

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter

June 2016 Volume 14 Number 6



<http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu> photo

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



JUNE 27 MEETING: TAWNY CRAZY ANTS

Dr. Robert Puckett, Assistant Professor and Extension Entomologist at Texas A&M University, will speak on the complicated biology and behavior of this invasive species. He will emphasize factors that lead to the invasion of tawny crazy ants and red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) and strategies for their management. Our monthly meetings 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

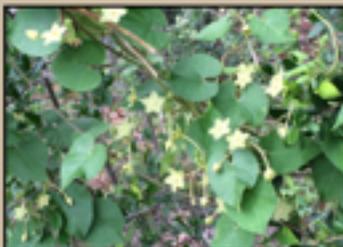
Hello Fellow Master Naturalists!

Summer is here for real. The rains have stopped. The rivers and creeks are flowing. Medina Lake is full after being almost dry for years. The continued waves of beautiful wildflowers is amazing. Because of the plentiful water, the diversity of plants is astounding this year. In the driest parts of Bandera county in Pipe Creek where I live are species of plants that I haven't seen in years. I was happy about the abundance of Antelope Horn Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*); I was able to collect a large quantity of seeds to contribute to the needed seed bank to increase available native milkweed population. I was also excited to see several stands of Texas Milkweed (*Asclepias texana*) in areas that I have never seen before. This is such a beautiful plant and so important for Monarchs. The Pearl Milkweed Vine (*Matelea reticulata*) is so abundant that you can actually see it from the roadside.

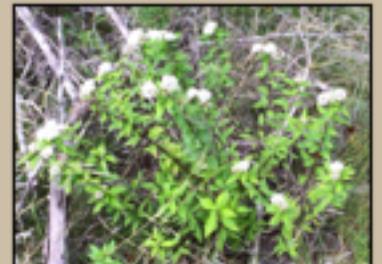
The New Class Committee, headed by the Class Director, Diana Armbrust, has been busy for the past several months preparing to welcome and conduct the training of the Class of 2016. Our Membership Director, Lisa Flanagan, has been receiving a steady flow of applications. The deadline for accepting applications is July 13. We are proud of the wonderful training opportunity that our chapter provides. Spread the word to your friends and neighbors.

Join us at our June 27 chapter meeting to hear Dr. Robert Puckett on Tawny (Raspberry) Crazy Ants.

Brenda Fest



photos by Brenda Fest. above, *Asclepias asperula*
left, *Matelea reticulata*; right, *Asclepias texana*.



This Month We Honor



Initial Certification

Jim Bobbitt, Clarence Reed

Special Recertification

Barbara Jansen

Recertification

Richard Adams, Leanne Beauxbeannes, Warren Ferguson, Eileen Gotke,
Ric McCormick, Ann Schneider, Marion Worthington

Milestone

Pam Lienhard, Andrew Robinson - Bronze Dragonfly, 250 hours

WELCOME

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



Congratulations to members who received awards at the May meeting:

From left to right: Larry Altman, Jill Bowen, John Walker, Barbara Marquer, Sharon Hixson, Marsha Miesch, Diana Armbrust, John Sloan, Norma Bruns, Rick Harter, Tom Hynes, Lisa Flanagan, Jan Unger, Paul Unger

Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley:

5/7/2016 The Texas Hill Country. How We Got Here
5/14/2016 There is Still Very Well-Managed Land in the Hill Country
5/21/2016 A Spring Walk Around the House
5/28/2016 How Can We Protect the Hill Country?

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

MENTORS NEEDED

We are seeking dedicated Master Naturalists to mentor our Class of 2016 members.

WHAT DOES THIS REQUIRE?

Be available for mentor training on July 28, 2016 (very important) where you will pick up class materials for your trainee. Then arrange to meet with him or her to deliver these materials and discuss them, so that your trainee will know what to expect during the program, and to answer any questions that he or she has.

Also, be available for the Class Reception on August 22, 2016.

Then, once classes begin, remain accessible for assistance when requested; stay in touch throughout the classes to help your trainee to have the best possible experience while learning about volunteering opportunities and advanced training.

PLEASE SIGN UP!

If you would like to be a mentor for a member of the the Class of 2016, please contact Lisa Flanagan at 830-928-2080 or hillcountrymembership@gmail.com

If you would like to be paired (if possible) with someone who has similar volunteering interests, please include this in your response.

THANK YOU!

UGRA Volunteer Summer Study

Volunteers collect water samples for bacteria analysis from the Guadalupe River or a tributary in Kerr County and bring those samples to UGRA for bacteria analysis. The program runs from the first week of June through the end of August. Volunteers submit samples no more than once a week and choose how many weeks they would like to participate.

Contact Tara Bushnoe for more information: tbushnoe@ugra.org.
HCMN project code KR11A

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.**

From Lisa Flanagan

A Step Back in Time

On May 15 a small group of Master Naturalists joined gracious hosts Bobby and Diane Gierisch at their ranch in Streeter for a tour of a very special place that has Cambrian age sandstone formations that date back 500 million years. It's located between the Llano Uplift to the east and the limestone of the western Edwards Plateau.



Sandstone between Llano Uplift and limestone

The land consists of open savannah-like grasslands and areas thick with bee brush, tasajillo, persimmon, mesquite, and mature blackjack, as well as post and live oaks. A wet-weather creek runs through steep rock cliffs and grasslands, revealing sedums, mosses, and other plant life that takes advantage of the moisture.



Ancient rock wall--who built it?

The sandstone rock formations could take you back in time, and a rock wall built ?? and by ?? allows the mind to wonder who lived here, when, and what the purpose of the wall was. A portion of the top wall is still intact.

Wildflowers took advantage of the wet Spring and cooler temperatures. Some flowers and cacti were the topic of enthusiastic discussion regarding their names.

Following the hike, participants came together for a picnic lunch and wrap-up discussion with Bobby. We also got to look through his journals/ almanacs, in which he has faithfully recorded details of the land, flora, and fauna, together with his experiences and observations. We thank you, Bobby, for a wonderful day!!



Hiking along a wet-weather creek



Pointing out ancient stromatolites



Hiking through sandstone formations



Sandstone, water, and plant life

From Brenda Fest

Pollinator Garden at the Bandera Natural History Museum

The Bandera Natural History Museum opened its doors on June 18. This museum is located on an eight-acre deer fenced property in the city of Bandera. The Board of Directors of the museum approached the Hill Country Master Naturalist Chapter and requested their help to landscape the grounds. So we have begun a new HCMN project. In time we will eventually add native grasses, flowers, shrubs, trees, and bird boxes to develop a native habitat throughout the grounds of the museum. This will take time.

For now, we have completed a small pollinator garden at the entrance of the museum. This garden is actually two separate plots that make up 476 square feet. A great group of Hill Country Master Naturalist volunteers have worked quickly to make this pollinator garden a reality in time for the opening of the museum. Here's a timeline of how the pollinator garden has come together.

March 29: HCMN volunteers met with museum board members Maggie Schumacher and Genie Strickland to survey the grounds of the museum. The volunteers included Peggy Carnahan, Gary and Brenda Fest, Jan Grimes, Claire Mitchell, Lynda Nollkamper, Tom Riordan, and Jim and Priscilla Stanley. Also present were Ernesto Cariño and Ysmael Espinoza from Medina Garden Nursery. They agreed to supply the native plants for purchase and provide their expert planting suggestions.

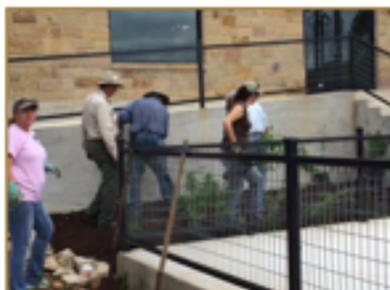
April 14: Brenda Fest met with the museum Board of Directors and presented a proposal for the pollinator garden. The board accepted the proposal and agreed to provide the necessary funds to purchase the plants, compost, mulch, and Monarch Waystation sign.

May 2 – 9: HCMN volunteers prepared the area, added compost, dug up plants, planted plants, added more compost, and then added mulch. In addition to the HCMN volunteers already involved, Lisa Barrett, Ray Dunton, Glenn Randow, Tom Schall, and Ken Weber also assisted. After all was done, we had planted 74 native perennials, including several native milkweeds. We added the Monarch Waystation sign just in time for the opening of the museum.

It is summer now; the garden is just getting established and we are already seeing butterflies visit the flowers that are beginning to bloom. We look forward to seeing this pollinator garden flourish. We are also looking forward to developing the grounds of the museum as a home for an abundance of native plants and critters.



Site at entrance of museum before we started.



Lynda Nollkamper, Glenn Randow, Tom Schall, Lisa Barrett, and Ken Weber adding plants and compost to small site.



Brenda Fest and Claire Mitchell adding plants to small site.



Lisa Barrett, Claire Mitchell, and Gary Fest water and finish up larger site.



Large site with Monarch Waystation sign.

Nature Study Program at the Kroc Center

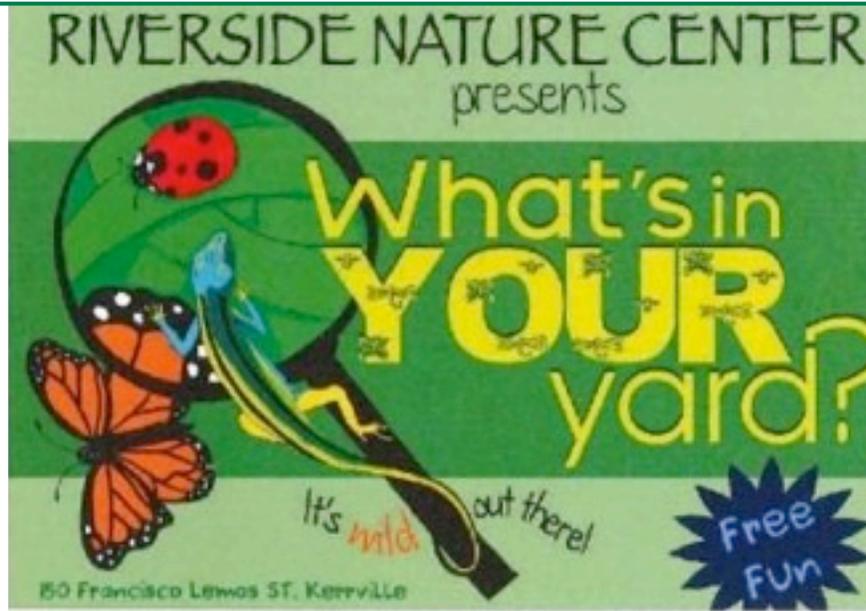
As Craig Hensley started setting up his props of various mammals' skins on the table in front of the after-school program for first, second, and third graders, it was obvious that they were excited about what they would be learning that afternoon. Master Naturalist volunteers Jill Bowen, Pam and Chris Lienhard, Martha Miesch, and John Sloan assisted with setting up skulls and antlers at the opposite end of the table. The students quickly pulled their chairs up near the display table to get a good view before Craig began.

He introduced himself and invited the students to visit the Guadalupe State Park, where he frequently presents programs to school children and visitors throughout the summer. He picked up animal skins such as coyote, grey fox, squirrel, skunk, possum, mountain lion, beaver, and raccoon and volunteers took turns carrying each one around as they were described, so the students could touch and in some cases smell the skins. Some held the furry pelts up to their cheeks. Then he held up the mammal skulls that also were on display and asked the students to tell him the difference between an elk horn and a deer antler. The students asked good questions and responded with good answers.

The finale of the program was small teams of students who took turns coming up to the table to match a skull to one of the mammals that had been discussed. For the most part they did a good job of remembering details like teeth, eye cavities, size, and probable diet needs when selecting and naming a skull.

Once again, the Master Naturalist volunteers enjoyed watching the enthusiastic students learn about nature. Thank you, Craig.





Thursday is Nature Night. Come visit with the experts. Bring questions & mysteries for identification. (6:30-7:30 pm)

(Free - but donations are always welcomed)

- June 9:** *Got rocks & fossils?* Susan Longacre & Grandson Gavin
- June 16:** *Who's that bird in YOUR yard?* Paul & Deloris Sellin
- June 23:** *Discover the Guadalupe River.* Tara Bushnoe & Travis Linscomb UGRA
- June 30:** *Cool crystals and fun fossils.* Bill Morgenstern
- July 7:** *What's the buzz with bees?* Debra Windham
- July 14:** *Dazzly dragonflies & beautiful bugs.* Bill Morgenstern
- July 21:** *What lives underground?* Morgan Williams
- July 28:** *Bugs! Snakes!* Judy Ferguson & Karen Millikan
- August 4:** *Who's been here? Evidence of wildlife.* Susan Sander
- August 11:** *Who's in the river?* Tara Bushnoe & Nate Smith

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 9 - 4. Thursday: 1 - 8
 Saturday: 10 - 3 Sunday: 1 - 4
 (830) 257-4837 www.riversidenaturecenter.org

The View from Rusty Bend



Guadalupe flooding

River, Risen

*The sun says goodnight, the dusk approaches;
and I watch the river rise.*

*The water's edges creep over banks;
a rich color of coffee-with-cream,
clotted with dark, wet logs.*

*The flood feels animate,
a vast creature smelling strangely of manure and perch.
Roaring in several octaves,
I feel him vibrate in my chest all night,
pummeling the cliff below my home.
My place in the world shrinks,
My sense of scale transforms.*

*At last, the beast subsides to earth.
Leaving the river scrubbed;
no stagnant pools, nor gooey edges.
He has remodeled the riverbed;
shaping new isles and rapids to relish.
Those cascades now sing a new song.*

As my granddaughter would say: “Buela, it’s lightnin’ and thundin’!” May is bursting with energy here at Rusty Bend. Fog, drizzle, storm, repeat. Some storms are so violent, the skies tremble with light. I get up from bed to watch and feel like I am in the center of a mirror ball. 360 degrees of lightning flashes. Constant. Stunning in intensity. Humbling.

The rain pushes out a second crop of new leaves and one can imagine the large growth ring that will date this wet, wet year. Abundance. More wildflowers, taller grasses, heavy seed heads, and babies, lots of babies. The new chickadees sport crisp white and black tuxedos, young ravens look yearningly at the bird feeder, fuzzy phoebes practice nabbing bugs. It is the time of small moths on the live oaks and it’s easy pickings for the just fledged. Mobs of moths. Working around the issue of awkward flight, the immature birds jump among the branches and grab ‘em.

The Canyon Wrens have fledged. From the bushes, they are noisy as they beg for bugs. “Cheep! CHEEP!” Mom and Pop ferry food to them for a few days, and now they patrol the porch with comically short beaks and tails. One windy storm blows down their nest and we can see it deconstructed. Nails! Thirteen nails from our construction project were woven into the nest with sticks and q-tips and dog hair. A miniature clean-up crew.

I look out the window at dawn and see another bug hunter. Snowcap’s white tail sticks straight up like a flocked Christmas tree as he grooves the yard for bugs. All you can see is a stiff tail pointed skyward. Downward facing skunk.

On the other side of the yard is a cottontail. I can walk right up to him. Clueless. He might as well carry a little sign that says: “Prey.” His cousin, a young jackrabbit is more with it. I watch him taste the new buffalo grass and spit it out. He methodically cruises the sod and levels stray forbs. A welcome weed-eater.

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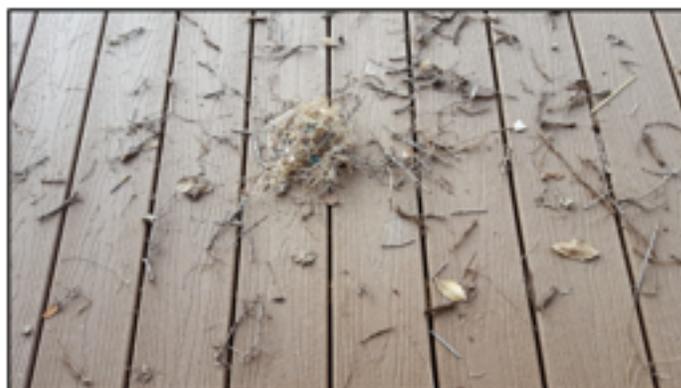
One afternoon, Andy and I are sharing a tasty beverage “with a view” and we hear a strange sound. Whump, whump, whump. Like the wings of a large raptor. We tiptoe over to the edge of the porch to see what could be happening, expecting something like a Cooper’s hawk pouncing on a titmouse, but no. Out of a hole in the ground a sandy colored snake is flinging its body three feet in the air. Like a thick rope, whump on the ground. Whump. A Coachwhip has grabbed a garter snake and is whipping it out of its lair. Hmmm. Hence the name.

Such abundance. More crickets, more mice, more frogs, more small snakes, more big snakes, more raptors. Rusty Bend thrums with vigor.

Then, in the evening, the skies become watercolored. Subtle, serene. The dusk comes on slow. The frogs begin their chorus. From the wet logs, another burst of energy. Lightning, small scale. Pirouetting fireflies to sweeten our night.

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.

Poem, essay, and images by Lucy Griffith. Copyright 2016



Downed Canyon Wren nest with nails



Advanced Training

MONDAY, JUNE 27 7PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY, KERRVILLE

AT16-119 TAWNY CRAZY ANTS

Dr. Robert Puckett will address the complicated biology and behavior of tawny crazy ants. He will emphasize factors that lead to the success of invasive ant species such as tawny crazy ants and red imported fire ants and strategies for their management.

TUESDAY, JUNE 28 7-8PM MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL, FREDERICKSBURG

AT16-126 INTRODUCING CACTI AND OTHER SUCCULENTS INTO YOUR LANDSCAPE

Dr. Jimmie Black will be the speaker at the monthly meeting of the Fredericksburg Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Social time, 6:30; presentation, 7pm.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29 9AM-5PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY AUDITORIUM, KERRVILLE

AT16-129 BANDERA COUNTY SPECIAL VALUATION BASICS WORKSHOP

Seminar topics include: water planning, water rights, new landowner considerations, rangeland management, riparian area structure and function, water efficient landscapes, and rainwater harvesting. Free; lunch included.. Limited seating; pre-registration is required. Call UGRA, 830-896-5445, to register.

MONDAY, JULY 18 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.

MONDAY, JULY 25 7PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY, KERRVILLE

AT16-TBA SPIDERS OF CENTRAL TEXAS

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, writer and photographer, will speak on basic spider biology and introduce the common spiders we might see in our yards and around the Hill Country.

MONDAY, AUGUST 15 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 Annual River Clean Up

July 23, 2016 8 AM – 12 PM

Flat Rock Park, Kerrville

Pre registration is encouraged; go to

<http://www.ugra.org/annualrivercleanup.html>.

All volunteers should return to Flat Rock Park with their trash by 11:00 am for refreshments and the distribution of awards for the most unusual item and the biggest item. Additional garbage drop off locations will be at the Ingram Boat Ramp, Guadalupe Park, and the Center Point Dam. All participants will be entered into a raffle for prizes and the first 100 pre registered volunteers will receive an official 13th Annual River Clean Up T-shirt. Additional t-shirts will be given away on a first come basis the morning of the clean up. Even though the Clean Up is being staged at one location, we anticipate that volunteers will spread out to clean up locations throughout the Guadalupe River watershed in Kerr County, including dry creek beds, bridges, and roadways.



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

- Brenda Fest -- President
- Floyd Trefny -- Vice President
- Rheda Boardman -- Secretary
- Diane McMahan -- Treasurer
- Liz Ross -- Advanced Training Director
- Bridget Langdale -- Communications Director
- Lisa Flanagan -- Membership Director
- Claire Mitchell -- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- Diana Armbrust -- 2016 Class Director
- Larry Eskridge-- 2015 Class Representative
- Kathy Ward -- 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.



Questions about our chapter?

Email Lisa Flanagan,
Membership Director
hillcountrymembership@gmail.com

