

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter

Photo courtesy of http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/images/reptiles/horned_lizard.jpg



JULY 2014

Volume 12

Number 7

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



JULY 28 MEETING: TEXAS HORNED LIZARDS

Lee Ann Linam will discuss the current status of horned lizards in Texas, possible reasons for their persistence, and options for their restoration, as well as Texans' recollections of its decline. She retired last year after 30 years with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Throughout her career, she focused on developing citizen science programs, including the Texas Horned Lizard Watch.

Everyone is welcome to join us on Monday, July 28, at 7 p.m. in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority's lecture hall, 125 N. Lehman Drive in Kerrville. Arrive at 6:30 to chat with members and guests.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . . Vern Crawford

Huge thanks go out to Class Director Liz Ross and Membership Director Becky Etzler for an awesome 2014 new class recruitment drive!

One question on the application form asked how folks found out about our chapter's Texas Master Naturalist Training classes. It's clear from the responses to that question that our members have been doing a terrific job of getting the word out, as it was common to see "I was encouraged to apply by my friend who is a Master Naturalist."

The application deadline for our Fall classes application has now ended, and we have received almost fifty applications!

I'm pleased to report that over a dozen applications were from the former Western Edwards Plateau counties which recently merged with us to create our new service area.

As class size is limited, the Board must now tackle the task of selecting the most qualified and deserving class candidates. I've read over all of the applications as they came in, and so know that it will not be an easy job: All of the candidates' skills and talents are exemplary. Not only was the desire to learn and to share newly gained knowledge evident, but a high level of volunteer enthusiasm was expressed by almost everyone.

Let me take this opportunity to commend our entire board, and especially Vice President Kathy Ward, for "stepping up to the podium" while Lenore and I have been on an extended journey. We met people and explored the flora and fauna of the Netherlands and France, and then returned to the States to continue our travels along the coast of the Pacific Northwest, before returning through the majestic Rocky Mountains.

We're looking forward to being back in our beautiful Texas Hill Country!

Vern

This Month We Honor



Special Certification

Rod Boertje

2014 Recertification

Ann Carabin Dan Carabin Warren Ferguson

Ric McCormick Bob McKinley Robert McRoberts Pat Nelson

Milestones

F. E. Baxter, Jan Grimes, Ernest Smith - Bronze Dragonfly, 250 hours

Richard Adams - Brushed Silver Dragonfly, 500 hours

Fane Downs - Gold Dragonfly, 1000 hours



Congratulations to members who received their 4,000 Milestone awards (Gold/Ruby Dragonfly) at the June meeting.

From left to right: Jim Stanley, Priscilla Stanley, Ron Hood, Tom Collins, Cathy Downs, Kip Kiphart

(Each of these volunteers already has logged more than 5000 hours.)

awards congratulations continue on next page



*Congratulations to members who received their April awards
at the June meeting.*

From left to right and back to front: Bob Wiedenfeld, Paul Pedersen, Marion Worthington, Cay Russ, Reidun Hilleman, Bob Hansen, Betty Clyburn, Phyllis Muska, Lisa Flanagan, Julie Clay, Mary Frances Watson, John Huecksteadt, Nancy Person, Harriet Warren, Scott Magee, Ginny de Wolf, Dale Bransford, David Hopf, Jack Millikan, Louis Guisti



*Congratulations to members who received their May awards
at the June meeting.*

From left to right: Bob Hansen, Pat Nelson, Ken Weber, Linda Ross, Ward Miller, Tara Randall, Pat Hopf, Andrew Robinson, Lucy Griffith, Paul Person, Becky Etzler, Betty Gardner, Louis Guisti, Martha Miesch

Milkweed Seed Cleaning, Storage, and Propagation

By Cathy Downs

Cleaning

Cleaning milkweed seed from the pod can be a time consuming and messy business if left for too long. It is not a task to be undertaken inside the home, as the chaff tends to fly about with a mind of its own. There are a variety of ways to separate the seed from the chaff, or fluff. If you were able to pick the pods before they split wide open the following method is easiest. Open the pod at the seam and grasp the silk together firmly by the tip. Gently lift the seed and silk from the pod with one hand. Then you can literally “tickle” the seeds into the palm of the hand or a container by sliding your fingers along the silk from top to bottom with your other hand. Keep a firm grasp at the top and continue sliding the hand down as seeds come away. A fellow Monarch Conservation Specialist, Candy Sarikonda, posted a youtube video describing this method in detail. Our milkweed pods tend to be dark in color but the pod she is using is from the Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and looks green to us. Although the pods look different the method will be the same. http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=aFXWitrxOmQ



If you were not able to get to the pods before they burst open you can empty the seed and chaff from the pods into a brown grocery bag and shake the contents repeatedly. The ripe seed will fall to the bottom and you can release the fluff through the top of the bag. Just tear a slight hole in the bottom corner of the bag to release the seed into a tray or container. I find this method less time consuming and more effective than any other methods. I do the releasing out in my meadow in case there are still a few seeds attached.



Other methods I have heard of include burning the seeds to remove fluff. After a test for germinating success by the author, however, it was decided that the burning method destroys seed germination (and it's a little dangerous; fluff is very flammable). Some folks put it through a vacuum cleaner; some have fancy equipment that churns the seeds. You can find several of these methods and engineering diagrams on the internet. Personally, I like to keep it simple.



Storage

If you don't have the time to glean the seeds right away, milkweed pods should be dried thoroughly for at least an hour in a paper-lined flat tray to discourage mold. The pods, once dry, can be stored in brown paper grocery bags until cleaning time. You can use the same bag to separate seed as above. Just be warned: when you open the bag to begin cleaning, fluff will be all the way to the top. Clean seed should be kept stored in paper in a cool dry place. I use lunch size brown bags, fold the top over, staple shut, and write the specie common and botanical name, date, and county location of origin.

Propagation

There are many methods, videos and essays on propagating milkweeds. The one common thread seems to be vernalization or cold stratification of the seed. Monarch Watch details vernalization and scarification as follows:

continued on next page

Vernalization

Seeds of most temperate plants need to be vernalized, which is a fancy way of saying that they need cold treatment. The best way to give the required vernalization is through stratification. To stratify seeds place them in cold, moist potting soil (sterilized soil is best but is not required) in a dark place for several weeks or months. Since most people prefer not to place potting soil in their refrigerators, an alternative is to place the seeds between moist paper towels in a plastic bag. This procedure works well, in part because there are fewer fungi and bacteria available to attack the seeds. After a vernalization period of three - six weeks, the seeds can be planted in warm (70°F), moist soil. Without vernalization / stratification, the percentage of seeds that germinate is usually low. "Shocking" seeds that have been refrigerated by soaking them in warm water for 24 hours also seems to improve germination rates.

Scarification

Even after vernalization / stratification, seeds of many plant species will not germinate. In these cases, the seed coats appear to require action by physical or chemical agents to break down or abrade the seed coat. "Scarification" with some type of physical abrasion that breaks the seed coat usually works and can be accomplished by placing the seeds in a container with coarse sand and shaking the container for 30 seconds or so. Scarification may be required for some milkweeds and might improve the germination rates of other species.

I use a warming pad when I start my milkweeds from seed. I use four inch peat pots in starter trays as it gives the plant more opportunity to put out the all-important tap root. Germination usually takes place within a week to 10 days. Once the plant shows two sets of real leaves I put the entire peat pot into a one gallon container with a mix of two thirds garden soil, one third potting soil and about one tenth granite sand for drainage. This way the transplant experiences the least amount of shock. Milkweeds are notoriously tricky transplants and I find the older the rootstock, the more success the plant will have. I will not put a milkweed into the ground before the rootstock is at least 10 months old or more. If you have room to winter over the gallons, that's even better! I water only when the pot is dry to about four inches.

Bobby Gendron has a great two part video that explains in detail planting methods for milkweed using a seed starting kit.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGRFXb9Xe7g Part 1

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcJDa6lovQ4 Part 2

I find that Mother Nature always knows best, though. Every year at the beginning of November during a light rain or drizzle I walk through my property scattering any seed I have left to the four winds. My milkweed plant count has tripled in the six years I've been doing this. Or, perhaps, I'm just paying more attention.

The UGRA 11th Annual River Clean Up will be on Saturday, July 26
Volunteers are wanted! Meet at Flat Rock Park, 8am
For details, go to www.ugra.org .

Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley:

- 5/30/2014 Can the World Continue to Feed Everyone?
- 6/6/2014 Our Oak Population is Declining
- 6/13/2014 A Fun Morning Sitting and Watching Nature
- 7/4/2014 Invasive Exotic Grasses are Reducing the Diversity of our Native Habitat

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

The Master Naturalists involved in the Nature Study programs at the Kerrville Kroc Center are seeking a few additional volunteers for the coming school year beginning on Sept 18th and continuing until May 2015. The programs are on the third Thursday of each month, from 4 - 5 p.m. About 25 fourth and fifth graders attend each session. If you like the idea of encouraging youngsters to observe nature closely and learn about preserving and protecting the flora and fauna of the beautiful Hill Country, please contact Martha Miesch at marthamiesch@msn.com or 830-792-4750.

How-to From the Webmaster

Kristie Denbow

If you have a volunteer event and want to attract new participants or keep current volunteers up to date, place your event on the chapter's Google calendar. Let chapter members know about service days, activities, or special events. It's so easy: just fill out this handy form (txmn.org/hillcountry/add-project-activities-to-calendar/). If your activity is a recurring event, for example: "We meet second Wednesdays," "Monthly on third Saturdays," or "May 5, 7, and 9," type this information or any other special instructions in the instruction box. The form is simple, but if you have a question email me at hillcountrywebmaster@gmail.com.

The calendar is always available on our website, txmn.org/hillcountry/calendar/. Instructions to subscribe to the calendar or to bookmark it can be found on the calendar page. Scroll down the page to view options.



LIVING WATERS CONFERENCE

August 19, 2014

Texas Tech Junction Center
254 Red Raider Lane
Junction, Texas 76849



The conference will include topics on watersheds and riparian areas as well as Best Management Practices for managing cattle, horses, and feral hogs. There will also be topics over how to manage and control key brush species within watersheds.

3 CEUs for pesticide applicators will be provided through the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Registration is only \$35 which includes lunch and an interactive float trip down the South Llano River for the first 20 registrants who wish to participate!

For more information and to register, visit <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/water> or call 979-845-2604.

From Tara Bushnoe

Riparian Areas Boost River Flow

A clean and reliable water supply is arguably the most important natural resource worldwide. Texas' naturally arid climate, extreme weather conditions, and growing population and economy have made planning for future water needs a primary issue at the state and local levels. The current Texas State Water Plan outlines \$53 billion of water supply projects to help meet the increasing needs over the next 50 years. Strategies include conservation, new reservoirs, desalination, infrastructure improvements, rainwater harvesting, and even cloud seeding.

Apart from household conservation and rainwater harvesting, the majority of these strategies are in the hands of industry, government, and agriculture. However, since more than 94% of Texas land is privately owned, there is enormous potential for individuals to play a role in enhancing water supplies through land management. One example is by protecting and increasing riparian areas.

The riparian area is a band of dense, native vegetation along a body of water. This zone can be identified by high soil moisture, frequent flooding, and the unique collection of plants and animals found there. Riparian areas provide numerous beneficial functions that support a healthy environment, including increasing flow in the accompanying waterway.

The "riparian sponge" is a term used to describe a properly functioning riparian area that has the capacity to store water in the land adjacent to the waterway and slowly release it over time. When rivers and creeks are bordered by land covered with a variety of trees, shrubs, and grasses, that means they are also bordered by rich soil. When flood waters flow over the banks into a healthy riparian area, the vegetation slows the water down allowing sediments and nutrients to be trapped which will nourish the plants and keep the riparian area stable and healthy. As the flood water slows down, it also soaks into the thick soil layer supporting the riparian vegetation. After normal flow conditions return, the riparian sponge slowly seeps water back into the river or creek for continuous flow between rain events. Minus a healthy riparian sponge, sediment laden water races off the land and down the stream channel without the possibility of being stored.

Protecting and increasing your riparian sponge starts with managing the types and quantity of vegetation. Changes in grazing or mowing practices, limiting animal access through fences, or simply leaving the land alone can help improve riparian areas ability to filter runoff, stabilize banks, lessen flood impacts, support wildlife populations, and store water.

If you are lucky enough to control property along a waterway, you have an opportunity through land management to boost stream flow for your own benefit and everyone downstream. UGRA supplies a field guide to riparian plants to anyone interested in learning more about riparian areas and the vegetation they support. Please contact me to obtain your free copy today.

Let's Keep *Our* River Clean

Tara Bushnoe is Natural Resources Coordinator for UGRA. Contact her at tbushnoe@ugra.org or 830-896-5445.

Comal County Land & Water Expo

www.texasconservation.org

Natural History of the Hill Country
Land Restoration
Watershed Management
Oak Wilt
Native Grasses
Living in the Wildland Interface
Wildlife Management 101
Wildlife Tax Valuation
Septic Systems & Water Wells



Wednesday, July 23, 2014, 8:30-5:00

GVTC Auditorium, 36101 FM 3159
Smithson Valley, TX 78070

\$15.00 admission - includes lunch

Continuing Education Units available for pesticide applicators

Let us help you manage your own little piece of the Lone Star State.

For information and to RSVP
contact:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service-Comal County

by Friday, July 11, 2014

Rosie Miner, 830-620-3440,
minerr@co.comal.tx.us

Web: www.texasconservation.org

The Comal County
Land & Water Expo
is sponsored by:



The Nature Conservancy, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, and
Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust

Prairie-scaping: A Perfect Alternative to Lawn

By Kim Eierman, CH, AOLCP

Tired of watering, fertilizing and mowing your lawn? Why not consider planting a native prairie-scape: a prairie or a prairie-like garden? Prairie-scapes are fantastic ecological alternatives to lifeless lawns, what I call "the Green Deserts."

A traditional American lawn is composed of exotic cool-season turf grasses that evolved in Europe. (In Texas, usually Bermuda or St. Augustine [carpetgrass]). These non-native turf grasses are not adapted to our climates or our ecosystems and they don't support our wildlife species. Additionally, turf grasses are very shallow rooted, unlike our native warm season grasses, and they require tremendous amounts of water to keep them going. The average American lawn uses 20,000 gallons of water a year - not very practical for the hot climates in Texas where water can often be in short supply.

Exotic turf lawns show their incompatibility with our ecosystems in other ways too - by demanding tremendous inputs of fertilizer and labor. Turf grass is like a demanding child - always hungry, always thirsty, incapable of being left alone. It's not happy here, so why do we keep planting it? My advice - keep only the lawn that you really use, and even then, think about some native grass alternatives that emulate shortgrass prairies like Buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*), Blue Grama Grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and Curly Mesquite Grass (*Hilaria belangeri*).

Even better, create a prairie-scape with a much greater degree of species diversity, and one which reflects your region - whether you are in the Gulf Prairie, the South Texas Plains, the Blackland Prairie, etc. To get some help figuring out what plants are native to your area, check out these helpful websites: Texas Parks and Wildlife "Wildscapes by Ecoregion," The Native Prairies Association of Texas, Biota of North America, and The Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center native plant database.

Whether you have a tiny yard or an expansive landscape, you can create a native "prairie" and give your landscape a big ecological boost. Bees, butterflies, other beneficial insects, and many species of birds will appear, seemingly out of nowhere. Many of these creatures are in trouble, including a number of the 800 species of bees that are native to Texas. You have the power to help them out in your own landscape.

Unlike traditional lawns, prairie-scapes are low-maintenance, requiring less labor and fewer costs than lawns. After a prairie-scape has established, you will need to cut it back once a year, and that's it!

Here are some things that you need to know to create a successful prairie-scape:

Prairies are almost always free of woody plants - no trees or shrubs.

Most prairie plants require full sun and infertile soil.

Utilize plants that are native to your eco-region and that will support your ecosystem.

Plant diversity is key. Bio-diverse landscapes have been found to be much more resistant to pets, diseases and extreme weather events resulting from climate change.

Emulate the "plant communities" in your region when selecting plants; choose plants which grow together in nature. Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), a tough xeric plant, is not a good partner for Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), which likes it moist.

Native grasses should comprise at least 50 percent of plants in a prairie-scape. In tall grass prairies, up to 80 percent of the plants can be grasses. Native grasses are a critical component in a prairie; they create a structural and ecological foundation both underground and above ground.

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A lawn which you stop mowing is not a prairie; it is only exotic cool-season grass allowed to grow, and will never provide the ecological benefits of a native prairie.

You can create a prairie-scape by using seeds, plant "plugs" or even large containers of plants. Your budget, the size of your landscape and your patience will determine which format you use. While seeded prairie-scapes are reasonably inexpensive, they can take several years to establish. Using large containers of plants can be prohibitively expensive, for all but the smallest landscapes. Plant plugs are a nice compromise - affordable and fairly quick to establish, but they can be hard to find.

Prairie-scapes can be naturalistic or more formally designed. A seeded prairie will be quite random in terms of where plants grow. By using plugs or containers of plants, you can create more of a design with swaths of plants, exactly where you'd like to have them. Do realize that plants will re-seed and move around over time.

Leave your prairie plants standing through winter to provide seeds for birds, cover for overwintering insects, and visual interest for you. Cut the plants back in early spring. If you have a large area, consider cutting back only half of the prairie-scape, or even less, each year to preserve habitat for wildlife species. Alternate the areas that you cut each year.

If you have a lawn, you can have a prairie-scape, and a much healthier ecosystem too!

Kim Eierman is an environmental horticulturist, an Accredited Organic Landcare Professional, a Master Gardener, and Master Naturalist. She teaches at New York Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, The Native Plant Center, et al. Kim speaks across the country on ecological gardening topics and native plants, and blogs on www.ecobeneficial.com.

Better Lights for Better Nights Conference

Dripping Springs Ranch Park Event Center

August 15, 2014

The City of Dripping Springs, in partnership with the International Dark Sky Association Texas (IDA Texas), will host the Better Lights for Better Nights Conference on Friday, August 15, 2014 at the Dripping Springs Ranch Park Events Center.

The day-long conference is designed to address many issues surrounding light pollution and provide tools to implement new lighting regulations and solutions in your community. Vendors and exhibitors will share displays and demonstrations, and organized sessions led by industry professionals and educators will take place throughout the day.

Early Bird Ticket Price: \$50

After July 15, 2014, Ticket Price: \$60

Register Now

The registration fee includes admission to all seminars, a box lunch, afternoon snack, reception, a mouth-watering barbecue dinner by The Salt Lick and a bus tour of outdoor lighting in Dripping Springs.

Registration and check-in will begin at 10:00am – the first session will begin at 11:00am. Vendor displays and exhibits will be available for viewing beginning at 10:00am; we invite you to come early and peruse the items and information that will be on display.

Dripping Springs is the first Dark Sky Community in Texas, and is among the first to host such an event. We hope you will join us in August to learn how to reduce glare & light trespass, improve visibility and protect our night skies. Keep Texas stars shining brightly!

The registration form and more information can be found on our website: TexasNightSkyFestival.org.

City of Dripping Springs, attn: BLBN, P.O. Box 384, Dripping Springs, Texas 78620

betterlights@texasnightskyfestival.org

(512) 858-4725

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EPA Releases EnviroAtlas Ecosystem Mapping Tool

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today released EnviroAtlas, a web-based interactive tool that integrates over 300 separate data layers, helps decision makers understand the implications of planning and policy decisions on our fragile ecosystems and the communities who depend on goods and services from these ecosystems. EnviroAtlas (<http://enviroatlas.epa.gov/enviroatlas/>) is designed for people from all levels of government, professionals, researchers, educators, non-governmental organizations, and anyone interested in considering the benefits or impacts of a decision, such as siting a new road or city park.

“Our health and well-being, our economy and our security depend upon healthy ecosystems,” says Bob Perciasepe, Deputy Administrator of EPA. “By providing EnviroAtlas, which contains a wealth of information for the United States, EPA is helping to ensure that anyone making decisions that may impact ecosystems will have the best available knowledge to build prosperous communities while conserving our natural resources.”

EnviroAtlas can help people learn about ecosystems, and how they provide us with benefits such as clean air and water, opportunities for recreation, and protection from severe weather, such as hurricanes and floods. EnviroAtlas also highlights how ecosystems provide habitats for plants, fish, and wildlife as well as the materials people need to produce food, clothing, shelter, and pharmaceuticals, and provides maps on all of these topics.

EnviroAtlas integrates geospatial data from a variety of sources to allow users to visualize and analyze how decisions impact ecosystems and their ability to provide goods and services. Communities are often faced with difficult decisions, such as trade-offs between transportation, residential or commercial development, and maintaining local wetlands, urban greenspaces, or urban forests. EnviroAtlas helps communities better understand the potential benefits and drawbacks of their decisions by providing data, maps, information, and tools to analyze relationships between nature, health and well-being, and the economy.

EnviroAtlas combines hundreds of data layers developed through collaboration between EPA, US Geological Survey, US Forest Service, other federal, state, and non-profit organizations, and several universities. Using powerful web application tools, it lets users generate customized maps and images that show the condition of their local community’s air, water, and landscape, as well as population density and other demographic data. Users can investigate land cover patterns, see how ecosystem services reduce pollution, and view closer to true scale data to compare them across selected communities.

EnviroAtlas is available to anybody with access to a computer and an internet connection. No special software is needed. Although the EnviroAtlas website is available on most mobile devices, it has not been optimized for use on those devices.

Using tools like EnviroAtlas to make informed decisions will help ensure that people can continue to enjoy economic, social, and environmental benefits of ecosystems now and in the future.

Long Days at Rusty Bend.



Image by Lucy Griffith

But I also say this: that light is an invitation to happiness,
and that happiness, when it's done right,
is a kind of holiness, palpable and redemptive.

- Mary Oliver

Long days at Rusty Bend. The sun retired on the solstice bump on the northwest horizon, and has begun its steady southern swing to the little hill where we mark its winter counterpart. Our lives seem held in this gentle cup, palmed in nature's arc of light.

Such light has strewn a sea of tiny flowers along each path and trail. Bright yellow Scratch Daisies, feathery white petals of fleabane, pink X's of Tiny Bluets. The Scarlet Pea hides a petite coral orchid. In contrast, the largest of butterflies waves by, the Zebra Longwing, dwarfing the busy hummers at their nectaring.

In the mornings, we sit on the porch and enjoy the chorus. The cough-bark of the fox on the river. The descending trill of the Canyon Wren greeting the day. The long missed "Bob-Bob White" as he whistles for his mate. A river of grey flows by above us, our gift from the Gulf of Mexico; as hypnotic as the sea, those wet, heavy clouds. The sweet fragrance of the late blooming Kidneywood mingles with the summery humidity. An armadillo waddles by, his little dinosaur tail pointing straight behind.

Tis also the time of fruits: crimson Agarita berries catch the light and flavor our drinks and in the brush, persimmon branches hang heavy with fruit. The Mustang Grapevine is decorated with miniature green clusters. Closer to home, the "house" jackrabbits get tamer every day. They sit side by side and gaze into the woods, so near to each other, one seems the shadow of the other.

Late in the afternoon, the light and feel of the air triggers a memory. "Where's Daddy?" I would say, on summer afternoons, as a young girl. "Out padiddlin," my mother would reply, "Probably late for dinner, too." I would go and find him way out in the pasture, a pair of loppers over his shoulder, pruning shears sagging his pocket, his stained felt Fedora providing a bit of shade. He would cut a cedar and drag it to cover some erosion, or prune a small tree into a pleasing shape, or throw some wildflower seeds in a damp spot. He took the time to watch young birds, to whistle back to the Bob White, to bring a puzzling grass back to the house for identification. And he was always late to dinner.

I know he would have enjoyed the idea of "target species" in our Wildlife Management Plan. Wrens and buntings and tanagers were always his favorites. He believed that providing reliable water, and safe cover and habitat, just made good sense.

And now we are awash with birds, wrens in particular. The Carolina Wrens have claimed the hood of the propane tank as their nursery. The young ones flash about with their bright bibs. We nickname them Hospital Administrator birds, as they yell "Schedule, schedule!" and answer "Procedure, procedure!"

The Bewick's Wren youngsters stay close and curious; crisp and clean in their new feathers. The Canyon Wrens are learning their complex songs, but slowly. They get stuck partway in the descending notes, like a needle on an old record. The front porch is their hangout. Unafraid, one lands on my leg and I feel the coolness of her delicate feet on my skin. She is lighter than air.

Surrounded by our "target species" we feel a singular pride, that our efforts to supplement food, water, and habitat, and to control predators, have been rewarded. What then, shall we call ourselves: wren wranglers? Prairie grass ranchers? Perhaps, what fits best: padiddlers.

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. Both Lucy and Andy are graduates of the 2013 Master Naturalist Class.

Comments are welcome at oodie1950@gmail.com.

Advanced Training

MONDAY, JULY 28 7 PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY LECTURE HALL, KERRVILLE (UGRA)

AT 14-125 TEXAS HORNED LIZARDS

Lee Ann Linam will speak on the history and status of the Texas Horned Lizard.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1 8:30AM-12:30PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER, BOERNE (CNC)

AT 14-126 TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR NATURE BOX DOCENTS

Presentations will focus on Shell, Coral Reef, Gardening, Worm Composting, and Dress like a Plant boxes. Cost: \$15 per person; includes a CD with all needed information. Limited to 25 persons; pre-registration is required. Contact www.cibolo.org or 830-249-4616 for further information and to register.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1 1-5PM KERR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT CENTER

AT 14-119 ELEMENTS OF HABITAT

This program will address the diets of native and exotic species, water use, development strategies and cover requirements. An outdoor tour of sites at this area will follow. Free.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8 8:30AM-3:30PM MASON MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

AT 14-119 ELEMENTS OF HABITAT

This program will address the diets of native and exotic species, water use, development strategies and cover requirements. An outdoor tour of sites at this area will follow. Free.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15 11AM-9PM DRIPPING SPRINGS RANCH PARK EVENTS CENTER

AT 14-114 BETTER LIGHTS FOR BETTER NIGHTS CONFERENCE

The City of Dripping Springs, in partnership with the International Dark Sky Association Texas (IDA Texas), is hosting this conference which will address many issues surrounding light pollution. It will provide you with tools to enable you to share this information and possible solutions in your community. Vendors and exhibitors will provide displays and demonstrations; organized sessions led by industry professionals and educators will take place throughout the day. Cost: \$60. To register, go to <http://www.cityofdrippingsprings.com/default.aspx?name=dscblbn.page>.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 5 8AM-3PM KERR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, HUNT

AT 14-120 FACING THE QUAIL DECLINE

Texas Parks and Wildlife and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension have teamed up to deliver quail ecology research highlights and statewide initiatives concerning the Northern Bobwhite and Montezuma quail. Join us for programs covering what we have learned and to learn how to participate in the Texas Quail Index. Outdoor tour of sites will demonstrate activities and topics covered indoors. Registration begins at 7:30am. For more information, registration, and lunch details, contact the WMA office at

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwildhunt/wma/find_a_wma/list/?id+12.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 12 8AM-3PM MASON MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

AT 14-120 FACING THE QUAIL DECLINE

Texas Parks and Wildlife and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension have teamed up to deliver quail ecology research highlights and statewide initiatives concerning the Northern Bobwhite and Montezuma quail. Join us for programs covering what we have learned and to learn how to participate in the Texas Quail Index. Outdoor tour of sites will demonstrate activities and topics covered indoors. Registration begins at 7:30am. For more information, registration, and lunch details, contact the WMA office at

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/hunt/wma/find_a_wma/list/?id=14

FRIDAY, OCT. 3 1-5PM KERR WILDLIFE AREA MANAGEMENT AREA, HUNT

AT 14-122 ECOSYSTEMS APPROACH TO WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

This third and final seminar will discuss white-tailed deer management, grazing management, prescribed burning, brush control, and endangered species. The seminar will also report on over 30 years of nutrition and genetics research conducted in the Donnie E. Harmel White-tailed Deer Research Facility. Outdoor tour of sites at the Management Area will follow demonstrating topics covered indoors. Free. For updates and the full agenda, contact WMA at

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwildhunt/wma/find_a_wma/list/?id+12 .

The newsletter's publication schedule does not allow listing all AT events in each issue. Check the chapter calendar on our website for additional AT.

The 2014 Texas Master Naturalist Annual meeting and Advanced Training will be held October 24-26, 2014 at Mo Ranch in Hunt.

This year, all accommodations will be included in your registration fee; there will be no need to make accommodation arrangements apart from registering for the meeting, unless you want to stay off site.



We meet on the fourth Monday of most months at 7:00 PM. in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehmann 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, essays, comments, and ideas are welcome.

Please email them to:

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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 Becky Etzler,
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