

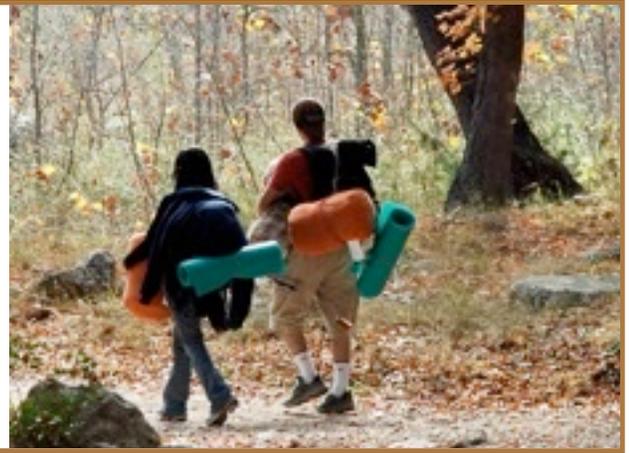
# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the

Texas Master Naturalist

Hill Country Chapter

September 2015 Volume 13 Number 10



*Texas Parks and Wildlife photo*

T E X A S

Master  
Naturalist™



## OCTOBER 26 MEETING: SOIL HEALTH

Peggy Sechrist, the Hill Country coordinator for Soil for Water, a project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology that is focused on educating landowners on ways to increase the water holding capacity of their soils, will speak on the role soil health plays in catching and holding rainwater.

Everyone is welcome to join us on Monday, Oct. 26, 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; the program begins at 7:00.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . . . Kathy Ward

Happy Fall to you!

It's great to have cooler weather. I hope you have been taking advantage of it to be outside and enjoying volunteering at our many outdoor opportunities. Also, I hope to see many of you at the State Master Naturalist meeting in Marble Falls this weekend and at our chapter meeting the following week. Our speaker, Peggy Sechrist, will speak on the very important subject of soil and water.

We will be sending the new Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter Operating Handbook to all members of the chapter soon. This new Chapter Operating Handbook integrates our chapter's existing procedures and guidelines, which were developed over the chapter's history, with the State Chapter Operating Protocol document. We will vote on accepting this document at our chapter meeting in November before we hear our speaker.

That meeting is on November 16, which is earlier in the month than usual to avoid Thanksgiving week. Our chapter advisor, Michelle Haggerty (who also is State Parks and Wildlife Adviser for all Texas Master Naturalists), will talk to us about the new Volunteer Management System, which Texas Master Naturalists who have computers will start using in January 2016. The class of 2015 members, who are doing a lot of volunteering, started using the VMS already and are doing fine with it. Those who have been teaching them say that once you learn it, it is easier. If you have any trouble with it and have a mentor, you can ask your mentor to help you enter your data. The Board will set up VMS workshops in area libraries as needed.

Thanks for all you are doing!

Kathy Ward  
President, 2015 Hill Country Master Naturalist chapter



Initial Certification

Ron Lehman

Recertification

Kris Bobbitt, Anne Cassidy, Cathy Downs, Jan Grimes, Carl Luckenbach, Pat McCormick, Glenn Randow, Ann Schneider, Mary Frances Watson, Ken Weber

Milestones

Pat McCormick - Bronze Dragonfly, 250 hours

Leanne Beauxbeannes, Rose Ellis, Merrily Labarthe - Brushed Silver Dragonfly, 500 hours

*Congratulations to members who received awards at the July meeting:*



From left to right: Chris Anderson, Paul Unger, Jan Unger, Larry Altman, and Sharon Hixson



From left to right: Mary Thomas, Jim Jones, and Lisa Flanagan

With sadness, we report the death of Paul Pedersen, father of Reidun Hilleman, both members of the Hill Country Master Naturalist Class of 2009. Paul got a diagnosis of malignant mesothelioma on September 22, following surgery to find the cause of fluid surrounding his left lung. "An aggressive cancer," the doctors said. "No chemo, I am not afraid, I have lived a good life," Paul said. On October 1 he died, less than a day after entering hospice care.

Paul was a person to whom service came naturally. Among his many volunteer activities, he was an outdoor guide at Cibolo Nature Center, sharing the wonder of nature with bus loads of children. He was a mentor to many new master naturalists, giving guidance and cheerful support and sharing his friendship.

A memorial service will be held on November 1 at Cibolo Nature Center. As details are finalized they will be posted on the website of Vaughan's Funeral Home in Boerne.

The family asks that you continue to lift them up in your thoughts and prayers.



Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 9/11/2015 | Soil for Water??                         |
| 9/18/2015 | Nature's Recovery After the Bastrop Fire |
| 9/25/2015 | Habitat—It Is Where We All Live          |
| 10/2/2015 | Lightning Hits a Favorite Tree           |

These and all other previous Kerrville Daily Times columns can be found at [www.hillcountrysnaturalist.org](http://www.hillcountrysnaturalist.org)

From Judy Hall

*The Monarchs arrived here (just north of Junction, on the headwaters of Gentry Creek) on October 8 or maybe day before. They are roosting in pecans near the spring. I would guess there are over a thousand, and the same amount are roosting in pecans just north of our house.*



From SkipKip Kiphart

The TPWD Nature Tracker page, The Monarch Butterfly, has been created and contains a lot of information with links to projects and other organizations. Go to: [https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife\\_diversity/texas\\_nature\\_trackers/monarch/](https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/monarch/) Note the Pollinators of Texas Fact Sheets and Texas Monarch and Native Pollinator Conservation Plan and the Identify Milkweek link, which is a great resource for identifying Texas milkweeds.

## Gleaners 20th Anniversary, October 20th, 2015

George Cates, Guest Speaker: "Safeguarding the Web of Texas Life"

On October 20, 2015, the Gleaners group of Riverside Nature Center will host a potluck luncheon to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the organization. All with an interest in native grasses and wildflowers are welcome at the luncheon, which will begin at 11:30 at the Riverside Nature Center. Please RSVP to 830-257-4837. This event, which coincides with Texas Native Plant Week, will celebrate the original work of Edith Bettinger, who founded the Gleaners in 1995, and all those who continue to be inspired by her work.

The Gleaners participate in various activities which include a bit of botany, wildflower observation and identification, plant rescue from roadsides and properties to be developed, and caring for the wildflower meadow at Riverside Nature Center. The main focus of the group is to glean and clean seeds, which are shared for personal gardens and planting at Riverside, as well as are shared with others in the community who have an interest in maintaining our native wildflower diversity.

The speaker for the event is George Cates, manager of the farming and seed production operations for Native American Seed in Junction. George began interning for Native American Seed in 2002 and was hired full time after graduating from Austin College in 2006 with a B.A. in Environmental Studies. For the past decade, he has participated in and led many prairie restorations utilizing seeds harvested across the many eco-regions of Texas. He will share photos and processes of the restoration of Commons Ford Metropolitan Park in Austin, where he has joined with an avid local birder to restore 72 species of grass, in addition to wildflowers, on 40 acres that have now become a favorite haven for a wide variety of birds.

In addition, he will share insights from the Austin project that can be used to further enhance the meadow restoration at the Riverside Nature Center. At the conclusion of his presentation, he will discuss commercial processes that can be adapted to our local gleaners' hand work, as well as any other best practices that can be applied to work on Hill Country properties.

Displays of the history of the Gleaners organization, as well as the wildflower meadow at the Riverside Nature Center, will be of particular interest to those who have enjoyed the flourishing beauty of the Nature Center garden. After the severe drought of 2011 caused the loss of many native plants, as well as encouraged the overrun of numerous invasive species, a restoration project was begun in June 2012 with professional input from Native American Seed. After a year of keeping selected spaces bare, in 2013 a seed mix of mostly warm-seasoned grasses together with annual, biennial, and perennial wildflowers were planted. Now, thanks to a team of dedicated volunteers who work year round maintaining the meadow, the glory of native plants can be shared by all who stroll through the grounds of the Riverside Nature Center.

This event will be a time of celebration as well as an ongoing commitment to the benefits that native plants provide, such as air and water cleansing, water supply retention, erosion and sediment control, pollination, and habitat for wildlife. As George Cates will emphasize in his presentation, planting native seeds is an important step in safeguarding the web of Texas life.

Riverside Nature Center  
150 Francisco Lemos St  
Kerrville, Texas 78028  
[www.riversidenaturecenter.org](http://www.riversidenaturecenter.org)  
830-257-4837

From Sharon Hixson

The 2015 Fall Native Plant Sale & Festival at Riverside Nature Center on October 3 was a fantastic event. Many Texas Master Naturalists and members of this year's class came out to volunteer their time by helping with pre-event planning and gathering the plants, setting up the displays, greeting visitors, hauling plants to cars, directing traffic, cashiering, being docents who shared ideas on the benefits of native plants to our environment with the community at large, and last but not least, cleaning everything up after the event closed on Saturday.

A BIG THANK YOU to the many volunteers who donated their time to this event. Thanks also to RNC staff and volunteers for their support, to Master Gardeners, UGRA, and NPSOT for supplying their information to the public, Jim Stanley for manning his "Ask the Expert" table, and Karen Millikan and Antoinette Hamilton for their creative and popular children's crafts. Plus, a big thank you to Cathy Downs for her informative presentation on Monarch butterflies and Gracie Waggener for the butterfly tent and displays. It was a team effort and everyone is appreciated for their cooperation, insight, and knowledge, which was generously shared to make this event a success.

Mark your calendars for the 2016 Spring Sale & Festival scheduled for April 23!

From Daneshu Clarke

Muleshoe Farm and Ranch Trust in Comfort welcomed some of the members of the Class of 2015 on October 2. John Karger introduced the history of the farm, including the history of the house and the project of restoring it to what it was when it was built in 1855.

Rheda Boardman told about up and coming projects and introduced the project leaders for some of those projects, Jim Clarke and Ann Dietert, along with Mike McLaughlin, who has done all the rewiring of the house. They visited the Healing Garden and Butterfly Demonstration Gardens, which are managed by Ann Dietert and Daneshu Clarke, and met Don Carabin, is the leader on the restoration of the historical farm implements. Tom Hynes and Rheda Boardman led them on a grass, plant, and bird box trail walk along the North Creek, which is on the property. We also discussed our bee operation, which was installed by Jim Burgin.



We welcome you all to the Harvest Moon event on October 31 at the Muleshoe Farm and Ranch Trust. It was previously held at the Boerne Visitors Center and now has been moved to the farm. We hope to see you all there to enjoy the festive events and see the farm coming to life.



photos by Rheda Boardman

Saturday, October 31, 2015  
Noon - 9pm

9TH ANNUAL  
**Harvest**  
**MOON**  
**Celebration**



\$10 Adults | Kids Free

free passes can be downloaded from our site

[HarvestMoonCelebration.com](http://HarvestMoonCelebration.com)

Muleshoe Farm & Ranch Trust  
306 Highway 87 | Comfort, TX

Birds of Prey · Live Celtic Music · Story Telling · Belly Dancers  
Kids Costume Contest · Pie Eating Contest · Owl Walk · Trick-or-Treating

Proceeds to benefit Last Chance Forever  
and Muleshoe Farm & Ranch Trust



#hmccomfort

## What are Lichens?



Have you ever wondered about that fuzzy gray stuff that grows on tree bark and branches? These organisms are called lichens (pronounced “lie-kens”). Lichens are very abundant on the trunks and branches of our Hill Country trees. During dry periods the lichens are shrunken and gray colored. After a good rain they fluff up and look greener. Lichens are fungi that have discovered agriculture; they are not classified as true plants, but instead are a fungus and algae growing together. The fungus gives the lichen support and anchors it to the substrate. The algae use the sun's energy to make food for themselves and the fungus. Both the fungus and the algae give the lichen its color and texture.

Lichens are not parasites; they do not consume any part of the tree nor poison it. Homeowners do not need to be concerned at seeing lichens on tree trunks and branches. Chemical control of lichens is not currently recommended. This is due to two reasons: one, the chemicals are not currently cleared by EPA; and two, the lichens grow back within the same year after the tree was sprayed.



Lichens are used for many things by both animals and humans. They provide forage for deer and shelter and building materials for birds and insects. Some insects have adapted their appearance to look like lichens as a form of camouflage. Hummingbirds gather small pieces of lichen and other soft materials for their nests, gluing it all together with spider webs. They often camouflage their nests with bits of lichen glued around the outside.



There are tens of thousands of different types of lichens around the world and they occur in some of the most extreme environments. They are commonly seen growing on rocks and old gravestones. The presence of lichens in an ecosystem generally signals that the air is clear and the environment healthy. Lichens are good monitors of air quality; some species quickly disappear when exposed to air pollution. They may be useful to scientists in assessing the effects of air pollution, ozone depletion, and metal contamination. Lichens have also been used in making dyes and perfumes, as well as in traditional medicines.

From Pam Lienhard

## Snake Program at the Kroc Center

Master Naturalist Karen Millikan introduced first and second grade students to snakes of the Hill Country in the September 17 after-school program at the Kroc Center. The program featured Shucks, the resident corn snake from the Riverside Nature Center, as the special guest. Karen used posters, pictures, snake replicas, a snake skeleton, books, snake sheds, and a rattlesnake skin to engage the students.

After learning about snakes, each student made a bead bracelet based on the color patterns of either a Speckled King snake, Coral snake or a Rough Green snake (all Hill Country residents). Not only did Karen come equipped with fabulous visuals for the presentation, she also did terrific research about snakes so that she was able to answer many questions from the students. Here are just a few of the topics:



Why do people fear snakes? Mainly because they don't know very much about them. Of all the animals, they are probably the most different from us--no limbs being the main difference. Although they are sometimes portrayed as evil, snakes are very valuable to our natural world, because they are the most efficient natural means of rodent control.

What poisonous snakes live in our area? Only one poisonous snake: the Prairie Ring Neck. Its toxic saliva is harmful if ingested, especially to the Coral snake that eats other snakes and to other animals that prey on snakes. A person bitten by a Ring Neck will have a reaction but nothing serious. There are four venomous snake species in the United States and all four live in Texas. These are Coral snakes and three Pit Vipers: Rattlesnakes (the Western Diamondback, the Northern Blacktail, and the Mottled Rock), the Copperhead and the Water Moccasin. According to local herpetologist Dave Barker, there are no Cottonmouth Water Moccasins in Kerr County. There are aggressive water snakes in our area--the Blotched Water Snake and the Diamondback Water Snake--but they are not harmful.

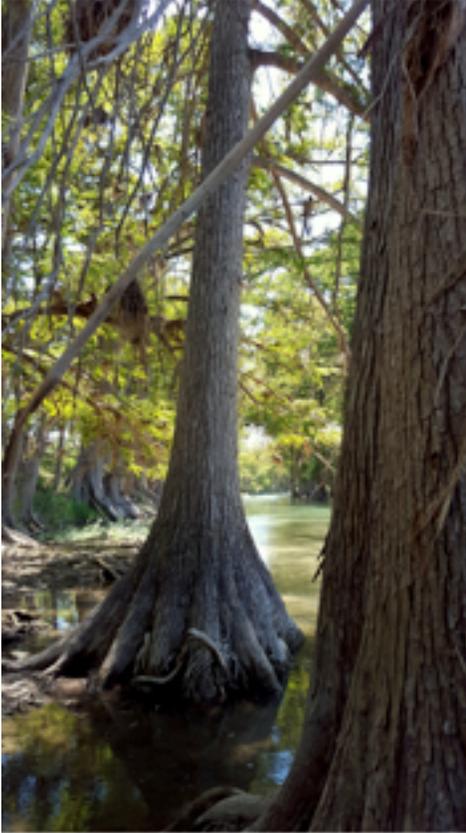
Remember that all snakes can swim and many enter the water from time to time.

Why do rattlesnakes rattle? Rattlesnakes rattle as a warning. The most widely held conclusion is that the rattling sound is a successful way of alerting and warning hooved mammals or predatory animals (also humans) that they might be too close or a threat to the rattlesnake. They are the only animal that has a built-in warning mechanism. A very specialized shaker muscle is responsible for the tail's movement. When disturbed, the snake can rattle for hours. Humans, quick to protect themselves from perceived danger, will almost surely choose to kill a rattlesnake on sight, even though it is not an impending threat. It is best to keep one's distance and move away. Predators such as owls, hawks, ravens, and coyotes, or road runners bent on a meal, might accept the rattling as "a dinner bell."



Assisting Karen were Master Naturalists Martha Miesch, John Sloan, and Mary Frances Watson as well as Chris Lienhard, Pamela Lienhard, Gabrielle McCrae, and Debbie Windham, who are members of the Hill Country Chapter Class of 2015.

## The View from Rusty Bend



*Cypress knees*

### *No Rain from These Clouds*

*The rivers are veins in the hand of a mummified chief;  
the unplowed earth--a prone derisive wall;  
the sky, a bitter-blue catalpa leaf  
crimped and crisping toward an untimely fall.*

*- Kenneth Porter*

At Rusty Bend in September, we remind ourselves that it's time to look up! Early migration has filled the skies with voyagers and we see dozens of pale Mississippi Kites hawking for bugs along the river. Darner dragonflies, bigger than hummingbirds, feast wildly on a hatch of tiny moths. The occasional oriole adorns the tops of trees and a few bats still season our late evenings.

We also look up for any sign of rain, but no joy there. So we are raising a bumper crop of dust, deeper and finer each day. Sigh.

The dry ground is sorely bug-free and our young turkeys seem to wander slower and slower, rarely bothering to scratch. The roadrunner, however, loves her dust baths in the road and lingers over her spa-time. After a shake she looks bar-coded, black and white and clean.

The water trough we buried has become a gathering place each evening. One night we watch as several axis does, a couple of whitetail bucks, and our turkey young 'uns converge for a drink. The deer congregate timidly, peering at the trough, stomping their feet like petulant children. The juvenile turkeys hide among their legs and under their bellies. Some sort of stalemate is occurring. At last, we see the culprit. A large fox *laying down* beside the watering hole. His posture declares: Mine, all mine. The motley crew retreats and leaves him to it.

Another night, in fast-fading light, we watch as greyish forms approach the trough. Two adult and two juvenile foxes meet at the water. The adults touch noses in greeting. The young ones pounce and dance, flinging themselves skyward. They look like shadow puppets in the dusk, conveying just the idea of a fox. Slender, weightless, ephemeral.

We also look up in the evenings. The heavens decided to have a festival and slipped in a full lunar eclipse, thoughtfully scheduling the spectacle before my bedtime. My last blood moon was on a trail ride forty years ago. That one smelled of horses and leather. This one is flavored with the scent of Threadvine and Kidneywood blossoms. We watch the earth's shadow slip slowly across the moon, crawling at its own pace. Reminding us that everything has its time. The rain will return.

But when the dust is near to driving me mad, and I need to feel some hope, I go down to the river to sit with my sisters, the cypresses. We both like our knees wet.

*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](mailto:doctorluz@hctc.net)*

*Text and image by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2015*

## Advanced Training

**TUESDAY, OCT. 20 11:30AM-12:30PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER, KERRVILLE (RNC)**

**AT15-226 GLEANERS TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

George Cates, Manager of Seed Production at Native American Seed, will share photos and processes of the restoration of Commons Ford Metropolitan Park in NW Austin where he has joined with an avid local birder to restore 72 species of grass, in addition to wildflowers, on 40 acres that have now become a favorite haven for a wide variety of birds. There is potluck luncheon celebrating the anniversary as well as the work of the Gleaners founder, Edith Bettinger. RSVP to Judy Gausnell, jgpp@windsteam.net, or call RNC, 830-257-4837.

**THURSDAY, OCT. 22 6-7:30PM BANDARA PUBLIC LIBRARY (KRONKOSKY LIBRARY)**

**AT15-230 ETHNOBOTANY**

Leanne Beauxbeannes will discuss the edible plants of the Hill Country, with attention to how both ancient and modern people have used native plants.

**FRIDAY, OCT. 23 9AM-5PM GILLESPIE COUNTY AGLIFE EXTENSION OFFICE, FREDERICKSBURG**

**AT15-204 SOIL TALK SERIES: GRAZING PLANNING**

Peggy Sechrist and Dr. Tim Steffens will provide strategies for managing grazing livestock to improve soil's water holding capacity and maintain excellent livestock performance. Lunch is provided for the first 25 persons who RSVP; others are encouraged to bring their own brown bag lunches. RSVP to soilforwater@ncat.org .

**MONDAY, OCT. 26 8AM-3PM KERR COUNTY ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG**

**AT15-223C ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG TRAINING DAY**

This second of a series is limited to four people who will complete one hour of training and five hours of volunteer time. No previous experience is necessary. Contact Kris Bobbit, kkbobbitt@gmail.com .

**MONDAY, OCT. 26 7PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY AUDITORIUM, KERRVILLE**

**AT15-202 SOIL HEALTH**

Peggy Sechrist of the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) will speak at our monthly chapter meeting on the role of soil in catching and holding rainwater.

**WEDNESDAY, OCT. 28, 1-2PM TEXAS LIONS CAMP, KERRVILLE**

**AT15-161 GRASSES IDENTIFICATION**

Jim Stanley is the presenter.

**SATURDAY, NOV. 7 2-5PM CAVE WITHOUT A NAME, BOERNE**

**AT15-227 CAVE TOUR**

Cave owner Tom Summers will provide this tour of the cave, photo gallery, and surrounding native landscape grounds. Bring a packed dinner if you want to stay for a concert at 7pm by Harpeth Rising, a string trio. Go to <http://www.cavewithoutaname.com/> to hear the trio and view the cave photo gallery. No charge to Master Naturalists for the tour; \$25. for the evening music event.

**TUESDAY, NOV. 10 11:30AM-12:45PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER, KERRVILLE**

**AT15-232 FRESHWATER MUSSELS**

Bring a sack lunch and hear Bob Howells, fisheries research biologist, speak on these natural biofilters. Cost: RNC members, \$8; nonmembers, \$10; free for those becoming members at the talk. For more information, call RNC at 830-257-4837.

**TUESDAY, NOV. 10 6:30-7:30PM HILL COUNTRY YOUTH EVENT CENTER , KERRVILLE**

AT15-231 BEE KEEPING SEMINAR

Double L Feed and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension are presenting this seminar. Call Double L Feed at 830-367-4100 to reserve your seat.

**TUESDAY, NOV. 10 -- THURSDAY, NOV. 12 9AM-5PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER, BOERNE**

AT15-228 RESTORATION AGRICULTURE DESIGN WORKSHOP

Mark Shepherd, farmer/entrepreneur/author, will present this workshop on the theory and practice of Restoration Agriculture, the intentional restoration of healthy, functional ecosystems as the context for economically-viable farm and ranch operations. Tuition: \$325 for the three-day workshop; includes lunch. To register (by Oct. 23) and for further information, go to [www.Cibolo.org](http://www.Cibolo.org).

**THURSDAY, NOV. 12-SUNDAY, NOV. 15 TRINITY UNIVERSITY, SAN ANTONIO**

AT15-207 TXSER 2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The conference celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the Texas Society for Ecological Restoration. For further information, contact Gwen Thomas at [gmthomas\\_eco@fastmail.fm](mailto:gmthomas_eco@fastmail.fm) Go to <http://chapter.ser.org/texas/2015-txser-conference/> to register.

**FRIDAY, NOV. 13 9AM-5PM HILL COUNTRY UNIVERSITY CENTER, FREDERICKSBURG**

AT15-204C SOIL TALK SERIES: FINANCIAL STABILITY

Peggy Sechrist and Walt Davis will speak on how agricultural enterprises can manage for improved soil function and greater profit. Lunch is provided for the first 25 persons who RSVP; others are encouraged to bring their own brown bag lunches. RSVP to [soilforwater@ncat.org](mailto:soilforwater@ncat.org).

**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.**

At our chapter meeting in November, which will be on Nov. 16, Michelle Haggerty, our chapter advisor, will explain and discuss the new Volunteer Management System, which Texas Master Naturalists who report their volunteer hours online will start using in January 2016.



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.



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 McMahan -- 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](mailto: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 Lisa Flanagan,  
Membership Director  
[hillcountrymembership@gmail.com](mailto:hillcountrymembership@gmail.com)

