

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter
June 2017 Volume 15 Number 6



D.K. Langford photo

T E X A S



June 26 Meeting: White-tailed Deer Management in Urban and Suburban Environments

Kevin Schwausch, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Technical Guidance Biologist who is based in Burnet, will speak on strategies for managing the growing population of white-tailed deer in and around towns.

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!

Summer is upon us. The scattered rains have missed several areas in the Hill Country so the wildflowers are not as abundant this year as they were last year. We'll see what the rest of the summer brings.

I have been working with fellow Hill Country Master Naturalists in the seed gleaners group in the Boerne Chapter of the Native Plant Society to collect and clean a large amount of Antelope Horn Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*) seeds to contribute to the Bring Back the Monarch Campaign at Monarch Watch. We (more than twenty volunteers) have collected and cleaned milkweed seeds from seven different locations in Bandera, Comal, and Kendall counties. We have cleaned more than two pounds of milkweed seeds to contribute to the seed bank that's needed to increase available native milkweed population. Without the seeds, the production of native milkweed plants is not possible. This is an important link in our efforts to bring back the Monarchs.



Our New Class Director, Reggie Cox, has been working with the New Class Committee for the past several months to prepare for the Class of 2017. The deadline for accepting applications is June 30, which is a bit earlier this year. Please share this information with anyone who might be interested in signing up for this year's class. For more information, go to our website (<https://txmn.org/hillcountry/>).

Join us at our June 26 chapter meeting for a presentation on White-tailed Deer Management in Urban/ Suburban Environments by Kevin Schwausch, TPWD Technical Guidance Biologist.

Brenda Fest

This Month We Honor



Initial Certification

Regina Wheaton

Special Recertification

Marylein Davies

Recertification

Bob Binney, Eva Broad, Norma Bruns, Gloria Costello, Lucy Griffith, Sharon Hixson, Marilyn Knight, Bridget Langdale, Alexis McRoberts, Sandra Meineke, Lars Nielsen, Paul Person, Andy Robinson, Linda Ross, Nina Stieler, Ken Weber, Bob Wiedenfeld, Morgan Williams

Milestones

Cecilia Fuentes - Bronze Dragonfly, 250 hours,
Pam Lienhard, Claire Mitchell - Brushed Silver Dragonfly, 500 hours
Larry Eskridge - Gold Dragonfly, 1000 hours
Kathy Ward - President's Volunteer Service Award, 4000 hours



Members are welcome and encouraged to attend and contribute to Board of Directors meetings. The Board will meet this month at the Riverside Nature Center at 2:30 on Monday, June 26.



Congratulations to members who received awards at the May meeting:

Heather Barnes, Floyd Trefny, Cathy Binney, Diana Armbrust, Teresa Coleman, Barb Jansen, Karen Burkett, Tom Harrigan, Brenda Fest, Ginny de Wolf, Gary Fest, Myrna Langford, Clarence Reed, Jim Bobbitt, Robin May, Susan McKinley, Nancy Person, Ann Schneider, John Walker

Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley:

- 5/6/17 How the Condition of the Land Affects the Amount of Runoff and Erosion
- 5/13/17 Rainwater Catchment: It is More than Tanks and Rain Barrels
- 5/20/17 The Importance of Mulch, Leaf Litter and Ground Cover
- 5/27/17 The Texas Hill Country: Are We Loving it to Death?

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

WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU!

We are seeking dedicated Master Naturalists to mentor members of our
2017 training class

WHAT DOES THIS REQUIRE?

*Someone who is available for mentor training on July 28, 2017 (very important) where you will pick up class materials for your trainee and then arrange to meet face-to-face to deliver these materials, go through them together, discuss what to expect during the program, and answer any questions as they arise before classes start.

*Someone who is available for the Class Reception on August 21, 2017.

*Someone who is accessible to his or her trainee for assistance when necessary, and will stay in touch with the trainee throughout the classes to help in having the best possible experience of learning about volunteering opportunities and advanced training.

PLEASE SIGN UP!

If you would like to be a mentor for the 2017 class, please contact Lisa Flanagan at 830-928-2080 or hillcountrysmembership@gmail.com

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

THANK YOU!

From Diana Armbrust

WHERE: Mamacita's at 215 Junction Highway in Kerrville

WHEN: Before monthly Hill Country Master Naturalist meetings

TIME: About 4:30-6:00 PM

WHY: **"Because we like you!"** (You get extra points if you know where that phrase came from.)

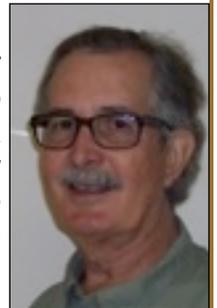


Members of the newly formed C.A.R.E. committee invite you to join fellow Master Naturalists prior to each month's chapter meeting. Gather at Mamacita's for an informal social hour. Order dinner if you are hungry. Most importantly, meet new friends and reconnect with those you just started to get to know before your class ended. You are a unique member of ONE BIG TEAM so get to know your fellow naturalists. Share your insights and learn about the interesting activities of your team members!

From Bridget Langdale

Milestone Highlights:
Notes on Contributions of Chapter Members Who Reached Milestones in May

Gary Fest is a member of the Class of 2014 who has contributed more than 1000 volunteer hours. He is the current President of the Native Plant Society of Boerne; in addition to leading their monthly meetings, he sets up and oversees their two-day plant sale. At Albert & Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area (ABK) he is involved in bird, plant, and butterfly surveys. He also monitors the cameras on the maple trees. Closer to home, he works at the 300 square feet garden at the Bandera Natural History Museum. That includes a Monarch Butterfly Restoration Project that is funded by the State Soil & Water Conservation Service.



Tom Harrigan is a member of the Class of 2016 who has contributed more than 500 hours. As a member of the Hill Country Archeology Association, he documents and registers sites on two days each week. On Fridays Tom documents geological finds and collects reports for the Superintendent at Albert & Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area (ABK). He is earning his Texas Water Specialization Certification through Stream Team research at Cibolo. As the Advanced Training Director on our Chapter Board, he reviews and approves ATs and emails that information to us.

Barbara Jansen is a member of the Class of 2015 who has contributed more than 250 volunteer hours. She participates in the Christmas Bird Count at several locations and in a monthly bird census at Muleshoe Farm in Boerne. She also works on the milkweed count at the Kerr Wildlife Area. At Riverside Nature Center she shares her knowledge of our white-tailed deer population with fourth graders in Project Wild. Also, she is a member of the Texas Tech University in Junction outdoor school, at which second through twelfth graders strengthen their Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) skills.



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Milestone Highlights, continued



Chris Lienhard is a member of the Class of 2015 who has contributed more than 250 volunteer hours. He volunteers each month at the Kroc Center After School Program, which is for children age five through 12, where he and other volunteers introduce the children to a variety of topics about our natural environment. He is particularly interested in Monarch butterflies, and participates in ongoing maintenance at the Butterfly Garden at Kerrville-Schreiner Park, the Kerr County Courthouse, and a local pollinator garden. Each year he helps in a variety of capacities at the Wings Over The Hills event.

Ann Schneider is a member of the Class of 2013 who has contributed more than 1000 volunteer hours. Before retiring and moving to Kerrville she was a geologist in Houston. At Albert & Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area (ABK) she works with others in identifying fossils and creates maps of the outcrops. This involves doing research, reviewing old records, and combining the old and new data into a new software system. Ann also volunteers at the Fredericksburg Park when third graders come to learn about the geology of the park.



Floyd Trefny is a member of the Class of 2009 who has contributed more than 4000 hours. He volunteers at Old Tunnel State Park, the Butterfly Garden at Kerrville-Schreiner Park, and doing maintenance work on the road at Love Creek Nature Conservancy. He has served on the Hill Country Chapter Board for three years, is an active state committee member, and assisted in writing up the memorandum when the Edwards Plateau Chapter became part of the Hill Country Chapter. Floyd is also the Treasurer of the Hill Country Land Trust.

From Daniel Oppenheimer

Chinaberry Trees

Chinaberry trees were first introduced from Asia in the mid-1800s and continue to be used as an ornamental tree today. With greater resistance to native insects and pathogens, these fast-growing trees can outcompete native vegetation and raise soil pH through their leaf litter, making it even harder for some native flora to thrive.



On June 12, Master Naturalist volunteers joined staff from the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) and Native American Seed (NAS) at Texas Tech University's Llano River Field Station in Junction. They learned about the importance of healthy riparian systems and the adverse impacts caused by non-native, invasive plants to these systems. Following this discussion, the volunteers worked with HCA and NAS staff to control 109 invasive Chinaberry trees along the Llano River.



The workers employed a "hack-and-squirt" method, using hatchets and herbicide that was applied to each hatchet-cut in the Chinaberry tree trunks. These Chinaberry trees will be monitored by Texas Parks & Wildlife, the Llano River Watershed Alliance, and the Field Station to inform future management needs.

To learn more about upcoming volunteer events, check out HCA's page at <http://www.hillcountryalliance.org/upcomingevents/> or contact Daniel Oppenheimer at Daniel@hillcountryalliance.org.

Up Close with Nature at Mason Mountain WMA

Volunteering to collect vegetation data at the Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA) provides an exciting opportunity to experience in-depth a place that few get to visit and to be fully immersed in the natural world of the Texas Hill Country. In addition to supporting the WMA's Quail Management Study, opportunities abound to learn a great deal about the science of habitat management, closely observe and study Texas Hill Country flora and fauna (some exotic), experience the town of Mason and the surrounding Hill Country and, of course, earn volunteer and advanced training hours if seeking initial certification or re-certification.



Bobby Gierisch, Diane Gierisch, and Donna Dutton, (Master Naturalists, Class of 2014), gathered data along a transect line under the guidance of WMA Manager Mark Mitchell and WMA Chief Biologist Dr. James Gallagher.

Texas Master Naturalists who participate team up with WMA staff to gather vegetation data within the Quail Management Program study areas. Volunteers do not need in-depth species knowledge, as the data to be collected is largely about plant structure and size, with only some shrubs and trees identified by species. In addition to gathering this data, ample opportunity exists to observe other flora and fauna, gain knowledge from TPWD staff, and share knowledge between fellow TMNs. It is a great giving, learning, and sharing experience.

Over the course of eight days (July 10-13 and July 17-20), three teams of two-four people, including a WMA staff member, will work together on each study area plot, with a goal of at least three plots per day until all 72 plots have been surveyed. Orientation sessions were available in May and June, but on-the-job training can be given to those volunteers who were unable to attend an orientation. Dr. James "Jim" Gallagher, PhD, who is the Chief Biologist at the WMA, has high praise for TMN volunteers: "TMN volunteers," he writes, "have made it possible for us to complete our surveys in less than half the time it took us without them. The extensive time that is involved threatened to bias our data collection, so their help has been vital to the project. Having fun people to interact with is just a bonus!"



Tyra Kane, Bobby Gierisch, and Donna Dutton collected data along a transect line



Tracking Texas Horned Lizards: Chris Keating, Donna Dutton, and Hal Zesch joined Alyssa Fink, Texas State University Masters student.

In addition to the Data Gathering Project, volunteers are often treated by WMA staff to a tour of the property and a glimpse into the WMA's other projects, including Horned Lizard Reintroduction, Monarch Habitat Improvement, Xeriscape Demo Garden, Black-tailed Prairie Dog Reintroduction, Rain Catchment, Exotics Viewing, and Beaver Lodges. Volunteers can also have a cooling swim in the WMA's spring-fed lake. Mason County TMNs also offer extra-curricular opportunities to visiting TMNs including visits to the Eckert James River Bat Cave and to the Llano River, hikes on private ranches, and star-gazing. For those wishing to stay a night or two, camping, RV sites, BnBs, and motels are available in and near Mason. It is also possible that Mason County TMNs will have some extra space for overnights.

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Donna Dutton, of the TMN Class of 2014, has generously given several of her vacation days to the project over the past two years and has this to say about her experience with the Vegetation Data Collection Project: "It was a delight to hear the bobwhites calling again! But equally fulfilling was the intimate knowledge gained of this special ecosystem. The TPWD staff is so knowledgeable and free to share their knowledge. I learned to recognize a lot of grasses that I had been struggling with, along with many wildflowers both in bloom and in seed. This will be my third year to participate, and I am really looking forward to it. Also, the Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area has many unique features one can explore after collecting data—including reintroduced Texas Horned Lizards—although they might be very challenging to locate."

After a few days of volunteering, Stephen Bishop, recent recipient of the Golden Dragonfly Award, notes that "While learning the proper procedure for collecting data in the field I was often distracted by the unique beauty of Mason Mountain WMA. Highly recommended!!"

Also considering the project worthwhile and time well spent is Bobby Gierisch, Class of 2014, who gained a great deal of knowledge from this immersive experience. "The quail management plant study," he notes, "was the most valuable experience ever for learning native plants—certainly the most intensive. I learned more about grasses in three days than in other classes that took weeks!"

For those volunteers not inclined to work in the field, there are other tasks that can be worked on in the office, including data entry and the development of some visual guides to be used in the study. The data entry will be done post-collection and the opportunity to develop a simple field guide exists now.

As this exciting partnership develops between the Texas Master Naturalist Program and the MMWMA, other opportunities for involvement will likely present themselves. In addition to providing a very useful service to the MMWMA, TMNs will also have a great opportunity to connect with the Mason County area of the Texas Hill Country, including its flora, fauna, and people, and to meet volunteers from various chapters and other nature organizations in Central Texas.



Checking out the lake at Mason Mountain

For more information and to volunteer, contact Tony Plutino at 512-496-2020 or tonyplutino@gmail.com .

From Greg Walton

Lost Maples State Natural Area Events

The Friends of Lost Maples would like to announce the kick off of our "Second Saturday" volunteer opportunity. Each month, at 9 am on the second Saturday, we will be hosting a volunteer activity at Lost Maples. Sometimes we will be removing invasive species from the park, other times gathering trash, and other times perhaps watering maple trees.

We are also continuing our Dark Sky astronomy parties at the park. At each Dark Sky event, a group of astronomers from San Antonio or Austin will be in the park after dark with their telescopes up and running. This is a great opportunity to learn more about our solar system and the universe that lies beyond it. The dates for the Dark Sky astronomy parties are:

Saturday, June 24

Saturday, August 12

Saturday, August 19

Saturday, September 23

Saturday, October 21

Saturday, November 21

Saturday, December 16

For additional information contact Colette Nicholl, FOLM Volunteer Chair at Colette.Nicholl@gmail.com, or check out our website at www.friendsoflostmaples.weebly.com. We hope you can join us!

From Ruth McArthur

2017 Texas Native Plant Youth Photo Contest

The Boerne Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas and the Cibolo Nature Center and Farm announced winners of its third Texas Native Plant Photo Contest at its June meeting. This year, 71 youths submitted 106 entries from nine local schools and home schools, including members of the Patrick Heath Public Library's Teen Photography Club. This is triple both the number of contestants and number of entries from last year. Each contestant received a certificate of accomplishment.

The purpose of the contest is to challenge youth photographers (and their parents) to learn more about native plants and pollinators of the Texas Hill Country--what they are and why they are important. The parent of one contestant said, "My children enjoyed this activity immensely. I love that it gave them an opportunity to stop and smell the roses and really start to study the nature around them. So, we won even if they don't win."

A parent of another contributor said, "This project has encouraged our whole family to really remember to stop and enjoy the little things in life, like nature. My student has loved taking pictures of all the Texas wildflowers!"

The contest is the brainchild of Rheda Boardman, a member of NPSOT and a Hill Country Master Naturalist, who created it and did much of the execution for the past three years. Many other chapter members and NPSOT members also lent a hand: Brenda and Gary Fest served on the review committee along with Kathy Ward; Cheryl Beck served on the panel of judges; Cecilia Fuentes and Rheda Boardman solicited sponsors and prizes. Craig Childs and Ruth McArthur, along with Kathy, Cecilia, and Rheda, held workshops on native plants and photography at the schools, the library, and Cibolo Nature Center and Farm. Randy Fuentes photographed the event, Cecilia worked as registrar, and Craig was MC. Ben Eldredge, CNC&F's Director of Education, was liaison and support.

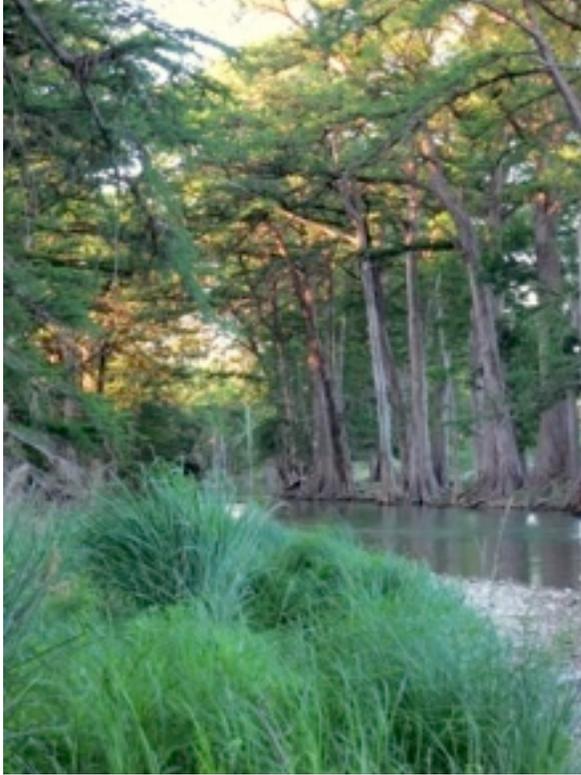


Craig Childs, Ben Eldredge, and Kathy Ward

It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes many organizations working together to educate people and protect our environment.



The View from Rusty Bend



Sedges on the Guadalupe

From a Tractor Seat

*A fresh world, from a tractor seat.
Rolling slowly, just at tractor speed.
Eight miles an hour, let yourself dwell-
What's that flower? What is that smell?
Prairie Verbena? Delicate Threadvine?
I am drawn to ride a slow sense of time;
My tractor, upon it--
Could be just the place to birth
a sonnet.*

Rusty Bend Ranch; Wrenville, USA. Andy and I are wren wranglers this month. Mornings are cool and breezy on the front porch as we watch Canyon Wren babies, with their short beaks and tails, learn the ropes from mom and dad. Carolina Wrens serenade loudly from the bushes at all points of the compass. Bewick's Wrens splash in the birdbath and scold in feisty duets from the garden fence. Second nestings are well along in the favorite venue of each species. Canyons on the porch, Carolinas in the carport, Bewick's in the boxes.

Slow mornings on the porch delay confronting the heat of the day. It's so easy to get lost in observing the finer points of critter feeding.

A Cooper's Hawk crosses the sky, not at his usual screaming speed, for he carries a titmouse in his talons, lengthwise, like a small gray torpedo. In contrast, a male Cardinal tenderly places a perfectly shelled sunflower seed in his mate's mouth. Black-capped Chickadees have a 'snatch and dash' strategy at the feeder. Lesser Goldfinches do their appealing pole dances, teetering on stems of Zexmenia to steal seeds from their golden heads. Canyon Wrens have odd hunting grounds. Slipping up through the hole in the base of the gutter, ducking around the chain, they gather bugs along the length of the gutter. Clickity-click. Nab. There's another one. Nab. Then they trot back to the entrance, clickety-click-click and belt out a song of happy hunting from the woodpile. They seem especially methodical; running the crevasses of our largest oak, bottom to top, then checking each corner of the porch columns from west to east. Rinse, repeat.

The river beckons on these hot and humid days. We wander down, feeling the temperature drop, as if it is a whole 'nother country. If porch research is a journal, then river time is an encyclopedia. We read the chapter on who's been watering in the mud by the water's edge. Footprints tell a story: deer, skunk, possum, raccoons and their handprints. A muddy eddy tells the story of an Axis herd river crossing.

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We watch young Canyon Wrens get a lesson on cliff cracks, extracting the bounty within. Blond, tiny frogs leap into the water like raindrops. Swallows dive Kamikaze-style into the sand banks. The Summer Tanager plummets for wasps. The rapids murmur like birdsong as Cypress limbs rub and hum an oboe solo. Sedges decorate the waterbanks, "sedges have edges". Each footstep a page of learning.

Finally, it gets too hot. We drag our cheap chairs into the river, plant ourselves in the current and sip a tasty beverage. Facing upstream, we gather the particular pleasure of being still, letting a river run through our hearts.

Poem, essay and image by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2017

Lucy Griffith, PhD co-manages the Rusty Bend Ranch with her husband, Andy Robinson. She also writes poetry; her muse is a tractor named Ruby. She is currently working on the story of the Burro Lady of West Texas, told in poems. Both Lucy and Andy are certified Master Naturalists from the Class of 2013. Comments welcome at doctorluz@hctc.net.

Advanced Training

THURSDAY, JUNE 22 6-7PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER (RNC), KERRVILLE

AT17-163 NATURE NIGHT: TRACKS! WHO WAS HERE?

Lee Burton, certified tracker, will present a tracker odyssey with photos and facts.

THURSDAY, JUNE 22 6:30-7:30PM WEBINAR

AT17-143 INSTRUMENTS OF WATERSHED CHANGE

Nikki Dictson is the presenter for this session of the "Texas Waters Specialist" program. To register, go to the website - <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5818565338900607489>

THURSDAY, JUNE 22 7-9PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER (CNC), BOERNE

AT17-154 FIREFLIES

Gene and Clare Carnicom, Comal County Master Naturalists, present a discussion of this fascinating species. \$10 for adults, \$8 for CNC&F Members, \$5 for Teens, Children under 12, free.

MONDAY, JUNE 26 7PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY LECTURE HALL, KERRVILLE

AT17-155 WHITE-TAILED DEER MANAGEMENT IN URBAN/SUBURBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Kevin Schwausch, Biologist, Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept., is the speaker at the monthly chapter meeting.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27 6:30-8PM MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LECTURE HALL, FREDERICKS BURG

AT17-142 ATTRACTING BIRDS IN THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

Biologist Rufus Stephens will discuss common problems and possible solutions for developing optimum habitat for birds at this monthly meeting of the Native Plant Society of Texas Fredericksburg chapter.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29 6-7PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER, KERRVILLE

AT17-164 RIVERS AND FLOODS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE DAMMED?

Tara Bushnoe, Natural Resources Coordinator for the Upper Guadalupe River Authority, will discuss local flood warning resources as well as reasons why floods are essential to the health of the Guadalupe River.

SATURDAY, JULY 15 12:30-2PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER, KERRVILLE

AT17-165 HAULING ROCKS AND FIRED CLAY: LATE PREHISTORIC INTERACTIONS

Dr. Chris Lentz will examine the formation, occurrence, and distribution of Alibates chert that was mined by the Antelope Creek people and used for making implements before the occurrence of metal artifacts.

MONDAY, JULY 24 7PM UPPER GUADALUPE RIVER AUTHORITY LECTURE HALL, KERRVILLE

AT17-158 Dr. Brodie Miller will speak on the biology, history, and current status of Cattle Tick Fever at the chapter monthly meeting.

**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 2017

- Brenda Fest -- President
- Craig Childs -- Vice President
- Kris Bobbitt-- Secretary
- Ann Dietert -- Treasurer
- Tom Harrigan -- Advanced Training Director
- David Davies -- Communications Director
- Lisa Flanagan -- Membership Director
- Claire Mitchell -- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- Reggie Cox -- 2017 Class Director
- Paula Harley -- 2016 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:
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The Hill Country Chapter does not recommend or endorse organizations or commercial sources mentioned in our newsletter. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and editor.



Questions about our chapter?
Email Lisa Flanagan,
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