

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter

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OCTOBER 28 MEETING: OLD STORY, NEW FINDS

Dr. Clark Wernecke, Project Director for the Gault Project, Texas State University, and Executive Director of the Gault School of Archeological Research, will examine various theories of the “peopling of the Americas.” Evidence found at several sites creates doubt about old theories--such as the Clovis culture, peopled by crossing an “ice bridge” from Siberia to North America some 13,500 years ago--without establishing a new consensus among archaeologists. Dr. Wernecke’s research at the Gault site, located northwest of Austin, has unearthed evidence of settlements earlier than those of Clovis culture.

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE . . . Vern Crawford

If you attended last month’s Monthly Meeting, you may have had the opportunity to meet Scott and Martha Richardson personally. They were the organizers of, and part of, the Western Edwards Plateau Chapter’s first class. They invited Lenore and me to join them in Edwards County to see first hand some of the projects and facilities that are now a part of the Hill Country Chapter’s new resources, as we embrace our new members and service area.

On Monday, September 30th the two of us were joined by Donna Oliver-Leep, and spent an delightful, informative and very productive day in Junction as Scott’s guests. A group of Hill Country Master Gardeners accompanied us for a slide presentation and tour on the development of a beautiful and highly functional native landscape project, the Opal B. Roberts Landscape of Hopes and Dreams, at the Junction Middle School. It was established in 2008 in memory of a exceptional and beloved teacher. Designed by Billy Kniffen, the project was initiated, coordinated, and continues to be maintained and managed by Scott.

Donna, Lenore and I then piled into Scott’s vehicle and he led our caravan out Highway 71 to the Native American Seed Farm. There we met with founder Bill Neiman, followed by a very educational and insightful tour of their fields of native wildflowers with George Cates. What an fascinating and inspiring facility!

After we said our thanks to the folks there at the farm, we headed back to town for a tasty lunch of soups, sandwiches and (for some of us) desserts at a local bakery.

After goodbyes to our new Master Gardener friends, the three of us accompanied Scott to the Texas Tech Llano River Field Station, where we explored numerous trails throughout the campus and grounds with the Director, Dr. Tom Arsuffi. Tom pointed out many of the ongoing research projects and we discussed training and volunteer opportunities that fit into our mission.

What an invigorating day!

I was excited to see that on Saturday, November 9, there is an AT opportunity with Bill Neiman at the Native American Seed Farm including a visit to the Leeps’ Pecan Spring Ranch to see good land stewardship in action. See the listing on page 15 for details.

Hope to see y’all there,

Vern



2013 Recertification

Gloria Costello Valeska Danielak
Steve Dodge Jim Jones Carl Luckenback

Milestones

Lisa Williams - Bronze Dragonfly, 250+ hours
Jim Clarke, Becky Etzler - Brushed Silver Dragonfly, 500+ hours
Scott Magee - Gold Dragonfly, 1000+ hours



Congratulations to members who received awards at the September meeting:

from left: Warren Ferguson, Eileen Gotke, Sarah Hilburn, Junior Hilburn, Stephen Bishop, Ann Dietert, Sharon Jay, Dan Carabin, Ann Carabin, Marion Worthington, Koy Coffey, Bob Wiedenfeld.

Congratulations also to Cathy Downs, who was awarded her 5000+ hour milestone pin at the September meeting. Cathy is the 30th Texas Master Naturalist to reach this milestone during our 15 year history.



Hill Country Residents Can Help Document Monarchs During Fall Migration

by Martha Richardson

The Monarch butterfly is perhaps the most well known butterfly species. It might be the first butterfly a person sees or catches as a child, and it's often the first story they hear about how animals migrate.

The migration of the Monarch is one of the most fascinating of the many species who migrate, but especially since not one individual butterfly makes the migration, but a series of generations.

Most persons are probably aware that there is concern among the scientific community about the decline of the Monarch butterfly population. Several factors have contributed to this over the last few years. Among those cited are loss of habitat in their winter roost in Mexico; severe droughts on their migration route in Texas, and other states; and a general decline in native flowers and milkweed, they depend upon for food.

According to Chip Taylor, Director of Monarch Watch, "Development is consuming 6,000 acres a day, a loss of 2.2 million acres per year. Further, the overuse of herbicides along roadsides and elsewhere is turning diverse areas that support Monarchs, pollinators, and other wildlife into grass-filled landscapes that support few species. The adoption of genetically modified soybeans and corn have further reduced monarch habitat. If these trends continue, Monarchs are certain to decline, threatening the very existence of their magnificent migration".



With this increased pressure on the Monarch population, observations of migration, egg laying, and milkweed populations become even more significant in contributing to the scientific knowledge about this species. Citizens can add to this scientific data by participating in one or more programs. These programs allow volunteers to record their observations on a website, where, during the fall, the progress of the Monarchs' migration is tracked. Journey North is one such website in which individuals' participation is greatly needed.

Residents of the Texas Hill Country are uniquely situated to observe migrating Monarchs. Lying squarely in the path of the Central Flyway migration route, the streams and river systems provide reliable nectar sources and shelter which the butterflies depend upon.



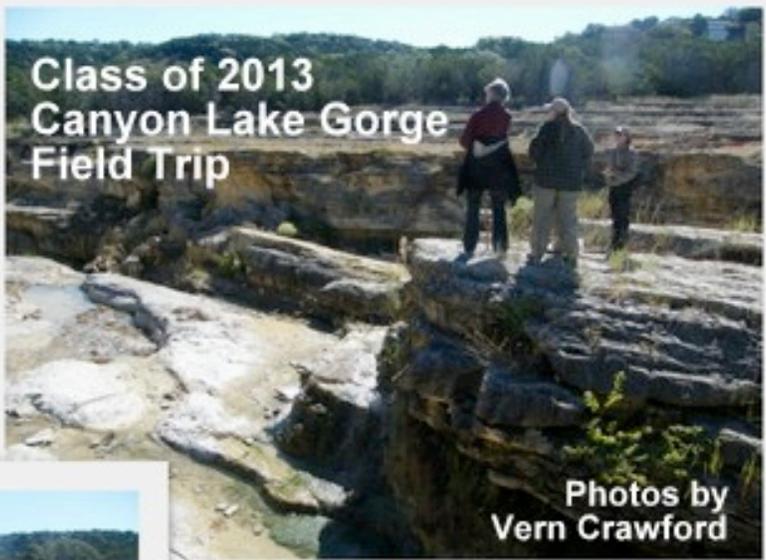
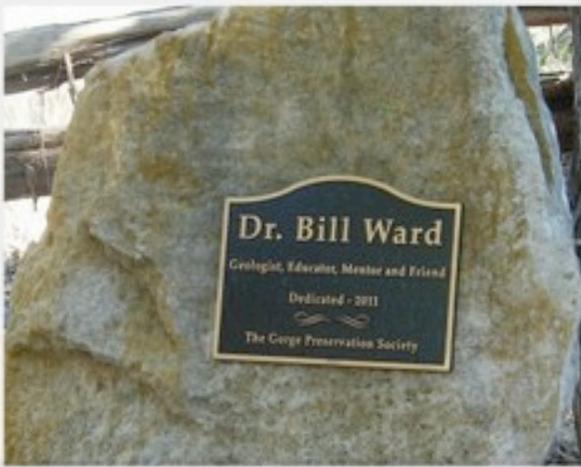
It is fun and rewarding to be a part of this effort and see how posting your observations becomes part of the record of this year's migration. In addition to sightings of individual butterflies, a truly thrilling occurrence is finding a roost where Monarchs cluster overnight on their migration south. Amazingly, they fly in masses to the same roosts, often to the exact same trees. Some Hill Country residents have observed such roosts on their property over the years. This fall especially, the observation of such roosts and migrating Monarchs is more important than ever. If there is a sighting, please report it and, if possible, please take a photo.

The migration officially began August 22 in the North. By early November the migration usually is complete, when the Monarchs arrive at their winter roost in Mexico. To learn more and help in the proper identification of Monarchs, here are some additional resources:

- <http://www.texasbutterflyranch.com/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/texasbutterflyranch/>
- [http://www.monarchwatch.org/..](http://www.monarchwatch.org/)

Martha Richardson is a member of the Hill Country chapter.

reprinted from The Hill Country Alliance, *Neighbor to Neighbor News*, Sept. 23, 2013 (hillcountryalliance.org)



**Class of 2013
Canyon Lake Gorge
Field Trip**

**Photos by
Vern Crawford**



**Thanks to
Pete Bryant, Guide and
Docents Cathy Downs,
Gracie Waggener, and
Sarah Hilburn**



Butterflies at the Kroc Center

Metamorphosis was in the air at the KROC Center's "After School Nature Class" on September 19, 2013. Cathy Downs and Gracie Waggener presented a program about butterflies with a focus on the Monarch. The students started out the lesson learning about the parts of a butterfly and key facts about the behavior and migration of the Monarch. Cathy was using a Monarch puppet to teach key concepts. Next the students learned how to properly net a butterfly.



Each student was given a net and assigned to a volunteer to go outside and look for butterflies and other insects. Each team was given a cage to hold their specimens until the sharing time. The students were so excited as they walked and some raced about the grounds looking for butterflies at the KROC Center. A beautiful Eastern Tiger Swallow Tail kept just out of reach and had the students engaged in the hunt, but it managed to elude everyone's net.



The children were also learning which native forbs were host or nectar plants as they were looking for insects. They were frequently reminded of how to respectfully handle their insects in the nets and cages. The teams came together at the end and shared what they had netted. They had captured a rare Sphinx Moth or Hummingbird Moth, a couple of Brown and Orange Skippers, a Cicada, and various grasshoppers. The lesson came to a close with the students observing the flight of the released insects. The following Hill Country Master Naturalists assisted: Rheda Boardman, Betty Clyburn, Sarah Hilburn, Diane McMahon, Martha Miesch, Pat Nelson, and Mary Frances Watson.



photos by Rheda Boardman

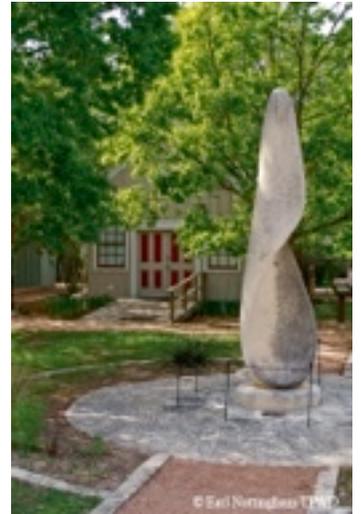
Down By The Riverside

By Rob McCorkle

In Texas municipalities that have wisely set aside a patch of undeveloped land for native plants and animals, the nature sanctuaries are often established on the edge of the city limits or beyond. Not so in Kerrville, a city of 22,000 that serves as the commercial hub of the Texas Hill Country.

Roughly a half-mile from the heart of downtown, a mama dove sits on her nest in a Mexican plum tree, squadrons of butterflies dive-bomb pollinator plants, couples walk garden paths and children cavort among the trees and rocks at the Riverside Nature Center.

Thanks to visionary out-of-towner and community support, locals and visitors today can readily access the center, a five-acre former farmstead that belonged to one of the town's first doctors, ideally situated at the confluence of the Guadalupe River and Town Creek. Easy to find, the center at 150 Francisco Lemos St. is located within the Main Street Historic District



The current location, however, wasn't Riverside Nature Center Association founder Susan Sander's first choice. Not long after she relocated in the early 1980s from Illinois, where she earned a master's degree in environmental land use planning, Sander spotted a choice wildflower-filled tract on Water Street downtown she felt would be ideal. The land cost proved prohibitive, but Sander would not be deterred.

A renovated visitors center reopened earlier this year.

"When I first started going around talking about the idea of a nature center, people would ask me, 'What's a nature center?'" she says, laughing. "We really had to start with educating people about the importance of preserving native landscapes. It evolved from there."

Sander's focus shifted to the Town Creek site, and through fundraisers, donations and membership dues, the association raised enough money to purchase in 1992 the first two parcels of mostly open, flat land that sported only a few mature trees. Since then, the association has purchased additional lots and leased City of Kerrville property and easements that provide river and creek access to expand the nature center.

Initially, Sander and a cadre of volunteers, upon whom the center still depends to tend the gardens and conduct educational programs, set about planting more than 100 native trees in what would become the arboretum, using Texas Forest Service grants. Eagle Scouts and other volunteers constructed wood chip and granite trails, and the center was awarded \$25,000 toward constructing a covered pavilion. Today, the spacious pavilion is sandwiched between the town's early 1900s Lawson Store that was moved onto the site and a nature study lab.

A stroll through the 1.5-acre garden area today reveals what 20 years of nurturing and growth can mean to what was once a blank natural canvas. Towering red oaks, pecans and other native trees share the acreage with wildflowers, native grasses and dozens of species of Texas shrubs, cacti, and succulents.

The arboretum and onsite rainwater collection exhibits serve to demonstrate to the public how a small tract of land overrun with exotic species can be restored as a showcase for native flora that attract a host of beneficial insects and other critters. Surveys have documented more than 80 butterfly species, 150-plus bird species, more than 140 tree species and more than a dozen different amphibians, reptiles and mammals.

"It helps if people understand where they live," Sander says of the center. "One of our primary goals is to foster stewardship through education and showcase what can be done by Hill Country landowners to establish native habitat and conserve water and other natural resources. My personal goal: I want citizens to be ecologically literate." The nature center allows visitors to view at least one specimen of a number of different tree and plant species that are endemic to the Edwards Plateau or are Hill Country natives rarely seen on public lands.

continued on next page

They include an anacacho orchid tree, sycamore-leaf snowbell, sabal palm, Mexican pinyon pine, Texas madrone, smoke tree and Blanco crabapple. And, visitors will find a few interesting species that are non-natives, such as the ginkgo tree, a species dating to the time of dinosaurs.

In 1999, the 10th anniversary of the organization's founding, a 5,400-square-foot visitors center opened, providing ample office and classroom space. A newly renovated visitors center reopened earlier this year with the addition of seasonal exhibit space, a children's nature niche, and a small museum combining traditional exhibits with modern technology.

Future plans, according to the center's executive director, Mary Muse, include the creation of interactive QR codes for signs and interpretive exhibits that visitors can scan with smartphones to glean more information on such topics as the Guadalupe River, the importance of watersheds and native flora and fauna. In addition, the center is developing a Texas Wildscapes demonstration area for people using the recently opened River Trail, whose first official trailhead is located at the Riverside Nature Center.



Nature and conservation are on display at RNC.

The center is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends. The garden area, however, can be toured from dawn until dusk seven days a week. For more information, visit www.riversidenaturecenter.org.

Rob McCorkle is a member of the Hill Country chapter

reprinted from *Texas Parks and Wildlife*, August/September 2013

Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley

9/20/2013, "Watching Nature From My Window"

9/27/2013, "The Lightning Tree Fell Down"

10/4/2013, "And Then Rains Came"

These and all other previous Kerrville Daily Times columns can be found at www.hillcountrynaturalist.org/columns.htm.

How-to From the Webmaster

Kristie Denbow

Calling Project Coordinators: This is your project's time to shine!

Each quarter we spotlight several of our chapter's volunteer projects. This is great way for members and the public to learn more about your project and interest new volunteers. If you would like your project featured on our website, send a brief story about the project, contact information, and an image to HillCountryWebmaster@gmail.com.

The Projects Spotlight can be found in the Volunteer drop down menu and on the right side bar - just click the shiny spotlight icon.

Field Trip Report

On Monday, September 30, Scott Richardson of the Hill Country Chapter guided a small group from the Hill Country Master Gardeners, together with Vern Crawford, Lenore Langsdorf, and Donna Oliver-Leep (also Hill Country Chapter members), on a field trip in Junction.

The first stop was at the Junction Middle School where Scott showed us a Power Point presentation of the school's Xeriscape and explained the project's history. Scott said "The landscape in front of the Junction Middle School is a memorial to Opal Roberts, who was my mentor and who I taught with there for nearly 20 years. After her death in 2008, I went to the school administrators and asked if I could plant a couple of trees in front of the building as a memorial to her. They were interested in possibly doing more and said they were interested in doing something related to rainwater catchment. So, I brought Billy Kniffen in, and he designed the landscape and helped with a lot of the construction. It was done by both community and local Master Naturalist volunteers. It cost less than a thousand dollars, and half of that was for a memorial stone for Opal. The section in front of the middle school has a drip irrigation system, but the rest gets no supplemental watering. This is considered a passive rainwater system with seven rain gardens within the landscape catching water off the front of the middle school and the gym. There are over 40 native species and three-or four nonnative species in the landscape."

After that presentation, Scott led us on a tour of the landscape.



Then we drove to the Native American Seed farm where we met the founder, Bill Neiman. George Cates led us on a walking tour of the fields and planting areas. The butterflies were everywhere--swooping in and out of the plants. It was an informative tour; we did not realize how much goes into harvesting seeds.



photos by Vern Crawford

Donna Oliver-Leep is a member of the Hill Country chapter.

New AgriLife Publications Give “Undiluted” Truth About Urban Landscape Water Use

by Paul Schattenberg, AgriLife Today

COLLEGE STATION — Texas A&M AgriLife research scientists have produced two new free downloadable resources to help educate Texans about how much water is actually used on urban landscapes, the benefits of green spaces and other ways to save water.

Authors of the new resources are: Dr. Kevin Wagner, Texas Water Resources Institute associate director, College Station; Dr. Raul Cabrera, associate professor at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, Uvalde; and Dr. Benjamin Wherley, assistant professor, Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station.

AgriLife researchers have developed two new free downloadable publications to provide Texans with accurate information on actual urban landscape water use and measures they can take to increase urban water-use efficiency.

The first publication, which appears as an article in Vol. 4, No. 2 of the *Texas Water Journal*, provides an evaluation of urban landscape acreage in Texas and associated water use. Related information can be found in the second resource, an accompanying Texas Water Resource Institute informational brochure. Both are available for free download.

“Addressing the current knowledge gaps and developing practices that significantly enhance water-use efficiency in urban activities, particularly landscape irrigation, is necessary to the Texas economy,” Wagner said. “These materials help empower Texans to continue maintaining landscapes while using water efficiently.”

The *Texas Water Journal* article, “An Evaluation of Urban Landscape Water Use in Texas,” available at <http://texaswaterjournal.org>, explains the often complicated issue of how to calculate water use. “The journal is an online, peer-reviewed journal devoted to Texas water resources management and policy issues from a multidisciplinary perspective, integrating science, engineering, law, planning, and other disciplines,” Wagner explained. “It is published by the Texas Water Resources Institute and the nonprofit group, the *Texas Water Journal*.”

The “Urban Landscape Water Use in Texas” brochure is a succinct summary of the *Texas Water Journal* article and a useful resource to those interested in water conservation education and outreach, he added. It can be downloaded from <http://twri.tamu.edu/publications>.

Wagner said the brochure complements another publication provided by the institute, “Status and Trends of Irrigated Agriculture in Texas.” Together, the publications provide Texans “an accessible survey of some of the state’s major water users and opportunities for improvements,” he said. This publication is also available for download at the institute website. Wagner said the new publications cover strategies for improved water conservation in urban landscapes, such as water-efficient plants, smart irrigation controllers, and alternative water sources for irrigation.

Behind agriculture, the urban-municipal sector is the second largest category of water use in Texas, and landscape irrigation is its largest component, according to Cabrera. “These resources summarize how much water is used by the sector and also offer strategies and practices that can significantly reduce water use for urban landscape irrigation,” Cabrera said. “With proper design and maintenance, urban landscapes can be aesthetically pleasing and have little-to-no need for supplemental water.”

For 2011, the total economic contributions of all green industry activities in Texas were estimated at \$17.97 billion, plus \$10.7 billion in value added and employment for 200,303 people, he said.

“Landscapes are important components of urban environments and provide an array of economic, environmental, human health and social benefits,” Wherley noted. “And to meet the water needs of a growing population, Texas needs innovative strategies.” Population growth and drought add further complexity to the management of urban-municipal water use, Wagner added. “Population growth in Texas, largely in urban areas, is expected to increase 82 percent in the next 50 years, and likewise, demand for municipal water over the same period is also expected to increase by 71.4 percent,” he said.

The Texas Water Resources Institute is part of Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University. Find more stories, photos, videos and audio at <http://today.agrilife.org>.

A Conversation about Private Property Rights and Water When should the government step in to protect water resources?

Texas Water Symposium
Thursday, October 24th, 7:00 pm
Schreiner University Campus, Kerrville

The Texas Water Symposium series will continue October 24th in Kerrville with a conversation about private property rights and water, moderated by Weir Labatt and featuring Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons, Sharlene Leurig and Garry Merritt.

As we struggle to meet water resource challenges, what is the proper role that government should play regarding land development and other traditionally unregulated issues, in order to protect stream flows and the private property rights of landowners? All are potentially impacted by water marketing and increased withdrawals from aquifers.

Weir Labatt, the program moderator, currently serves as Secretary of the Board of Trustees of Schreiner University and Chairman of the Investment Committee of the San Antonio Area Foundation. Weir is a former member of the Texas Water Development Board and the Edwards Aquifer Authority Board of Directors.

This interesting and diverse panel includes:

Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons, who has been involved in Texas wildlife conservation for over 30 years, most recently serving as Chairman of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. He has served as Vice-President of the Texas Wildlife Association and is a Director of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association.

Sharlene Leurig, Sustainable Water Infrastructure Program at Ceres, a national nonprofit helping institutional investors to integrate sustainability into the capital markets. Recently Sharlene has been travelling Texas documenting what's happening to springs for her project and blog, "Hell's Oasis."

Garry Merritt, who has been serving the citizens of Real County as County Judge since 2011. Gary is also a founder and director of Pioneers Youth Leadership, Inc., a nonprofit corporation that provides leadership and community development for high school students.

Water, essential for life, is our most precious and valuable natural resource. But water supply is limited and under increasing pressure from a growing population. How will we protect this resource and plan for a sustainable future? There is a great need for a water-literate public; decisions being made today have far-reaching and long-lasting effects on our children and future generations.

The Texas Water Symposium Series provides perspectives from policy makers, scientists, water resource experts and regional leaders. Join us as we explore the complex issues and challenges in providing water for Texans in this century. Each session is free and open to the public. The hour-long program begins at 7:00 pm, followed by discussion time with Q&A. Texas Public Radio will broadcast this event one week later on Friday, Nov.1, on KTXI 90.1 FM in Ingram and KVHL 91.7 FM in Llano. A recording of the program will also be available on the TPR website.

For more information about the Texas Water Symposium Series, visit www.schreiner.edu/water. To stay informed about future programs, subscribe at www.hillcountryalliance.org.

The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country.



Medina River
photo by Mariana Krueger

Final Report: The Big Sit on October 12, 2013

Team Name: Riverside Birding Blast

Circle Captain: Thomas Collins

Location: Riverside Nature Center, Kerrville

Participants: Tom Collins, Susan Sander, Cynthia Johnson, Ronald Hood, Cathy Downs, Gracie Waggener, Virginia deWolf, Donna Brewton, Judy Ferguson, Carl Hix, Martha Hix, Maggie Tatum, Judy Gausnell, Artie Richards, Marion Worthington, Jeanette Watson

Weather: Light rain at 4:30am, then overcast until around noon, followed by mostly clear and humid afternoon.

Time At Location: 13 hours 0500-1800 Team total - 30 species

Around 0430, just after a light rain had fallen, I arrived at the Nature Center. Unloaded my car into a large wagon, pulled it down to the circle, and went back to bring the large ice chest in a wheel barrow. Circle was already flagged so I set down and played a Screech Owl tape; immediately got the Eastern Screech Owl calling right over my head, and then three Great Horned Owls began calling.

Susan Sander arrived at 0515 followed by Cynthia Johnson at 0650 and then Ronald Hood at 0700; this was the core team. Around 0800 Cathy Downs and Gracie Waggener arrived and set-up to do some Monarch tagging along with helping to spot birds. The remaining 11 folks arrived and left at various times.

By noon we had 25 species. We were served a lunch by the staff of Riverside Nature Center after which I gave a 30 minute talk on Bird Song Identification. During the remaining day we worked hard, but the heat and humidity appeared to shut down the birds. Most frustrating was the lack of some 15 species that were expected. A Chimney Swift flew just out of sight of the circle due to heavy canopy tree cover. Our hummingbird feeder was never visited; other birds just outside the circle either seen or heard were American Robins, House Wren, Orange-Crowned Warble, and Clay-colored Sparrow. Missing but expected were a White-eyed Vireo heard on Friday and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons roosting near by. Perhaps the biggest miss was Morning Doves that are usually fairly common around the center. We did manage to get our two Kingfisher species and just before shutting down, a Pied-billed Grebe popped up in Town Creek. Monarch butterflies were present all day and several were caught and tagged.

All team members had a great time. The added benefit was that we had pledge sheets for people to pledge funds for team effort or team species count. The resulting pledges will be used to help fund a water feature at the Riverside Nature Center.

For more information and reports on the Big Sit elsewhere, go to http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bigsitlive/index.php?sc=hom_accordion.



continued on next page

Species list

1. **Pied-billed Grebe** (*Podilymbus podiceps*)
2. **Black Vulture** (*Coragyps atratus*)
3. **Turkey Vulture** (*Cathartes aura*)
4. **Red-shouldered Hawk** (*Buteo lineatus*)
5. **Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)** (*Columba livia*)
6. **Eurasian Collared-Dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)
7. **White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*)
8. **Inca Dove** (*Columbina inca*)
9. **Eastern Screech-Owl** (*Megascops asio*)
10. **Great Horned Owl** (*Bubo virginianus*)
11. **Belted Kingfisher** (*Megaceryle alcyon*)
12. **Green Kingfisher** (*Chloroceryle americana*)
13. **Golden-fronted Woodpecker** (*Melanerpes aurifrons*)
14. **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** (*Picoides scalaris*)
15. **Flycatchers** (*Empidonax*)
16. **Eastern Phoebe** (*Sayornis phoebe*)
17. **Blue Jay** (*Cyanocitta cristata*)
18. **Barn Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)
19. **Carolina Chickadee** (*Poecile carolinensis*)
20. **Black-crested Titmouse** (*Baeolophus atricristatus*)
21. **Carolina Wren** (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)
22. **Northern Mockingbird** (*Mimus polyglottos*)
23. **Chestnut-sided Warbler** (*Dendroica pensylvanica*)
24. **Northern Cardinal** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)
25. **Indigo Bunting** (*Passerina cyanea*)
26. **Great-tailed Grackle** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)
27. **Common Grackle** (*Quiscalus quiscula*)
28. **Lesser Goldfinch** (*Spinus psaltria*)
29. **House Finch** (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)
30. **House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)

Tom Collins is a member of the Hill Country chapter.

Project WILD Workshop at Riverside Nature Center, Nov. 23, 2013, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide focuses on wildlife and habitat. The guide is full of 124 activities that emphasize hands-on, inquiry-based, and cooperative learning strategies with demonstrated classroom effectiveness. It is organized in topic units and is based on the Project WILD conceptual framework. Because these activities are designed for integration into existing courses of study, instructors may use one or many Project WILD activities or the entire set of activities may serve quite effectively as the basis for a course of study.

Each Project WILD activity contains all the information needed to conduct that activity including objectives, method, background information, a list of materials needed, procedures, evaluation suggestions, recommended grade levels, subject areas, duration, group size, setting, and key terms. A glossary is provided, as well as a cross-reference by topics and skills.

Seats at the workshop are limited; contact Koy Coffey, 830-792-3070 or email kcoffer@texas-wildlife.org **by Nov. 9** to reserve your spot. Cost is \$30, which includes the Activity Guide, drinks, and snacks. Bring your lunch, notepad, and a pen. The workshop will be outdoors for part of the time, so wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

The View From Rusty Bend

“Days decrease, / And autumn grows, autumn in everything.”

— *Robert Browning*



image by Lucy Griffith

So long summer. The heat has lost its bite. Early autumn's angle of light gilds the landscape with softness. The seeds on the fall grasses sway heavy in the sun.

This is the season ruled by the flycatchers. The rains have hatched the insects and the insect lovers are mad with it. Before their journey south of the border, the Mexican free-tailed bats scoop up the moths above the live oaks on the cliff. The Eastern Phoebe sallies from her perch to nab bugs on the wing. Her wagging tail flick resembles the conductor of a symphony. Pheeee-bee, pheeee-bee. Flick, flick. Allegro!

We see a phoebe-like bird with a large head and no tail flick. In the sun his green iridescence marks him as an Olive-sided Flycatcher. The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher skips from branch to branch like he's on fast-forward. The Ash-throated Flycatcher has left her nest in the bluebird box, a nest woven with snake skins. We find more than 20 juvenile Scissor-tailed Flycatchers along the road to the river. Their tails are comically short and their peach belly color is bright and ripe. Practicing their food pinching skills, they bomb each other with aerial sorties. Gotcha! Weaving and diving and reversing in a wild display. Play with a purpose. Further down the road, an adult Scissor-tail discourages a wandering raven by landing on his back. He plummets and vacates the scene.

On a neighbor's fence line near a hayfield, we see a new fly catching scene. A Loggerhead Shrike dashes from a tangle of greenbriar, grabs a grasshopper and returns to impale it on a thorn for later use. The nickname, Butcher Bird, righteously earned. His white plumage suggests an apron for messy work.

Who needs television when there is a wren around? The Carolina Wrens and Canyon Wrens seem to have claimed the south side of the house. The juvenile Carolina is dull and scruffy and inconspicuous. The South gang comes up on the porch and grooms our woodpile for bugs. The Bewick's Wrens claim the north side of the house and bounce around the Bear Grass and low shrubs. So very industrious. The real breakfast bar though, is the post-and-rail fence. The wrens start at one end and check each hole for spiders and other delicacies. Is there a bug here? Oh, yes. Yum. Bounce, bounce. Let's look up here on this rail. No joy. Bounce, bounce. How 'bout down here?

Each day the air is filled with some amazing creature come to life with a particular temperature and humidity: dragonflies that rival the hummingbirds in size, delicate damsels with their wings swept back. The huge Zebra Longwing butterfly drifts by like a glider. One night a four inch Dobsonfly emerges from its life as a Hellgrammite in the Guadalupe. Little flying dinosaur.

A season of subtlety. Harvesting, gathering, putting up, putting away, transformation. Winter provisioning has begun.

Lucy Griffith, PhD co-manages the Rusty Bend Ranch with her husband, Andy Robinson. When she is not on her tractor, she practices Clinical Psychology. When the tractor is broken, Andy is fixing it. Lucy and Andy are in the 2013 Hill Country Master Naturalist Class.

Advanced Training

FRIDAY, OCT. 25, 1PM - SUNDAY, OCT. 27, 2PM T BAR M RANCH, NEW BRAUNFELS
AT 13-196 TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST 14TH ANNUAL MEETING AND ADVANCED TRAINING;
See conference agenda and advanced training descriptions; count AT hours only for scheduled presentations and field trips at http://www.regonline.com/TMN_14th_annual_meeting

SATURDAY, OCT. 26 7-8:30PM GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK (GRSP)
AT 13-218 PROWLIN' FOR OWLS
A walk to listen for the owls that inhabit the park. Join us at the Amphitheatre behind the Discovery Center to first learn about owls and their amazing adaptations. This program is free with a Park Pass or a \$7 daily pass (children ages 12 and under are free).

MONDAY, OCT. 28 7-8PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY (UGRA)
AT 13-222 OLD STORY, NEW FINDS
Dr. Clark Wernecke, Project Director for the Gault Project, Texas State University, and Executive Director of the Gault School of Archeological Research, will examine various theories of the "peopling of the Americas." Evidence found at several sites create doubt about old theories--such as the Clovis culture, peopled by crossing an "ice bridge" from Siberia to North America some 13,500 years ago--without establishing a new consensus among archaeologists. Free; call Tom Hynes 830-990-5750 for further information.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 30 1:30PM - 3:00PM TEXAS LIONS CAMP, KERRVILLE
AT 13-185 GRASS ID CLASS
The fall plant identification classes will be held again this year after the New Class meeting on Wednesdays. If you have taken the course before, but you feel you will learn more by repeating, you can earn Advanced Training hours. Presenter is Jim Stanley.

FRIDAY, NOV. 1 8AM-SATURDAY, NOV 2 9PM TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY LLANO RIVER FIELD STATION, JUNCTION
AT 13-182 THE NEW ECOLOGY: MANAGING FOR RESILLIENCE IN A CHANGING WORLD
Society for Ecol, including presentations and field trips. Go to texasriparian.org/tra-txser-joint-meeting for schedule, costs, and registration information.

SATURDAY, NOV. 2 10AM-4PM BOERNE CONVENTION CENTER
AT 13-224 RAINWATER REVIVAL
Whether you are interested in capturing water from your roof or capturing the water that falls upon your land, the Rainwater Revival is an event you don't want to miss. The event includes informative presentations by professionals and users of rainwater, water conservation-related business vendor booths, rainwater system displays, and experts to provide guidance and services; also food and sales booths and live music. Free.

MONDAY, NOV. 4 9-11AM AND 5:30-7:30PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER (CNC)
AT 13-225 TREES AND THEIR BENEFITS TO LOCAL WILDLIFE
Meet at the CNC Pavillion and join Betty Dunn for an tour that focuses on the trees that reside in the park. Learn which trees are best to include in your landscaping in order to attract and nourish wildlife in your own backyard. Free.

SATURDAY, NOV. 9 11:15AM-6PM NATIVE AMERICAN SEED FARM AND NEARBY RANCH
 AT 13-220 TOUR OF FARM AND NEARBY RANCH

The Native Plant Society of Kerrville is sponsoring this tour, which will leave from the Riverside Nature Center. Bill Neiman, founder and owner of the Native American Seed Farm, will discuss the importance of creating a healthy landscape with a variety of native grasses and plants. He also will conduct a tour of the farm and explain how diversity produces a good habitat for wildlife, protects valuable soil, and preserves the beauty of the Hill Country. After the tour and a picnic lunch (bring a sack lunch and a chair), the group will go on to visit to a nearby ranch that has created an attractive landscape using native plants. Cost: \$15 (Please bring cash or check.) Contact Melinda Wasson, 830-895-2521 or melindaw@windstream.net for more information.

TUESDAY, NOV. 12 11:45AM-12:45PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER (RNC)

AT 13-216 SECOND TUESDAY LUNCH & LEARN: GEO-CACHING

Geo-caching with Dave Rogers. Learn all about the ultimate scavenger hunt. Cost: \$3, RNC members; \$6, nonmembers, or free if joining at the event.

SATURDAY, NOV. 23 9AM-3PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER (RNC)

AT 13-221 PROJECT WILD WORKSHOP

Teachers, informal educators, homeschoolers, youth group leaders, and parents are encouraged to take this training. Upon completion of the class, everyone will receive a certificate and educators will receive 6 Hours (TEEAC). Bring a pen, notepad, and your lunch. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes, since part of the workshop will be outdoors. Cost: \$30; includes a Project Wild K-12 Activity Guide, drinks, and snacks. Seats are limited; contact Call Koy Coffey, 830-792-3070 or kcoffer@texas-wildlife.org. Everyone must preregister by Nov. 9 so materials can be ordered.

Riverside Nature Center Events

Family Nature Program, Saturday, Nov. 9, 2 p.m. Bird Feeder Birds." Kevin Pillow of Wild Birds Unlimited will teach how to create habitats for our feathered friends. Program is in conjunction with Cornell University.

Herbs at Twilight, Thursday, Nov. 14, 6-7:30 p.m. 'Herbal Treasures for the Holidays.' Includes workshop materials and samples. Led by certified herbalists Amy Coward, R.N., and Sally Garrett, M.S. Cost is \$20 for RNC members; \$25 for nonmembers.

Native Healing Garden, Thursday, Nov. 21, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Plant and tend this unique medicinal garden. Led by certified herbalists Amy Coward, R.N., and Sally Garrett, M.S. Bring a healthy dish to share in the potluck. Donations fund the garden.

Recurrent Events

GROUNDS AND BUILDING MAINTENANCE, Wednesday mornings. Volunteers are needed to keep the grounds and improvements in working order and looking nice.

FAUNA CENSUS, 1st Fridays, 9 a.m. Walk the property for about an hour, recording the fauna census, particularly of birds. Meets 2nd Friday in January. ALWAYS check for date changes.

MEADOW TENDING, every Wednesday, 9-11 a.m. The RNC meadow is undergoing a renovation with the help of dedicated volunteers. Demonstration garden to be tended.

NATIVE HEALING GARDEN, 3rd Thursday, 11:30 a.m. Learn about native medicinal herbs; then plant and tend the garden. Bring a healthy dish to share.

TOWN CREEK CLEANUP, quarterly, Saturday a.m. Work with Upper Guadalupe River Authority on quarterly cleanup of Town Creek. Must register at least a week in advance.

These events are open to all Kerrville-area residents and visitors. No reservations required for most, but RSVPs are appreciated. Please check for changes/cancellations: drop by, or call 257-4837.

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



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

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

Everyone is welcome.

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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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 email them to:

Lenore Langsdorf, Editor
LenoreLangsdorf@gmail.com

The Hill Country Chapter does not recommend or endorse organizations or commercial sources mentioned in our newsletter. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and editor.



Questions about our chapter?

Email Valeska Danielak,
Membership Director
imatxn10@yahoo.com

