

# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the

Texas Master Naturalist

Hill Country Chapter

May 2016 Volume 14 Number 5



T E X A S

Master  
Naturalist™



## MAY 23 MEETING: THE SCIMITAR-HORNED ORYX

The speaker will be Colleen Gardner, Executive Director at Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve. Over the last 45 years, this 5,550 acre ranch has become one of the largest habitat restoration projects in the state. About ten years into the restoration of the land and water, David Bamberger heard about the threatened extinction of the scimitar-horned oryx, which had roamed freely in northern Africa but was threatened with extinction. The species now is thriving on the ranch.

The monthly meetings of the Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter are free and open to the public. We meet in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority's lecture hall, 125 North Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Socializing begins at 6:30; the program starts at 7:00.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . . Brenda Fest

Hello fellow Master Naturalists!

I hope everyone has been enjoying the wonderful weather. What a wonderful time of the year to appreciate the many beautiful wildflowers, native shrubs and trees that feed so many beautiful creatures. We are so blessed to live in an area where so many different species live. It seems like this is an especially good year to enjoy the flora and fauna of the Hill Country.

We have all been busy with so many wonderful projects, both old and new. Two new pollinator gardens are underway. The Kerr County Courthouse is home to one of them. This garden is a small area near the side entrance of the courthouse and gives us an opportunity as Master Naturalists to provide a native garden in a very public place. The other new garden is on the grounds of the newly built Bandera Natural History Museum that is scheduled to open in mid June. We are happy to say that as visitors enter the museum they will see that the native garden at the entrance is actually a Monarch Waystation with native plants that attract pollinators. Both of these gardens will eventually have educational signage about the native plants and their importance to pollinators.

We will not be having a spring picnic this year. Instead, we will be having our regularly scheduled chapter meeting. This is such a busy time of the year with so many volunteer projects and advanced training opportunities. Please check our list in this newsletter and the online calendar each week to see what is available. Also, you are receiving emails from our Director of Advanced Training, Liz Ross, and Director of Volunteer Projects, Claire Mitchell. Get out there and have some fun with your fellow Master Naturalists.

We are continuing to receive applications for our 2016 Training class. If you know of some people who might be interested remind them that the deadline to apply is July 13. Applications and helpful information can be found on our website and brochure.

Join us at our May chapter meeting for a presentation about the scimitar-horned oryx by Colleen Gardener of Selah Bamberger Ranch.

Brenda Fest

## This Month We Honor



### Initial Certification

Becky Leal, Zeke Verbeck

### Special Recertification

Jill Bowen, Merrick Harter

### Recertification

Larry Altman, Carla Brady, Norma Bruns, Ann Carabin, Dan Carabin, Rose Ellis, Becky Etzler, Lisa Flanagan, Bob Hansen, Kay Harter, Sharon Hixson, Tom Hynes, Sandra Magee, Scott Magee, Barbara Marquer, Alexis McRoberts, Martha Miesch, Lars Nielsen, Liz Ross, John Sloan, Jim Stanley, Priscilla Stanley, Jan Unger, Paul Unger, Evelyn Vittone, Russell Vowell, John Walker, Bob Wiedenfeld, Morgan Williams

### Milestones

Larry Altman, Diana Armbrust, Sandra Meineke - Bronze Dragonfly, 250 hours

Morgan Williams, Roger McRoberts - Brushed Silver Dragonfly, 500 hours



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

From left to right, back row: Floyd Trefny, Gary Fest, Ann Dietert, Larry Eskridge, Carl Luckenbach, Steven Bishop, Chris Anderson.

In front: Susan McKinley, Gracie Waggener, Ginny de Wolf, Paul Unger, Ruth McArthur

Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley:

4/2/2016	The Backyard Cedar Tree
4/9/2016	Cottontails and Jackrabbits: It Wouldn't be Texas Without Them
4/16/2016	Mr. Texas Bluebonnet, Carroll Abbott
4/23/2016	Diversity: A Key Concept in Biology, Ecology, and Ecosystems
4/30/2016	A Weekend Learning about Cedar and Soil and Water

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



**An Invitation to Apply for Membership in  
the Hill Country Master Naturalist Chapter Class of 2016**

The last date for receiving applications is July 13. Classes begin on August 24 and continue every Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to about 1:00 or 1:30 p.m.

Commencement is Wednesday, November 16.

For more information, go to <http://txmn.org/hillcountry> or contact the 2016 Class Director, Diana Armbrust, at [frau.crossbow@swbell.net](mailto:frau.crossbow@swbell.net).

From Pam Lienhard

## Courthouse Pollinator Garden

After some site changes and rain delays, the Pollinator Garden at the Kerr County Courthouse is becoming a reality. Three major work days and lots of extra work by dedicated Master Naturalists have brought the project quite far.

On April 9 with the help of scouts and parents from Troop 111, we removed the granite gravel from Site 1 and cut back some of the exotics. A major task was removing a 900+ pound cactus from the site. On April 23 we spread the soil and started work on Site 2. Planting began on Site 1 on May 2, and on May 7 soil was spread on Site 2, which is now ready for planting. Donna Dutton designed the garden plan.



*Site 2: cactus and crape myrtles are gone, and soil is spread; ready for planting. Crew: Jill Bowen, Ray Dunton, Pam Lienhard, Clarence Reed; not pictured: Chris Lienhard.*



*Site 1 after the soil was spread and before the planting.*

We continue to plant when we are able to get the right plants for the garden and when the weather cooperates. Already in place are native plants such as blackfoot daisy, mealy blue sage and other salvias, four-nerve daisy, columbine, rock rose, a variety of milkweed, and more. The rock planters on Site 1 were created using historic stones from the original county courthouse.

We're still looking for donations. If you have some great pollinator plants looking for a new home, please let Mary Frushour ([wings2flyus@gmail.com](mailto:wings2flyus@gmail.com)) know. She's taken on the task of gathering the plants for the garden.

We've gotten many compliments from people entering and exiting the courthouse. Next time you go to the courthouse, enter from the east side and let us know what you think.



*The crew after spreading the soil on Site 1: From left to right: Lisa Flanagan, Ray Dunton, Jill Bowen, Chris Lienhard, Pam Lienhard. In front, Donna Dutton.*

From Martha Miesch

## Kroc Nature Study Program on Bats

Nyta Brown, Superintendent and Wildlife Biologist at Old Tunnel State Park near Fredricksburg, was the program leader for our sharp group of second graders in the after school program at the Kroc Center. She started the program with power point pictures of various bat species of all sizes and colors, many of which are found outside Texas. One of the interesting features of the species is that most of their names seem to match a characteristic feature. These students were very clever about guessing the names based on a physical feature, such as the Wrinkled-Faced Bat, the Yellow-winged Bat, and the Striped-faced Bat. The largest bat is the giant flying fox, which has a six foot wing span and is found in Indonesia. The smallest bat, the Bumblebee Bat, weighs less than a penny. It is found in Thailand and can have less than a two inch wing span. Vampire bats live only in Mexico, Central America, and South America and rely on blood from birds and mammals.

After showing these pictures, Nyta set up a display of animal skins that bats frequently seek nourishment from, such as raccoons or squirrels. The students looked carefully at the small skeleton that Nyta talked about. She showed them that it was very comparable to a human hand with a thumb and the four fingers that form its wing spread. The Master Naturalists who brought the students up to the display in groups were Jill Bowen, Chris Lienhard, Pam Lienhard, Gabrielle McCrae, and Martha Miesch. They absorbed this program with enthusiasm. That enthusiasm about nature can be contagious.

Nyta also showed an example of the three million Mexican Free Tailed bats that inhabit the old railroad tunnel that is now part of Old Tunnel State Park. They benefit agriculture by eating up to 120 million moths a night. It was in a display case along with two other species of a similar size. A few of the students have visited the Bat Tunnel already, and it is my guess that more will be asking to visit with their families in the future.



# WELCOME

Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend and contribute to Board of Directors meetings. The board will meet this month at the Agri-Life Building at 1:30 on Monday, May 23.

## New Native Pollinator Management Guidelines Available for Landowners Working to Achieve Wildlife Tax Valuation

Protecting native insect pollinators on private property now comes with new benefits for landowners. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Nongame and Rare Species Program developed new guidelines for landowners to develop wildlife management plans for their properties. If a landowner's property is currently evaluated under an Agricultural Tax Valuation, they may qualify for an Agricultural Tax Appraisal based on Wildlife Management Use if they follow the new guidelines to protect and support native pollinators.

Because more than 95 percent of Texas lands are privately owned, effective native insect pollinator conservation requires private landowner involvement. Landowners can play a significant role in conserving and maintaining pollinator populations by applying management practices that benefit these species, which support the healthy growth of several agricultural crops for free.

The new guidelines are published in Management Recommendations for Native Insect Pollinators in Texas, which can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/TXNativePollinators>. The guidelines outline a suite of different practices that benefit these species, from prescribed burning, native plant re-seeding and installation of native pollinator plots to creating nest sites. The various practices in the guidelines could be applied to small backyards and large ranches alike.

The guidelines address a growing problem: Native insects that are important to pollinating wildflowers and agricultural crops, including some bumble bee species and the monarch butterfly, have experienced dramatic population declines and are in need of conservation action. In addition, significant challenges to managed European honeybee health has sparked interest in native insects as alternative pollinators for agricultural production.

Pollination is one of the most vital processes in sustaining natural ecosystems and agricultural production. The majority of flowering plants that comprise Texas' diverse ecosystems rely upon insects to transport pollen among flowers, ensuring the production of viable seed. Viable seed is critical for the perpetuation of plant species across the landscape. The annual value of insect-pollinated crops to the U.S. economy is estimated at over \$15 billion.

Landowners who apply these practices to their lands will be supporting populations of native pollinators that aid in maintaining healthy plant communities on their properties, as well as those lands that surround them, thereby benefitting a range of other wildlife. In addition, landowners will be conserving and perpetuating native pollinators that can pollinate surrounding agricultural producers, potentially reducing the need for leased honeybee hives to pollinate some crops.

Although the non-native European honeybee tends to garner the most public attention, there are actually several hundred bee species that are native to Texas. These include bumble bees, carpenter bees, mason bees, leafcutter bees, long-horned bees and many others. These native bee species were here long before the honeybee and are critical to the state's diverse native plant communities and agricultural production.

Of all the insects that visit flowers in Texas, including beetles, butterflies, moths and wasps, bees tend to be the most effective pollinators. Two traits make bees preeminent pollinators: First, they purposefully collect pollen to feed their offspring, transferring pollen from flower to flower as they forage. During a single day, a female bee may visit several hundred flowers, depositing pollen along the way. Second, bees tend to be specific about the flowers they visit. During a foraging trip, a female bee may only visit the flowers of a particular plant species. The benefit of such foraging preferences is that the plants' pollen is not deposited on the flowers of a different plant species and wasted.

Native bee pollination is critical to the maintenance of Texas' diverse ecosystems. Many of the berries, nuts and seeds consumed by birds, mammals and other insects are the result of bee pollination of native woody and herbaceous plants. Several crops, including blueberries, grapes, olives, peanuts, pumpkins, squash, strawberries and tomatoes are more effectively pollinated by native bees than the non-native honeybee. The added benefit to farmers from native bees is that their services are essentially free if adequate natural habitat is maintained around farm fields to support healthy populations of these pollinators. The pollination service provided to U.S. agriculture by native bees has been estimated in excess of \$3 billion annually.

For additional information, please contact Michael Warriner, Nongame and Rare Species Program Leader, at [michael.warriner@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:michael.warriner@tpwd.texas.gov).

*reprinted from the Hill Country Alliance News, May 12, 2016*

# All Things Water

## Kerr County



**Wednesday, June 29, 2016**

**9:00 AM — 4:00 PM**

**Upper Guadalupe River Authority Auditorium**

**125 Lehmann Drive, Kerrville TX 78028**

**Seminar topics include: water planning, water rights, new landowner considerations, rangeland management, riparian area structure and function, water efficient landscapes, and rainwater harvesting.**

**Free of charge and includes lunch!**

**Eligible for 3 Pesticide CEUs.**

**Seating is limited, so pre-registration is required.**

**Call UGRA at (830) 896-5445 to register.**

**Brought to you by the Upper Guadalupe River Authority and  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in partnership with Hewitt  
Engineering Inc. and Kimley-Horn.**

## The View From Rusty Bend



Spring storm

### Hidden Nest Haiku

Silver dollar sized,  
Lichen crust, with spider silk.  
Tiny hummer house.

Dear Daddy,

This month would have marked your 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday and so I feel your spirit near. I picture you on our new front porch, with a Miller High Life in hand. Your tattered tie is tucked between the second and third buttons of your old dress shirt. The wingtips retired from the office, scuffed and muddy. For an old Virginia gentleman, this is as casual as you get. The Bob White calls and you whistle back.

You smile as you hear the baby ravens squawk in three-part harmony as Papa and Mama deliver food to the nest. The nest is just in front of our house, close enough that we are privy to the details of child-rearing. "Mighty fine," you say. Then you look up as you hear the Canyon Wren running his traps inside the gutter overhead. Click, click, click, you can hear his little wiry feet tap along the long gutter. A shiny, slippery canyon ripe with bugs for his babies.

Looking out over the river, you see that the "reluctants" have finally set their leaves. The mesquite, Texas Ash and pecans are the last to green up, but when they do and with all this rain, the river looks like Borneo, all lush and dripping. You hear a loud "Craaaaaack" and watch a Great Blue Heron fly below, like a benevolent bomber.

A tree we call the "No-see-um" blooms with a hatch of tiny bugs, backlit by the sun. A favorite haunt of the Blue-grey Gnatcatcher. He is a blur of motion, as he nabs what we cannot see. And our colorful migrants have arrived from Mexico: Painted Buntings and Summer Tanagers, Indigo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks. It's as if they agreed with Robin Williams' description: "Spring is nature's way of saying 'Lets party!'"

If we took a little walk, you would be tickled that the cedar has been cut. Prairie grasses such as Little Bluestem are thriving beneath the downed limbs. Some of those seeds are those you sowed long ago, and some I sowed last year. Even with all this rain, there's been virtually no runoff, as the grasses sponge up the moisture. There are seeps up and down the entire ranch. The spring above the tank is flowing once again. This once goat-nibbled caliche desert is healing, Daddy, and I know it would please you so.

I might have you sit in the breezeway of the barn, in our battered leather chair. With some binoculars you could watch the hummingbird nest, suspended from a dead branch. A round ball, almost invisible, cloaked in lichen. The mama hummer brings spiderwebs in for days to line her nest, weaving back and forth as she shapes it from within. Pure magic, those webs will stretch as her babies grow.

The barn is a fine place to listen to an afternoon thunderstorm and smell the perfume of a wet hill country spring. The post and rail fence gets soaked and when the sun comes out it steams with a certain grace, as if candles were just extinguished on each pillar.

A fine spring. You belong here. We miss you.

*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).*

*Poem, essay and image by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2016*

## Advanced Training

**MONDAY, MAY 16 8:30-10:30AM HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA, BANDERA**  
AT16-229 BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Ranger Leanne Beauxbeannes and Texas Master Naturalist Scott Magee lead this guided birding walk for both beginners and experienced birders. Bring binoculars, comfy/sturdy shoes, layered clothing, and water. If you wish, bring a picnic lunch and stay after the walk to enjoy our 5000-acre natural area. Come early to register; regular day-use fees apply: Texas State Park Pass, no charge for everyone in the vehicle; Seniors (65+), \$3 with Bluebonnet Pass; kids 12 and younger, always free.

**FRIDAY, MAY 20 10:45-11:45AM HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA, BANDERA**  
AT16-090 WILDFLOWER WALK

Walk with Ranger Leanne Beauxbeannes and learn to ID the common and the rare, the tiny and the tall that thrive in the limestone soil of the Hill Country. Meet at the headquarters at 10:45 for an easy guided walk through the wildflower pasture. Dress appropriately. Regular day use fees apply.

**SATURDAY, MAY 21 9AM-12PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER (CNC), BOERNE**  
AT16-108 HARVESTING RAINWATER & SOLAR ENERGY

John Kight, engineer, rainwater catchment and solar panel owner gives the latest technological information and the most practical advice. The Kight home relies solely on rainwater and their grid tied solar energy system produces sufficient energy to power all appliances other than the air conditioning. Tuition: Members \$25/person; non-members \$35/person. Pre-registration required; go to Ben Eldredge at [ben@cibolo.org](mailto:ben@cibolo.org).

**MONDAY, MAY 23 7 PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY, KERRVILLE**  
AT16-086 SCIMITAR-HORNED ORYX

The speaker is Colleen Gardner, Executive Director at Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve. Over the last 45 years, this 5,550 acre ranch became one of the largest habitat restoration projects in the state. About ten years into the restoration of the land and water, David Bamberger heard of the threatened extinction of the scimitar-horned oryx, which had roamed freely in northern Africa. The species now is thriving on the ranch.

**TUESDAY, MAY 24 6:30PM MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL, FREDERICKSBURG**  
AT16-115 GROWING TEXAS NATIVE PLANTS FROM SEED

Chuck Janzow, former science teacher, self-taught horticulturist, and founding member of the Boerne chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas is the speaker.

**MONDAY, JUNE 20 8:30-10:30AM HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA, BANDERA**  
AT16-229 BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Ranger Leanne Beauxbeannes and Texas Master Naturalist Scott Magee lead this guided birding walk for both beginners and experienced birders. Bring binoculars, comfy/sturdy shoes, layered clothing, and water. If you wish, bring a picnic lunch and stay after the walk to enjoy our 5000-acre natural area. Come early to register; regular day-use fees apply.

**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.**

### UGRA Volunteer Summer Study

Volunteers collect water samples from the Guadalupe River or tributary in Kerr County and bring those samples to UGRA in Kerrville for bacteria analysis. The program runs from the first week of June through the end of August. Volunteers can submit samples no more than once a week and can choose how many weeks they would like to participate. To volunteer, contact Tara Bushnoe, 830-896-5445 or [tbushnoe@ugra.org](mailto:tbushnoe@ugra.org). For more information, go to [www.ugra.org/vstudy.html](http://www.ugra.org/vstudy.html).



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 2016**

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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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*Questions about our chapter?*  
Email Lisa Flanagan,  
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hillcountrymembership@gmail.com

