall@ktc.com.

** In my original article on nature photography I neglected to tell you to make sure to set the 'white balance' of your camera. This is simply a basic setting that makes your camera coincide with the type of light; sunny, cloudy, shady, etc. Do this at every shoot and make changes as the weather may change during the day.



Blue Grosbeak

Three super observation blinds can be found at [Kreutzberg Canyon Natural Area](#) in Kendall County. Kendall County Partnership for Parks (KCPP) designed the blinds and habitat yards to be the best possible for photographers and birders. The blinds have large viewing windows, camera ports, side windows, solar fans, and comfortable seating. The habitat yards have natural stone water features, native plants, and multiple feeding stations.



When you visit, please leave a small donation in the box to help KCPP maintain the blinds. It will be very appreciated by the birds and the volunteers.



from Tom Collins

NORTH AMERICAN BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION COUNTS

The public is invited to help.
Please contact any compiler to participate.
A \$3 fee helps offset the cost to record and publish results.

Love Creek on June 8
Core Coffee House in Medina at 8:00am
Compilers: Tom Collins towhee@hctc.net
Rebecca Flack rflack@TNC.org

Center Point on June 16
Camp CAMP at 8am
Compiler Bob Tanner bintense@hotmail.com

Kerrville on June 29
Riverside Nature Center at 8am
Compiler Tom Collins towhee@hctc.net

Boerne on July 13
Cibolo Nature Center at 8am
Compiler Cathy Downs mzdowns@hctc.net

Guadalupe River State Park-Cordillera Ranch-River Mountain Ranch Count is pending and needs a compiler. Email Kip Kiphart skipkip@gvtc.com if you can help with this count.



from Tom Collins, reporting from Collins' Ranch, Pipe Creek, Kerr County

April 19: While doing my weekly nest box census, I found two new species of butterflies for the ranch. Both were on my watch list, but I never expected to find both on the same day within about ten feet of each other. The new species are great purple hairstreak *Atlides halesus* and oak hairstreak *Satyrium favonius*. Both were feeding on antelope horns milkweed flowers with 20-plus gray hairstreaks. The ranch saw hundreds of dainty sulphurs and dozens of red admirals and American ladies. Orange sulphurs, sleepy oranges, and checkered whites were in good numbers. Queens were just showing up, and I still had two to three monarchs daily. Variegated and gulf fritillaries were in small numbers. Even a few Reakirt's blues fluttered about. The skippers were missing - not sure if they were slow to recover - will this be the year without them? Was it drought and heat from last year?

Back to my new species. As soon as I saw the large dark butterfly on the milkweed I knew it was a great purple hairstreak. What I didn't know was that out of the twenty pictures I took of hairstreaks on the milkweeds, two would be oak hairstreaks. I wonder how many times I glossed over those little gray-looking hairstreaks and wrote them off as grays?



Bee and great purple hairstreak – note orange abdomen.



Oak Hairstreak



Gray Hairstreak

Note in the comparison images that the oak (left) is a little darker and has a blue tail spot with a red cap and the strong "W" postmedian band over it. Also note the submarginal band on the oak has a red border facing away from the head. The gray hairstreak (right) lacks the red cap over the blue spot and its postmedian band has a red border (when present) facing toward the head. Go out and look for oak hairstreaks. We are on their western edge, but I have found them as far west as the Concan area.

This fairly worn eight-spotted forester moth was also feeding on milkweed.



Kip Kiphart contributed \$250 to the Monarch Butterfly Fund in honor of MLMP@CNC Volunteers.



with Mexican NGOs and researchers, and conduct environmental education workshops for guides in the Monarch Reserve and for individuals engaged in reforestation efforts. We've also worked with the Monarch Joint Venture monarchjointventure.org to support select efforts to promote breeding and migratory habitat

The Monarch Butterfly Fund supports conservation of monarch wintering habitat in Mexico through a combination of support to promote sustainability in the communities living in and near the Monarch Butterfly Reserve, reforestation in the Reserve, and research that is directly related to conservation of monarchs or the forests in which they overwinter. We work in partnership

in the US. Please visit the website to read more about MBF work and peruse recent newsletters. monarchbutterflyfund.org/

A child said,

“When you explore you get more imagination than you already had.”

WORTH *Watching*



from Kip Kiphart

Another awesome, mesmerizing Louie Schwartzberg video - *Gratitude* [youtube.com/watch?v=gXDMoiEkyuQ&feature=youtube_gdata_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXDMoiEkyuQ&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

from Paula Smith

Horneros urbanos
Watch horneros, known as oven birds, build their wonder of a nest. [youtube.com/watch?v=wQ-0llsEp9I&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ-0llsEp9I&feature=related)
While on youtube check out other fascinating horneros videos!

“ KEEP UP TO DATE WITH WHAT'S GOING ON ”

check your email address and contact info on the [chapter member list](#) - notify [Eileen Gotke](#) of changes.

A note about sending photos for the newsletter.

Please send photos!

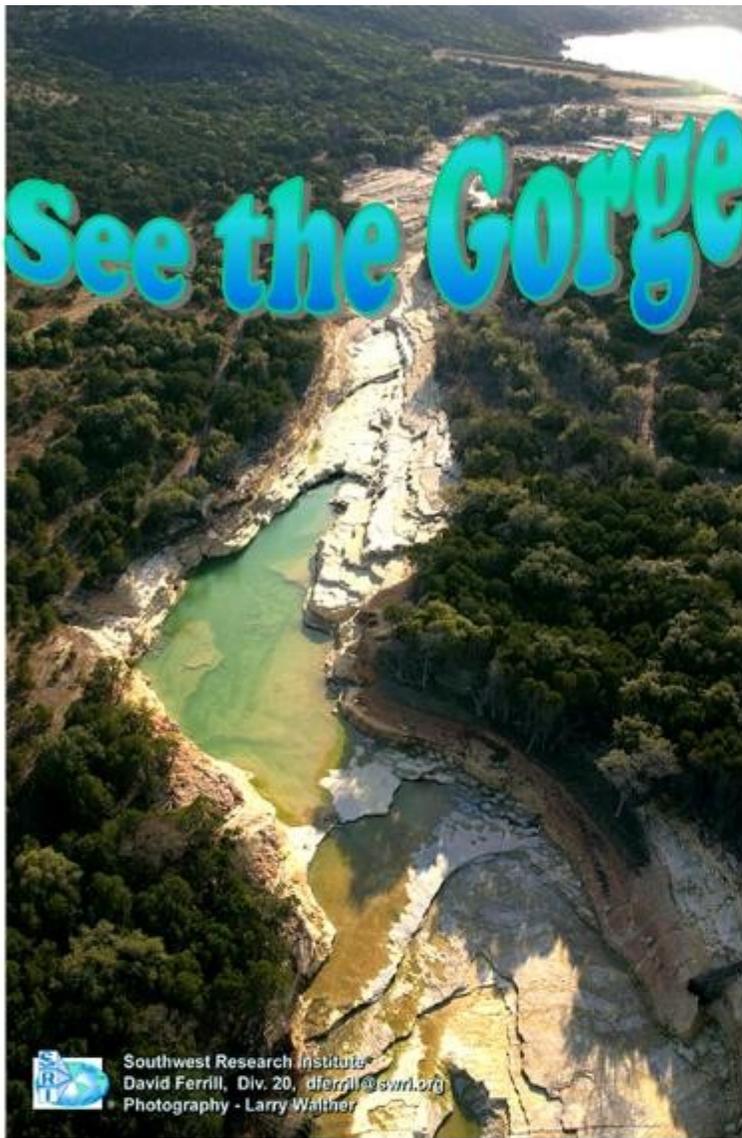
If sending more than two photos, please group images in a zip file and email the zip file.

If including photos in a document, email individual JPEGs of each image in a zip file.

Very important - Identify all persons by first and last name or provide captions.

Keep the photos and your articles coming!
We love to hear about what you are doing!

Thanks for your help!



Canyon Lake
Gorge
CHAPTER FIELD TRIP

**Wednesday
May 30
9:00 a.m.**



HURRY!

The trip is limited to the first 23 persons.

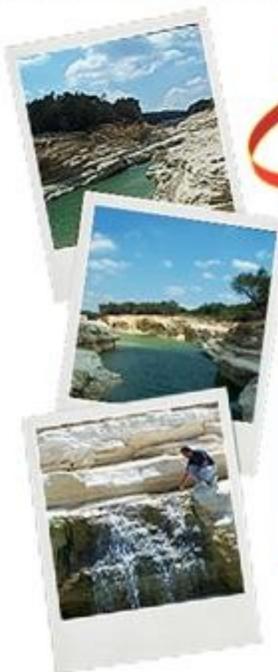
Read this, then email Tom Hynes at tph03@ctesc.net to register.

All tour participants must:

- Wear footwear appropriate for the tour – sneakers, hiking boots, etc. No slick-soled shoes, no sandals. **If you do not have on appropriate footwear, you will not be allowed to participate in the tour and will not receive a refund.**
- **Absolutely no one under 7 years of will be allowed in the Gorge.**
- Bring at least one bottle of water. Snacks are a good idea also, but should be carried in a backpack of some type so that your hands remain free.
- You may want to wear a hat and sunscreen, especially during summer months and in winter months dress in layers.
- If you have any health concerns such as bad or weak knees, ankles, hips, a heart condition, are overweight and get easily winded or fatigued, you may want to rethink this tour. **It is physically demanding.** In addition, it gets hot in the Gorge very quickly during sunny warm days, so please make sure you are well hydrated before and during the tour.

No rock or fossil collecting is allowed on Gorge Tours. No pets of any kind on tours, no exceptions.

Entrance fee is \$5.00. Visit canyongorge.org to learn about Canyon Lake Gorge.





April 1, 2012

NPSOT Fall Symposium 2012 – Call for Papers

The Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) announces the Call for Papers for their 32nd annual Fall Symposium to be held on October 4-7th, 2012, in Kerrville, Texas, at the YO Ranch Hotel and Conference Center located at 2033 Sidney Baker.

The education theme for Symposium 2012 will be **“The Texas Hill Country – A Changing Landscape”** and will feature the Edwards Plateau eco-region and its vegetation. NPSOT Symposium 2012 offers a significant educational event that explores the history of the Edwards Plateau eco-region, highlights the factors that have influenced its transformation, and debates the issues that we face today in conserving our native plants and habitats. Our speakers will share their research and best practices on how we might positively influence the future evolution of the landscape, improve stewardship of our natural resources, and preserve unspoiled natural habitats in the Edwards Plateau. Field trips to diverse locales will showcase beautiful examples of endemic habitats and efforts to restore or preserve endangered areas.

Authors are invited to submit research papers, general papers on topics of interest, and “How to” articles related to the Symposium 2012 educational theme. Our diverse audience will include academics, professionals, conservationists, educators, and gardeners who are interested in the “research, conservation and utilization of native plants and plant habitats of Texas.”

Notification of your intent to submit a paper should be emailed to symposium@npsot.org no later than **June 15**. Please include the following information: paper’s title, a brief description (150 words or less); author’s name, brief biography, and contact information. The Symposium Education Committee will review all proposals and notify authors by June 15th of your status along with instructions for submission of your final paper. Final papers accepted for inclusion in the Symposium 2012 Proceedings will be due no later than August 15th, 2012. Selected papers may also be chosen for oral presentation.

For questions, please contact Lonnie Childs, NPSOT Symposium 2012 Co-Chair, at symposium@npsot.org or you may contact the NPSOT state office directly at state@npsot.org or by calling 830-997-9272.

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 our 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.

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Questions about our chapter?
Email Eileen Gotke,
director of membership
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.

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.

