

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the

Texas Master Naturalist

Hill Country Chapter

March 2015 Volume 13 Number 3



photo by Tyra Kane

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



MARCH 23 MEETING: IT AIN'T EASY BEING GREEN

John Herron, the Director of Conservation Programs for the Texas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, oversees the organization's conservation, marine, and science programs in Texas. He will speak on current conservation issues in Texas.

Everyone is welcome to join us on Monday, March 23, 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 Kathy Ward

Hello to Hill Country Master Naturalists,

Do you think that spring has finally started? Windflowers, Dutchman's breeches, whitlow grass, pin clover, silk tassel, and some redbud trees are now blooming. Of course, they are a little late this year. In my yard the Mexican plums only have buds, but my Texas almond is in full bloom. Both Cibolo Nature Center (April 4) and Riverside Nature Center (April 18) are having native plant sales next month. If you don't have some in your yard, buy some. Both places welcome volunteers.

Now is the time to revisit the Natural Areas and Parks to see what will be blooming next. Most have offerings of advanced training and volunteer opportunities. It's wonderful to be outside after our long cold spells.

Enjoy spring!
Kathy Ward

Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend and contribute to Board of Directors meetings. The board meets on the Wednesdays prior to the monthly chapter meetings at 1:30 PM at Riverside Nature Center.

This Month We Honor



Special Recertification (Class of 2014)

Eva Broad

2015 Recertification

Stephen Bishop, Rheda Boardman, Daneshu Clarke, Kristie Denbow, Mike Foulds, Sandy Leyendecker, Jim Stanley, Priscilla Stanley, Gracie Waggener, Kathy Ward

Milestones

Brenda Fest and Paul Person - Bronze Dragonfly, 250 hours

Marion Worthington - Brushed Silver Dragonfly, 500 hours

Congratulations to members who received awards at the February meeting.



Tom Collins Tom, Susan McKinley, and Karen Burkett



Gracie Waggener receiving the diamond dragonfly pin, in recognition of her 5000 volunteer hours, from Michelle Haggerty, TMN State Program Coordinator

Wild Turnip: A Real “Bastard.”

by Bill Lindemann

Two years ago I wrote an article warning area residents of an impending problem of an alien (non-native) plant taking over our highway rights-of-way and spreading into adjacent farms and ranches. That invasive plant has several common names: wild turnip, Mediterranean mustard and my choice, bastard cabbage--but one botanical name, *Rapistrum rugosum*. The threat has not gone away and without intervention, will continue to get worse every year.

Can you imagine the Hill Country, or Texas, without wildflowers? Unless we act fast to eradicate this alien mustard invader, that dire situation will become reality in less than ten years. In parts of Texas this yellow-flowered mustard is taking control of the highway right-of-ways and moving onto farms and ranches. A trip to Austin will provide you all the evidence of the consequences we face, if we fail to take action to impede this plant's march across the Hill Country.

The annual, which stands two to three-plus feet high, has a large rosette of lobed basal leaves up to the size of a dinner plate. The stalk of the plant is multi-branched; each branch has a terminal cluster of small blooms with each flower having four light yellow petals. Some of my friends have told me that they think it is a beautiful “wildflower.” It is not one of our wildflowers. When the plant's seed sprouts in the fall it puts out the large rosette of leaves that blocks out sunlight for other plant seeds sprouting beneath the wild cabbage's leaves. As the bastard cabbage plants' rosettes coalesce, their basal leaves eventually take total control of all space, shading out other wildflower plants as it grows.



The first line of defense against this invader is for the public to be convinced that this plant will cause serious problems and be willing to take action to eradicate it. The next step is to learn how to identify the plant, because many yellow flowers occur in our wild landscape. The plant must be removed from the scene to insure the seeds are destroyed, with burning the preferable method. Finally, annual follow up reconnaissance runs are necessary to insure all plants have been eradicated.

The best chance to control bastard cabbage is to detect it when only one plant appears along the roadsides. Pull it up, put it in a bag and toss it on the burn pile. If the plant is not removed and is allowed to produce seed, dozens of plants will appear the following spring. The next generation of plants will produce a yellow patch of flowers a few feet across. In succeeding years the patches will coalesce and bastard cabbage will be the only flower present. Early detection and removal is the best way to eradicate this invasive plant.

I would suggest that people interested in saving our roadside wildflowers and protecting their property to adopt a section of our roadways and periodically patrol the roads' rights-of-way to find and remove all of the plants, particularly the single plants. If the infestation has moved beyond single plants or small patches, ask your friends and neighbors to help you remove the plants. Where the plants have established high infestations, mowing and herbicides are the only plausible eradication solutions. The key to this process is to limit and ban seed production of these annuals. If you appreciate our beautiful bluebonnets, paintbrushes, coreopsis, phlox, and firewheels, you cannot simply wait and hope someone else takes on this challenge. All of us must act, and act now.

A friend and I have adopted U.S. Highway 290 between Fredericksburg and Harper to keep the invader out. This is our third season to keep the alien out of our selected territory. Our first try netted several large garbage bags of the plant; however, the good news is that our recent survey only found one plant. Control is not an option; eradication is the only solution. I challenge you to adopt a roadway near you and join us in taking action, before it is too late.

This article was published in the Feb. 25, 2015
Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post.

A Virtual Tour of Ecoregions at the Kroc Center

An exciting virtual tour of three of Texas' seven ecoregions was awaiting 24 fourth and fifth graders in the Kroc Center's after-school group when they attended the nature education program on February 19th. The program was developed by Julie Clay and facilitated by HCMN volunteers Betty Clyburn, Susan McKinley, Martha Miesch, and Mary Thomas.

The students began their journey with a brief overview of our Hill Country ecoregion, touching on the geology, climate, flora, and fauna with which the students are most familiar. They were shown samples of local plants and fossils from the area as they learned that the Hill Country once lay at the bottom of a shallow sea. Then they were asked to imagine traveling through some of the surrounding regions as they were divided into three groups to rotate through learning stations representing the Big Bend, the South Texas Plains, and the Gulf Coast.



At the Big Bend station, the students viewed many pictures of the Trans-Pecos region that illustrate the varied geological formations that make up that unique area. They discussed how plants and animals are specially adapted to live in the often harsh, arid conditions of the desert climate. They also identified some plants and animals that were native to both the Hill Country and the Big Bend area, such as prickly pear cactus and coyotes.

The South Texas Plains station covered a variety of climates and environments from the brush country to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The students examined a soil sample much different from that found in the Hill Country, as well as plant samples of thorny brush and cacti which are found in both regions. Through many pictures, they learned about the subtropical climate of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, with its lush, tropical vegetation of palms and citrus found nowhere else in the state. They looked at produce grown in the Valley and discussed that much of our food comes from the warm climate and fertile soils of this region. Pictures illustrated animals of the region.



Through pictures and artifacts, the students traveled to the Gulf Coast region. Shells and beach sand as well as many pictures of shore birds and plants native to the region brought this favorite vacation area alive for them. The children learned about how abundant rainfall leads to a great diversity of plants and animals. They also were told how the barrier islands protect the low elevations of the Texas coastline and that the roots of dune plants help maintain the dunes.

At each station, the students played a riddle game to identify animals native to that region. As a culminating activity, they were invited to create their own "rock art" using pictures to tell a story from their lives, as Native Americans from the Big Bend area had done. As one tech savvy young lady said, "We don't need rock art, we have Instagram!"



Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley:

2/6/2015	Winter Along the Nature Trail
2/13/2015	Bird Nests Show the Ingenuity of our Little Feathered Friends
2/20/2015	Oak Trees: They Make the Hill Country Special
2/27/2015	Stop, Look and Listen: One Year of Visits to the Nature Trail

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



Bennett Trust
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

An exclusive 2-day conference for landowners and managers with property in the beautiful Edwards Plateau.

Topics covered include:

- 1-D-1 Open Space Land Tax Valuation
- Brush Management
- Estate Planning and Elder Law
- Feral Hog Management
- History of the Edwards Plateau
- Land Stewardship
- Leasing Your Land for Hunting or Grazing
- Livestock Production
- Plant ID
- Water Issues
- Wildlife Management



Conference attendees receive all meals, break refreshment items, and field tour transportation. Come and join us as we discover the history and resources management of a very special region of Texas – the Edwards Plateau!

April 23 - 24, 2015
Kerrville, Texas
For more information, visit:
<http://bennetttrust.tamu.edu/>



Native Landscape Certification Program

presented by

Native Plant Society of Texas

Are you interested in ...

- Learning about native plants for Central Texas landscapes?
- Sustainable landscape design using native plants?
- Environmental advantages of native plants?
- Native plants to attract birds and butterflies?
- CEU hours for professionals in landscape-related fields?
- Texas Master Naturalist/Texas Master Gardener advanced training hours?

If you answered **Yes**, NLCP is designed for you!!!

NLCP Workshop Now in Fredericksburg

Each class includes a 5-hr classroom session and a 2-hr outdoor native plant knowledge walk.

Completion Certificate provided at the end of the class.

Competency Certificate issued upon passing an optional end-of-day test.

Participants must complete Level 1 before attending Level 2.

Register online: <http://npsot.org/wp/nlcp/>

Level 1: Introduction to Native Landscapes – \$37 all registrants

- Saturday April 18, Gillespie County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 95 Frederick Road, Fredericksburg, 8:30-4:30
 - ✓ Learn the value of including and preserving native plants in landscapes.
 - ✓ Understand differences between sustainable and conventional development.
 - ✓ Learn about Central Texas vegetation region and soil type.
 - ✓ Learn about 45 native Texas plants for your landscape and five exotic plants to avoid.

Level 2: Landscape Design with Native Plants – \$37 NPSOT members, \$52 non-members

- Coming Soon
 - ✓ Learn to create landscape designs with regional native plants.
 - ✓ Understand important considerations for creating a landscape design.
 - ✓ Learn how to preserve native plants in the landscape.
 - ✓ Learn about 45 additional native Texas plants for your landscape and five additional exotic plants to avoid.

Sponsored by the Fredericksburg Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. For more information or for mail-in registration form, send a request to nlcp@npsot.org or call Meg Inglis at 512-589-1316.

The Kerrville Native Plant Society will visit the Kerr Wildlife Management Area

On Monday April 13, the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) will visit the Kerr Wildlife Management Area in Hunt. Ryan Reitz, Wildlife Biologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will present the program. He will discuss the role of native plants in producing high quality habitat and stable conditions during droughts and periods of dormancy.

NPSOT members and their guests will meet at the Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos in Kerrville at 11:30 a.m. to form carpool groups and depart by 11:45. Nonmembers who wish to join NPSOT are welcome to attend the field trip and join at the meeting. Participants should bring a lunch. We will eat on the porch of the conference center before moving inside for the program at 1:00 and will take an outdoor tour of the Management Area after the program.

For more information about this visit, contact Barbara Stidham at 830-928-3202. For more information about the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas, visit our web site, npsot.org/Kerrville.

How-to From the Webmaster

Kristie Denbow

Project coordinators are encouraged to place their project's events and activities on the chapter calendar. It's as easy as completing this simple form: <http://txmn.org/hillcountry/add-project-activities-to-calendar/>. Activities usually are posted to the calendar within 48 hours; often sooner. If the project has a list of scheduled activities for the year or months in advance, just email the listing to the webmaster, hillcountrywebmaster@gmail.com. If only a few activities are scheduled at a time, the form works best.

Check the website often for news, info, education, and fun.

The Fredricksburg Native Plant Society March Meeting

On Tuesday, March 24, the Native Plant Society of Texas Fredericksburg Chapter will present a program by Texas Master Gardener, Sierra Club member, and Gardening Volunteers South Texas member, Linda Higby, highlighting native shrubs of the Texas Hill Country. She will describe shrubs, maintenance of shrubs, and the types of landscapes in which the shrubs look the best. To accompany her presentation, Higby will show photos of the shrubs, including mature plants, immature leaves, flowers, etc., and close-ups showing leaf structure or other notable features.

The meeting will begin with a social gathering at 6:30 p.m., followed by the program at 7:00 in the fellowship hall of Memorial Presbyterian Church, 601 North Milam Street, Fredericksburg. The meeting is open to the public, and there is no charge to attend.

The purpose of the Native Plant Society of Texas is to promote the conservation, research and utilization of the native plants and plant habitats of Texas, through education, outreach, and example. For more information on this program and the Native Plant Society of Texas, please contact Kathy Lyles, Fredericksburg Chapter president, at 830-997-0724.

Wings Over the Hills Nature Festival

With spring just around the corner we are planning the 5th annual Wings Festival, which will be at the Lady Bird Johnson park in Fredericksburg on April 24, 25, and 26.



This year, we will have as a special guest and speaker Greg Miller, who is one of the birders depicted in the book and movie, *The Big Year*. He will be leading one of our field trips along with giving a presentation on Saturday evening.

Hummingbird Banding is one of the most interesting field trips for learning about hummingbirds, with close up observation of hundreds of hummers and the banding process. Robert and Kay Lookingbills will discuss the history of hummingbirds and what has been learned from banding projects.

Another great event on Saturday morning will be a photography workshop with Ruth Hoyt, who is a nationally recognized photographer, with work appearing in magazines including National Geographic, the Nature Conservancy, Texas Monthly, Birders World, and many others.

Saturday is always busy with lots of kids activities and families visiting the park. There will be some new vendors this year with exciting things to see and purchase, as well as exhibitors from state and local organizations. Be sure to look over our Speaker List, with numerous topics to learn about and places to explore in the park with excellent guides.



All of the activities and registration are on the website, www.wingstx.org

We are still looking for volunteers for some of the areas, so this is a great opportunity to get volunteer and advanced training hours, all in the same fun weekend. To volunteer, email Gracie Waggener, gwaggener@flow-apps.com



Spring Native Plant Sale & Festival

Saturday - April 18, 2015, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Co-sponsored by
Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter & Riverside Nature Center

Please join us to Celebrate Spring! We will have ongoing Demonstrations and the Hill Country ROCKS Exhibit. The Riverscape Project is now under construction on our grounds. It begins at the water tanks and goes to the fence line along the edge of the river trail. Riverscape was funded by a grant from the Peterson Foundation along with many generous donations from our volunteers. The purpose of Riverscape is to illustrate how the Guadalupe River is formed and makes its way through Kerr County in the 400 mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. Riverscape will be plumbed with variable water controls so we can demonstrate how seeps and springs feed the river and how drought and rains impacts the river. The water used in this demonstration area will be supplied by our rain water collection tanks and re-circulated so our only water loss will be from evaporation.

NATIVE PLANT SALE (Under Pavilion)

Our expert volunteers have gathered over 80 beautiful species of plants native to our region. These wild flowers, shrubs, grasses, and small trees are sourced from local growers. Native plants require lower maintenance—saving you time and money. Plus, they create a habitat for a host of native wildlife—including songbirds, butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. Come **early** for the best selection! Experts will be available to answer questions and to help you select plants that will thrive in your particular landscape conditions.

All net proceeds benefit the RNC and NPSOT education efforts.



Preview sale, *for* RNC and NPSOT members, is on Friday, April 17, from 5-6:30 p.m.

Nonmembers can join either or both of these organizations at the pre-sale and start shopping.

Ongoing Demonstrations (Near Pavilion) "Potting and Sharing your Native Plant Volunteers" and "Protecting Plants from Deer and Wildlife"

Informative Talk, 11 a.m. Join the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas and special guest, Marvin Hatter, for a presentation and discussion on landscaping with native plants of the Kerrville area.

Displays (Outside) Ask the Plant Expert; Riverside Nature Center Association; Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter; Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter; Kerr County Cactus & Succulent Society; Hill Country Master Gardeners; UGRA on Water Quality & Conservation; Public Radio; Native Healing Garden

Kids' Activities (Nature Lab) 9:00-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-2:30 p.m.
Create fun nature craft projects to take home. An adult needs to stay to help supervise.
8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.; Nature Walk with Angelo

Bring your family and friends to enjoy the day at our Nature Center.

As always, we could not do this without our wonderful volunteers.

If you want to help, please call (830-257-4837) or email (office@riversidenaturecenter.org).

Brush Control and Water

By Steve Nelle

Most Hill Country residents and all Hill Country ranchers know the problems caused by excessive amounts of cedar. Although cedar (and mesquite) are native to the Hill Country and have important beneficial value, these brush species have caused great economic harm to ranching and livestock production. Ranchers have been fighting the encroachment of brush for four or five generations with considerable help from government subsidies.

Many people believe that brush is detrimental to our water supplies. The traditional belief is that brush is largely responsible for the drying of aquifers, springs, and creeks, and that brush control will restore these water resources. This traditional belief is so deeply ingrained that it has become almost sacred.

The old traditional logic was based on three assumptions. First, that brush wastes abnormally large volumes of water. Second, that the removal of brush will allow extra water to be slowly released to springs and creeks. Third, that an improved cover of grass will develop which will cause more water to soak deeply into the ground. There is a thread of truth to each of these assumptions, at least in certain situations. However these old assumptions contain flaws, exaggeration, and oversimplification. The old logic seemed to make sense at the time, but the extra water has not materialized despite massive brush control efforts.

New and compelling research conducted by top scientists over the past decade has refuted much of the old thinking about brush and water. This new science comes mostly from Texas A&M, the state's premier agricultural university, and is causing many people to rethink their beliefs about brush and water dynamics.

The results of the new research have been eye-opening and controversial. The first reaction of most ranchers and range management professionals was to discredit the research and ignore the implications. The initial response was to bury our heads in the sand and keep repeating the traditional chant, *"brush control means more water; brush control means more water."*

But now that the conclusions of the research have been found to be valid, more and more professional range scientists and range specialists across Texas are doing a 180 degree turnaround on the subject of brush and water. However, not everyone is convinced; like the turning of a large ship, it is a slow process. Change of belief happens gradually and painfully, especially when bound by generations of tradition and inertia.

The federal and state government has spent untold millions of taxpayer dollars providing financial assistance to landowners to control brush in the hope of generating additional water for Texas. The sad news is that these government funded programs have not increased the state's water supply despite decades of trying. In some cases, localized spring flow did increase, but the increases have been either temporary or of insignificant volume. Simply stated, gaining meaningful amounts of additional water through brush control has proven to be a colossal failure and a waste of public funds.

This isn't the first time that government programs have failed to produce the desired results. Responsible government does not continue doing the same things over and over when they are proven to be ineffective. Taxpayers of any political persuasion can agree that such unsuccessful programs need to be carefully scrutinized and redirected, or perhaps even defunded or discontinued.

Not only have these programs failed to produce additional underground water supplies, but in some cases, they can actually harm the land they are designed to benefit. The newest program is the Water Supply Enhancement Program or WSEP. Under this state funded program, the goal is to increase the public water supplies of larger cities. In order to achieve this goal, the underlying strategy seems to be the generation of increased runoff through brush control. Instead of trying to get more water going into the ground, this program, in some cases, appears to promote the loss of water from the land so that it can be captured in downstream water supply lakes.

continued on next page

Clearly, most landowners do not want to intentionally do anything that will hasten the loss of water from their land. Even landowners who have a significant brush problem and who welcome financial assistance will be reluctant to accelerate the loss of water off their land with brush control. Not only is the loss of water a major issue, but the corresponding increase in soil erosion will degrade the productivity of the land.

Scientists have discovered that rangeland hydrology is much more complex than we originally thought. Although science has not yet provided all of the answers, this much we do know – that brush control has not produced the water we have hoped for.

There are many good reasons why ranchers and landowners engage in brush control. When properly carried out and with good sustainable management, selective brush control can help maintain or restore healthy grasslands, improve wildlife habitat and sustain ecologically diverse landscapes.

Government incentive programs that promote genuine land and water stewardship on private land are a worthy investment of public funds, but only if they deliver the benefits they promise.

If public funding of brush control continues, it must be justified for reasons other than an increase in water.

Steve Nelle is a privately employed range and wildlife specialist with 39 years of experience working with landowners. He retired from the Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2011. Nelle is a Life Member of the Society for Range Management and resides in San Angelo.

An earlier version of this article was published
in the Kerrville Daily Times



From Judy Gausnell

When the members of the 2014 Hill Country Master Naturalist class had devoured the potluck dishes and said goodbye to each other at the Cibolo Nature Center commencement event in November, there was a universal desire to stay connected. Led by the enthusiasm of class member Tyra Kane, now the official Social Chairperson of the class, the group met in February at the Center Point ranch owned by Aspasia Erian. The motivation to gather was the desire to stay connected, to volunteer along with each other, and to join in meaningful AT learning opportunities.

The gathering was considered a reunion, and the attendance was impressive with 28 of the 35 class members showing up at 10 a.m. for coffee and sweets, followed by a meeting. The Erian's ranch is close to the Kerrville Airport and was built by the inventor of the Mooney airplane. Possibly the funniest moment of the morning was hearing sophisticated Aspasia explain the weird guest restroom, which is a small triangle; obviously, it's a copy of an airplane restroom.

We have named ourselves the Fourteeners. Our goal is to stay connected with each other while also encouraging our commitment to the Master Naturalist mission. One future plan is to go to the Kanes' ranch in Comfort on April 1 to see Tyra's success in saving trees. Currently, Tyra is negotiating with Mother Nature to make sure that her redbuds will be blooming; however, if not, she has many tips on saving trees in the Hill Country which will be the lesson of the day.

The photo is a composite of the Fourteeners at the gathering. A recommendation to future classes, as well as to those past, is to take advantage of the camaraderie that you build in those Wednesday sessions. Make it a force for sharing knowledge, future learning, and mutual support.



Cibolo Nature Center & Farm 25th Annual Mostly Native Plant Sale

Now in its 25th year, the Mostly Native Plant Sale is a community-favorite event. Held at the Kendall County Fairgrounds on the first Saturday in April, you can find native and tried-and-true Hill Country plants for your landscape and gardens. Meet the expert growers and learn from informal presentations and demonstrations throughout the day.

nurseries and growers with native and well-adapted plants for this region;
regionally produced food items and natural products--soaps, candles, and fiber products;
nature-inspired art and jewelry; garden art, furniture, and pottery;
organic soils, plant food, pest prevention; landscape design and rainwater harvesting systems businesses

Cost: \$5.00 per person *OR* become an individual CNC&F member for as little as \$25 and receive free entry to the sale in addition to receiving CNC&F benefits all year long!

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on April 4

Location: Kendall County Fairgrounds, on Highway 46, Boerne, TX 78006

**The annual CNC&F members pre-sale event, Sip & Shop,
will be held on Friday evening (April 3) from 5 - 7 p.m.**

Calling All Birders and Nature Enthusiasts!

The registration deadline for teams participating in this year's Great Texas Birding Classic is approaching quickly. Join this fun, friendly, birdwatching competition. There are tournament categories for all ages and skill levels, so select the one that works best for you. Since the competition is now statewide it's much more convenient for all participants as well.

Registration Deadline: April 1st
Tournament Days: pick any day from April 15-May 15

Participating teams can choose from a variety of tournament categories, choosing to participate for a half day, full day, or more and compete regionally or statewide, including:

The Big Sit! This category is great for teams that have one or two "ringer" birders or if you have lots of people wanting to be on one team together.

State Park Tournament, Big Sit! or Sunrise-to-Noon Tournament. Ideal for a team seeking a more laid-back day without too much traveling around and for teams composed of mixed ages, so kids, teens, and adults can be on a team together.

Regional Big Day. Perfect for those who want to test their skills against others in your part of the state, while birding for most or all of a 24-hour period. Categories are separated by age groups. Mentor a Roughwings (13 years and younger) or Gliders (age 14-18) or do your own adult tourney.

Statewide Tournament. Take on birders throughout Texas for either the Statewide Big Day Tournament for 24 hours of birding or enter the Statewide Weeklong Tournament for six consecutive days of birding anywhere and everywhere in Texas.

Want to learn more? Here are quick links to some of the basics to get you started:

How to Participate: <http://bit.ly/1dNevMI>. All registration forms are online, so it's so easy to enter your team and participate!

Tournament advice for mentoring a youth team, doing a Big Day Tournament, taking on the Weeklong Tournament, or birding with blind or visually impaired birders can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1gBGwvY>

Sponsorship tips - Community organizations, bird clubs, local businesses and more could sponsor your team(s). Learn more here: <http://bit.ly/1BONt7M>

Conservation grant project proposal - Submit projects for a chance to win funding! Project proposals are due by May 1st. If you field a team and if your team wins, it could be in a position to select your group's project proposal: <http://bit.ly/1BiD03c>

For inspiration, check out this short video highlighting the Big Sit! Tournament: <http://youtu.be/x6bSYNzP1wQ>. Go to www.birdingclassic.org for more information and registration instructions, or call Shelly Plante, TPWD Nature Tourism Coordinator, 512-389-4500.

The Texas Deer Study Group is a 1.5 day workshop focusing on white-tailed deer management and research. This year's event, to be held in Palestine on April 9-10, is directed towards the hunter's role in deer management. Topics include impacts of predation on deer populations, a timeline of deer management, regulations in regard to deer and deer hunting, and habitat management. The program will wrap up at Big Woods on the Trinity, looking at habitat and management techniques.

For more information or to register online please visit <http://www.texas-wildlife.org/resources/events/texas-deer-study-group-2015> . Contact Clint Faas at cfaas@texas-wildlife.org for more information and details.

APRIL 18, 2015

Texas Tech University – Llano River Field Station



Oasis Pipeline Wildfire Recovery Workshop



Please join us to discuss the recovery of land impacted by the April 2011 Oasis Pipeline Wildfire. An expert panel will provide information about recovery of the land, water and wildlife, and what strategies were most effective.

In addition to a guided tour, participants will have access to resources, programs, and assistance information.

Landowners will gain knowledge and resources for the continued recovery and monitoring of their land including booths with information about conservation programs and assistance, as well as information about habitat and wildlife management. The morning panel session will be followed by a question and answer session and then participants will take a guided tour of demonstration areas.

Register by April 1, 2015

For more information, visit southllano.org.

The View from Rusty Bend



Ice clad Bald Cypress

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake.

-Robert Louis Stevenson

“HEY!” Rap, rap, rap. “The feeder’s empty! It’s February!” I sit at the breakfast table, eye to eye with three crazy goldfinches hanging on the screen, banging on the window. The frozen fog has flocked the landscape and food is scarce. I stand notified.

This February, Rusty Bend is spare and bare. Live Oaks are shedding their leaves; the trees have lost all color. The eye searches for green and rests with relief upon lime-colored fields of winter oats. Long stretches of cold keep us inside by the fire as we wait and wait and wait for spring.

I am by nature an early riser, but the Canyon Wren beats me to it every day. It’s as if she is saying: “Get up! Don’t miss anything!” Her lilting aria is the most inviting of alarms. I grab my coffee and start paying attention.

Some February days seem to have a critter theme. The turkeys wake me up while it is still dark, squabbling and gobbling on the roost. Then we see them outside each window throughout the day. Our punctual skunk, the 7:06, returns for a few days, then calls in the cavalry. One, two, three, and four little skunks canter by the house, each with distinctive markings. On this uncommonly warm day, they roam about searching for mates.

One cold and foggy morning draws in the foxes. Three of them trot the perimeter of the yard with purpose. In the soft stillness of the mist, we see a Great Blue Heron showing the world what real gliding is all about as he drifts above the river between the cypress trees. His mate follows his path as surely as if there were a trail in the air.

I step outside for firewood and spook a very wet roadrunner on the bottom step. Andy sees him later, comically balanced on top of the bird feeder. Finches and titmice yield their stations to the ungainly trespasser, and watch the show from the bushes.

The wild temperature variation has thoroughly confused the plants. Elbow Bushes signal spring with their early blossoms, then get bitten by a hard freeze. Bluebonnets are already showing their little gray-green skirts. Will they survive the next frigid morning?

On rare days, the sun finds its way through the clouds and cold; then at sunset an amber light flows across the pasture. October light without the gaudy foliage; it has a purity about it. In February, you take your color where you can.



Fog laced spider's web

The poet, Mary Oliver, said that “Attention is the beginning of devotion.” Wake up. Look close.

Lucy Griffith, PhD co-manages the Rusty Bend Ranch with her husband, Andy Robinson. When she is not on a tractor named Ruby, she practices Clinical Psychology. When the tractor isn't running, Andy is fixing it or building something straight and true. Both Lucy and Andy are certified Master Naturalists from the Class of 2013. Comments welcome at doctorluz@hctc.net.

Advanced Training

THURSDAY, MARCH 19 6PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER, KERRVILLE (RNC)

AT 15-081 CONVERSATIONS WITH CONSERVATIONISTS

Steve Nelle will speak on "Genuine Land Stewardship," which he defines as a "deeply held inner conviction that motivates landowners and land managers to care for their land." A wine and cheese reception begins at 5:30. No charge; recommended donation \$20 per person.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 9AM-12PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER, BOERNE (CNC)

AT 15-059 HARVESTING RAINWATER AND SOLAR ENERGY

John Kight, engineer; rainwater catchment and solar panel owner gives the latest technological information and the most practical advice. Cost: \$25 for CNC members; \$25 for non-members. To register now, go to ben@cibolo.org; for more information, call 830-249-4616.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 9:45AM-12PM LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER, AUSTIN

AT 15-071 FIELD TRIP AT THE CENTER

Dan and Terri Carroll, docents at the center, will provide the option of a two-hour tour beginning at 10am (Tour One) or a one-hour tour, (Tour Two) beginning at 9:45. Cost: \$9 per person (cash only) at the start of the tour. Minimum of 15 registrants; to register now, contact Rheda Boardman at rhedaboardman@yahoo.com or 713-504-6253 and designate Tour 1 or Tour 2.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 1-3:30PM HONEY CREEK STATE NATURAL AREA, SPRING BRANCH

AT 15-063 NATURE HIKE AT HONEY CREEK STATE NATURAL AREA

Craig Hensley will lead this hike. Wear sturdy shoes. Cost: \$7, unless you have state park pass.

MONDAY, MARCH 23 6:30PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY AUDITORIUM, KERRVILLE

AT 15-054 IT AIN'T EASY BEING GREEN: THE NATURE CONSERVANCY AND CONSERVATION IN TEXAS

John Herron, Director of Conservation Programs for the Texas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, will present an overview of The Nature Conservancy organization and programs at our monthly meeting.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24 7-8PM MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FREDERICKSBURG

AT 15-085 NATIVE SHRUBS OF THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

Linda Higby will describe and show photos of shrubs, maintenance of shrubs, and the types of landscapes in which the shrubs look the best at this monthly meeting of the Native Plant Society of Texas Fredericksburg Chapter. Free.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26 WEBINAR

AT 15-052 STREAM CHANNEL REPAIR AND RESTORATION

Following extreme flooding damage, a systematic and sound approach is needed to assure that the proper treatments are implemented. This one hour webinar will present an overview of geotechnical and fluvial considerations. Please join the session 15 minutes prior to the start of the webinar; go to <http://www.conservationwebinars.net/webinars/stream-channel-repair-and-restoration-following-extreme-flooding-damage-part-2>.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26 9-10AM ENCHANTED ROCK STATE NATURAL AREA

AT 15-038 WHAT'S IN THE PUDDLE? VERNAL POOLS

Whether you'd like to be a "lifeguard" or just would like to know more about these special places, this presentation is for you. We will start at the pavilion and take a short hike to the summit that ties in with what we've learned. The presenter is Nina Hazle. Cost: \$7, or show state park pass. Limited to 25 people; call 830-685-3030 to register.

FRIDAY, MARCH 27 12:30-5:30PM BOERNE (SPECIFIC SITE TBA)

AT 15-084 Back to Basics, Home Gardening, Chickens, and Natural versus Organic Production.

This is one of a series of educational events for new landowners to be held in four counties, with different topics in each. For more information (including site identification and maps) and for registration, contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office, 830-997-3452.

SATURDAY, MARCH 28 9AM-12PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER, BOERNE

AT 15-020 INTRODUCTION TO BIRDING

Avid birders and Master Naturalists Tom and Patsy Inglet share tools, tips, and techniques that allow you to start birding like a pro. Cost: \$20 for CNC members; \$25 for non-members (per person).

Advanced Training

SATURDAY, MARCH 28 8:45AM-3PM LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER, FREDERICKSBURG

AT 15-065 Native Plant Society of Texas Spring Symposium

Speakers at the event this year will be Brandi Clark Burton of Austin EcoNetwork, on Building an Environmental Community; Scooter Cheatam, on Useful Wild Plants; Dawn Hancock, on Pollinators; Dr. Ashley Lovell of Texas Land Conservancy, on Saving Nature; and Andrea DeLong-Amaya of the Wildflower Center, on Native Plant Selections. Register online now at <http://www.npsot.org/springsymposium2015>. Cost: \$50 for NPSOT or Wildflower Center members; \$55 for non-members. You may pay at the door (\$65) provided there is available space. A light breakfast, box lunch and full access to the Wildflower Center gardens is included.

FRIDAY, APRIL 3 9:30-10:30AM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER, KERRVILLE

AT 15-074 SEEDS: THE FRUIT OF THE MATTER

The Gleaners of Riverside Nature Center are offering their basic training session on the gathering, cleaning, and storing of seeds--most of which will focus on wildflowers, although grasses will also be addressed. Barbara Lowenthal and Susan Longacre are the instructors. Cost: \$5 for RNC members; \$8 for non-members. To register, go to SusanLongacre354@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4 8:45AM-3PM ECOCENTRO, 1802 N. MAIN AVE., SAN ANTONIO

AT 15-086 INVADERS OF TEXAS CITIZEN SCIENTIST TRAINING

This full-day training opportunity will include data entry, use of a GPS and digital camera and the new Texas Invaders mobile application utilization. The workshop will also cover invasive pests of regulatory concern and best management practices for the control and eradication of selected species. We will demonstrate the Eradicator Calculator, which is designed to help organize and record volunteer-based eradication efforts. Bring a camera and GPS or Smartphone/Tablet if available and a sack lunch. The Program Coordinators are Lonnie and Judith Shockley and Cheryl Hamilton. Space is limited; to register, go to

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1eV7njyM7Nwx-rpT5W1if6BwLu5dFLu4okJ8ilAx8Smw/viewform?c=0&w=1&usp=mail_form_link

TUESDAY, APRIL 7 7-8PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER, BOERNE

AT 15-072 NATURALISTS OF FRONTIER TEXAS

Lonnie Childs, immediate Past President of the NPSOT, will speak on Texas, 1820 to 1880, when hundreds of naturalists searched for specimens to broaden knowledge and understanding of botany, zoology, paleontology, and geology. Their accounts provide a report of their adventures and a view of the natural landscape prior to alteration by European settlers.

FRIDAY, APRIL 10 10AM-12PM LAND HERITAGE INSTITUTE, 1349 NEAL ROAD, SAN ANTONIO

AT 15-073 FIELD TRIP

The LHI, on the lower end of the Medina River, showcases every culture that shaped the state of Texas. Our guide, Peggy Oppelt, is a volunteer with the Land Heritage Institute and a Texas Master Naturalist. She will lead a nature hike that is over two miles and semi-strenuous; not ADA accessible. Wear sturdy shoes. Cameras and walking sticks are encouraged. Donation: \$3 minimum per person.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15 9-9:45AM WEBINAR

AT 15-044 THE MAGIC OF MONARCHS

Videoconferencing style programs are offered through Connect2Texas. Each program is 45 minutes long, designed for grades 1-6; TEKS aligned, and free. Go to www.connect2texas.net to register.

SATURDAY, APRIL 18 8AM-4:30PM TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION, 95 FREDERICK ROAD, FREDERICKSBURG

AT 15-077 NPSOT NATIVE LANDSCAPE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM WORKSHOP

For details on Level 1, Introduction to Native Landscapes, and Level 2, Landscape Design with Native Plants, go to <http://npsot.org/wp/nlcp/course-descriptions>. Each level includes five classroom hours and two outdoor hours. A Competency Certificate is issued upon passing an optional end-of-day test. Participants must complete Level 1 before attending Level 2. Go to <http://npsot.org/wp/nlcp/> to register. Cost, Level 1, \$37 (all registrants); Level 2, \$37 for NPSOT members; \$52 for non-members. For more information contact Meg Inglis, 512-589-1316.

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.



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.

Board of Directors 2015

Kathy Ward -- President

Paul Person -- Vice President

Sarah Hilburn -- Secretary

Diane McMahon -- Treasurer

Liz Ross -- Advanced Training Director

Bob Wiedenfeld -- Communications Director

Lisa Flanagan -- Membership Director

Pat McCormick -- Volunteer Service Projects Director

Brenda Fest -- 2015 Class Director

Judy Gausnell-- 2014 Class Representative

Vern Crawford -- Immediate Past President

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:

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.

LEARN
MORE ON
OUR WEBSITE

TXMN.ORG/HILLCOUNTRY/

Keeping the Hill
Country Native

Questions about our chapter?

Email Lisa Flanagan,
Membership Director

hillcountrymembership@gmail.com

