

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the

Texas Master Naturalist

Hill Country Chapter

January 2020 Volume 18 Number 1



JANUARY 27 MEETING: OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOIL

Our country has known since the dust bowl of the 1930's that soil health is vital to our well-being. Kara Kroeger, a Sustainable Agriculture Specialist with the National Center for Appropriate Technology in San Antonio, will consider why it has taken so long for soil health to get the attention it needs, and what we know today that is new and compelling. She will also address the role Master Naturalists can play in this new national interest in soil health.

President's Message . . . Elsa Roberts

Happy New Year everybody!

Your new board of officers and directors have hit the ground running. We are hard at work to ensure that 2020 will be another great year of learning and advancing our mission. A big thank you to our outgoing President, Lisa Flanagan, for her service to this chapter and to all of the 2019 board members who have given so much time and effort to keep this chapter running smoothly.

If you missed the volunteer recognition party in December, you missed a very good time. The food was delicious, the entertainment was humorous, and the fellowship was great. The silent auction had so many items donated that it was hard to decide what to bid on. Many of the items were works of art produced by our own members. Who knew we had so many talented artists in our chapter? Thank you, Katy Kappel, for organizing a very successful fund raiser; the total generated was \$1,468. Thanks also go out to Craig Childs and Tom Burke for underwriting some of the expenses. Their generosity is why the price of admission was held to a very affordable \$10.

I want to start this year with encouragement to make use of our webpage at <https://txmn.org/hillcountry>. There is a wealth of information available to you there. If you don't know who your new board members are, they are listed there.

At this writing, we are desperately in need of rain. Hopefully, this unseasonably warm and dry weather will end soon. Some of the dirt road surfaces that I drive on have turned to powder, raising a dust cloud that reminds me of my childhood in far West Texas. Does the cedar pollen seem worse this year? Seems like everyone is sneezing and coughing. This too will pass and none too soon.

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday and are ready to put your heart into all the projects you are involved in. Together, we can make this the best year ever.

"In all things of nature, there is something of the marvelous" - Aristotle

This Month We Honor



Initial Certification

Janis Aterbury, Kirsten Dickerson, Billy Gunn, Laurel Rhodes,
Stephanie Roberts, John Shaver

Recertification

Carla Brady, Betty Clyburn, Vern Crawford, Nancye Drukker, Donna Dutton, Eric Edwards,
Mary Frushour, Robin Graham, Tim Graham, Laura Grant, Nancy Grimes, Sharron Jay, Jerry Kerr,
Nancy Kerr, Lenore Langsdorf, Terry Lashly, Susan Longacre, Linda Myers, Anna Orsak, Greg Walton,
Kevin Wessels, Maura Windlinger

Special Recertification

Cindy Cox, Jeralyn Hathorn, Sheryl Pender, Deborah Youngblood

Milestones

Lisa Center, Tim Graham, Van Turner - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly
Nancy Huffman, Sharron Jay, Dora McDaniels, - 500 hours, Brushed Silver Dragonfly
Mack Brown, Bridget Langdale- 1000 hours, Gold Dragonfly



Congratulations to members who received awards at our November meeting:
From Left to Right: Clark Williams, Becky Leal, Sheryl Pender, Richard Adams,
Tom Burke, Jim Jones, Amanda Martin, Lisa Flanagan

Continued on next page



Charles Smith, Becky Leal, Charleen Moore,
Nancye Drukker, Sharon Hixson



Lee Ann Booker, Tom Burke, Connie
Fluegel, Mildred

From Paula Harley, KSP Pollinator Project Coordinator

The Kerrville Schreiner Park Pollinator Garden recently received a Certificate of Appreciation for our Significant Contribution to the City of Kerrville Parks and Recreation Department. Larry Eskridge and I would like to acknowledge the dedicated volunteers who; week after week, in oftentimes uncomfortable weather, continue to give their time, talent, and labor to support pollinators and native plants.

Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley

- 11/2/19 Aldo Leopold: The Man, His ideas, His Philosophy\
- 11/9/19 What Our Common Native Critters Eat
- 11/16/19 Invasive Exotic Grasses are Reducing the Diversity of our Native Habitat
- 11/23/19 Aldo Leopold: The Land Ethic
- 11/30/19 How Much Brush is Too Much Brush?
- 12/7/19 How Much Rain Did You Keep?
- 12/14/19 Understanding Aquifers: What They Are and What They Are Not
- 12/21/19 Aldo Leopold: The Tools of Land Management
- 12/28/19 The Big Four Grasses of the Tall Grass Prairie

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

From Reggie Cox, UGRA EduScape Project Coordinator

Upper Guadalupe River Authority EduScape (KR-08-NPA)

The Texas Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter has entered a partnership with Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) to plant and maintain a pollinator/wildflower garden as part of the EduScape project.

The purpose of the EduScape project is providing an educational platform to help educate residents of the Texas Hill Country. UGRA wants to provide choices for yards that will survive and provide food and shelter for native animals—especially pollinators, which play a huge part in our food production—and other plants. A big focus is on conserving water and keeping rivers clean. UGRA uses the EduScape for tours by our fellow Master Naturalists, schools, interested residents, visitors, and others.

Our chapter's part of the partnership is to plant the native plant pollinator garden and maintain it. We will also participate in the maintenance (weeding), and assist with replacement of plants that fail in the overall garden. Many of these plants are native, but there also are adapted plants in the landscape. In return for our assistance, UGRA is waiving all room fees for our monthly chapter meetings and annual training class. These fees are a significant part of our annual budget so we will benefit directly in return for maintaining our pollinator garden and assisting with the project.

If you have a particular plant that thrives in your garden, I would like to know about it. Donations of plants when you are dividing plants will help the garden grow. This is not a fenced garden, so knowing your success (and failures) with deer issues is needed.

UGRA has constructed a rain water catchment system that includes a large storage tank, an HVAC condensation storage tank, and a rain barrel. Rain gardens are started but still must be completed.

Work starts in the garden again in February and volunteers are needed to help with planting replacement plants that perished over the winter and with maintenance of the garden.

Please contact me at 830-896-5153 or reggiemcox@gmail.com if you would like to participate in this project, share your plant suggestions, deer strategies, rain garden information; or note your favored workdays. Workdays will be on the chapter calendar as they are scheduled and you will receive emails.

Thank you to Gary Fest, Veronica Hawk, and Brenda Fest for their plant identifications and suggestions. Also, to Kim Burkhart, Pam Lienhard, Pam Goolsby, Al Cox, Katy Kappel, Nancy Huffman, Rebecca Laird, Marian Worthington, and others who have come on workdays to get the ball rolling.



continued on next page

Welcome

UGRA EduScape



Quick Facts:

Water demand in Texas is projected to increase dramatically in the future as the state continues to have strong population growth. As a result, protecting water resources and utilizing water conservation practices will be essential to sustain the state's water supply and remain balanced. The most economical and environmentally friendly way water users can water saved through conservation.

Did You Know?

The Texas Hill Country sits on the boundary of the Chihuahuan desert. Our position along this transitional zone has resulted in a diverse plant community where both desert and non-desert plants thrive. It also highlights the importance of our surface and river. We must wisely manage our water resources for future generations.



Visit www.ugra.org
or scan for more info.

What You Will Find

As you stroll along the landscape pathway you will see numerous examples of water conservation and stormwater detention practices that help stretch scarce water supply and protect all our water resources including the Guadalupe River. You can implement these same practices in your home or business landscape.

All of the plants featured in EduScape are native to our region and a few adapted plants are included as well. Native and adapted plants are more drought and stress tolerant, so they require less water and maintenance than other varieties. Using only native plants provides additional benefits to wildlife and biodiversity. Look for the plant labels and consider including some of these species in your landscape.

1. Welcome
2. The Guadalupe River
3. Rainwater Harvesting
4. Texas Wildflowers
5. Pervious Surfaces
6. Dry Creek Bed
7. Lawns
8. Condensate Collection
9. Rain Gardens
10. Xeriscape



UGRA recognizes the innovative stewardship of the Hill Country Master Gardeners in the design and construction of the UGRA EduScape, 2018.



NPSOT Boerne Chapter Monthly Meeting

On Tuesday, February 4 at 6:30, Ryan Bass will present current information about conservation and restoration of the Upper Cibolo Creek.

Social, 6:30; presentation, 7:00
Cibolo Nature Center, 140 City Park Road

NPSOT Fredericksburg Chapter Monthly Meeting

On Tuesday, January 28, our speaker will be John Thomas, founder and owner of Wildseed Farms.
Social, 6:30; program, 7:00
Memorial Presbyterian Church, 601 North Main Street

NPSOT Kerrville Monthly Meeting

On Tuesday, February 11 at 1:30, Kelly Conrad Simon, Urban Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, will speak on "Native Plants for Native Wildlife."

Social time begins at 1:00; presentation, 1:30
Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street

NPSOT meetings are free and open to the public.

From Catherine Gauldin, Communications Director

We Made a Difference

The Hill Country Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists made a difference in the Hill Country environment in 2019. Our membership made a collective contribution within the various communities where we serve and we left positive impressions among the leaders and coordinators of the many places where we volunteer our time.

Becky Etzler, the Director of Riverside Nature Center, expressed her admiration for the dedication she sees every day among members of the Hill Country Chapter: “We are extremely fortunate to have an organization of such talented and knowledgeable volunteers such as the Texas Master Naturalists. These folks willingly give their time and talents. TMNs serve as Riverside Guides, youth program instructors, adult education presenters, community outreach representatives, plant sale docents, event workers, exhibit designers, landscapers, garden tenders, and carpenters and building maintenance engineers— not to mention the fact that many of our board members are Texas Master Naturalists.”

There are many volunteer opportunities each month to take advantage of, and in doing so we serve the community and gain immeasurably by learning from each other. Service itself is its own reward, and members gain in experience with every activity in which they take part. HCMN member Marylein Davies was recognized in October 2019 for her contribution of 500 hours to our organization and she expressed her feelings about the reason she devotes so much of her time and effort in promoting the objectives of the Texas Master Naturalist Program: “What I value most about being a Master Naturalist,” she said, “is the opportunity to meet fellow lovers of nature, learn of their activities and experiences, be in beautiful places while helping to generate an appreciation of the natural world in the public we come in contact with, and foster an interest in preservation of that world.”

Charleen Moore, who completed over 500 hours of service in October, said of her work leading guided tours of the Honey Creek State Natural Area: “It is a great joy to lead visitors to one of the most pristine streams in Texas with shores lined with tall bald cypress and oaks covered in Spanish moss. We talk about the cultural and natural history of the area, including preservation of the golden-cheeked warbler and other endangered species, and hope to give the visitors a sense of the importance of preserving this unique area of the Hill Country.”

Our Calendar is full and members can expect an equally varied assortment of volunteer opportunities. We go forward into 2020 knowing that our effort is a collective effort, that we have a common purpose, and that our purpose made a difference last year. Our unified efforts in the new year will continue to make a difference towards preserving the natural environment of our beautiful Hill Country home.

From Kristie Denbow, Webmaster

Do you report Chapter Administration hours on VMS? Wondering which subcategory best fits **your** hours? Subcategories are decided at the state level. A list of definitions "Explanations for Chapter Administration Subcategories" can be found, along with other valuable information about reporting hours on VMS, by clicking the VMS tab on our chapter's website.

From Paula Harley, KSP Pollinator Project Coordinator

The HCMN 2020 board would like to know if there are any grant writers who are willing to share their skill with the chapter. Project funding is often challenging and the need for those who know how to make it happen is great. This is an invaluable skill and there are members who would like to possibly team up with you for some mentoring or hands on training. Please contact Paula Harley (prharley57@gmail.com) and I will forward this information to the Board.

From Tom Burke, Volunteer Service Projects Director

Sources for Project information!
Refinement of coding for Hill Country State Natural Area
New project opportunity

Are you looking for a current list of volunteer project opportunities? Need help with how to code your time? Guidelines and rules for volunteer service? **Check out our chapter website!** <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/volunteer/> or <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/vms/> will cover just about anything. If it's not there, email me and I will try to help.

Do you volunteer at Hill Country State Natural Area? There is now a Field Research extension for this site. Any hours for census work, surveys, bird/wildlife/plant counts should be entered under **BD-01-A-FR**. Other activities can be entered as **BD-01-A-DO** (Direct Outreach). Eldon Sheffer, ELSheffer@aol.com, is the coordinator. He would not turn away a new able-bodied volunteers.

Want to help those afflicted with cedar allergy? **If you live near some ash juniper trees (who doesn't), this new project might be for you.** Dan Katz at UT Austin is directing a citizen science program designed to predict pollen concentrations and provide an "early warning system" for allergy sufferers. You would need to observe pollen cones on nearby trees a few times per week late December through February and enter your observations on the National Phenology Database. Check out the website for more information <https://www.usanpn.org/nn/PollenTrackers>. You can receive training and signup for the project via the website. Reach out to Dan for questions or issues at Dan.Katz@austin.utexas.edu. Volunteer hours can be coded under **CC-08-F USA-NPN Phenology Monitoring**. Then note "Pollen Trackers."

Hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season!

From the VMS team

If you have questions regarding VMS or AT hours entries, contact your approver or Data Manager, Sandy Leyendecker. Members of the Hill Country Chapter can find their approver and more information about VMS and volunteer hours by clicking the VMS tab or Volunteer tab on the chapter website.

If your Last Name begins with	Your VMS volunteer hours approver is
A-B	Sandy Leyendecker sandy325@windstream.net
C-F	Claire Mitchell claire.c.mitchell@gmail.com
G	Lisa Flanagan terlinguagirl@gmail.com
H-K	Reggie Cox reggiemcox@gmail.com
L	Brenda Fest brendafest@gmail.com
M-Z	Sandy Leyendecker sandy325@windstream.net
Advanced Training Hours	All AT hours are approved by Data Manager Sandy Leyendecker sandy325@windstream.net

From Sherry Wilson

South Llano River Birding Festival

April 24-26, 2020. Junction

Registration has gone live for the South Llano River Birding Festival. There is a new registration website through Texas Tech. This means registration and payment can both be done online. Also, AT hours have been approved for some of the activities. The code is AT20-018 Check the TMN calendar for specifics. During the festival there will also be a need for volunteers. The specifics will be announced closer to the festival, as needs are determined. A different reporting code will apply; this is also listed on the calendar.

Activities begin Friday evening with a “Meet and Great” social at the Texas Tech Llano River Field Station.

Saturday morning activities will include a Breakfast with the Birds, Golden-Cheeked Warbler Hike, Birding the Riparian, Birding Around Town, Mist Netting and Bird Banding followed by lunch.

Saturday afternoon activities will include Birding Around Town, Birding by Golf Cart, Birding the Riparian, and a lecture titled Tweets, Trills and Whistles.

Our day will conclude with a banquet dinner at the Texas Tech Llano River Field Station with Keynote Speaker, Dr. Clint Boal. Topic: “Land fragmentation and its effect on Raptors”.

On Sunday morning all activities will be conducted at the South Llano River State Park. We will begin with Breakfast with the Birds at the Ranger Station followed by the Big Sit and Roving Guides.

Register soon as spaces are limited to enjoy one of the more premier birding destinations in all the Texas Hill Country! Visit online to register and learn more about this year’s scheduled events:

www.facebook.com/TTUJunction. www.facebook.com/SouthLlanoRiver
<https://indico.ads.ttu.edu/confRegistrationFormDisplay.py/display?confId=1414>.



**Monarch Larva Monitoring Project
(MLMP)
Volunteer Training (AT20-002)**



Kerr Wildlife Management Area Bass Center, Hunt

February 8, 2020. 10:00am – 3:00pm

This will be the training for the MLMP Project for the Chapter in 2020. Speakers Cathy Downs and Craig Hensley will cover the MLMP Project, tagging and citizen sciences involving the monarch butterfly, and how volunteers can help with the declining monarch populations. With this training, volunteers can join the team at the Kerr or any of the other Chapter monitoring sites, or monitor their own property.

To register, please email Gracie Waggener, gwaggener@flow-apps.com .

From Jessica Alderson, Urban Biologist, TPWD

**Wildlife Tax Valuation Workshop
Saturday, March 7 from 8am-5pm.**

Register TODAY using our on-line form; select the San Antonio workshop from the workshop list.

Location: Phil Hardberger Park Urban Ecology Center. 8400 NW Military Hwy., San Antonio.

Who should attend: Texas landowners interested in wildlife tax valuation for their property.

Topics Include Wildlife Tax Valuation Process, Ecological Region Overview, Determining Goals and Objectives, 7 Wildlife Management Practices, Appraisal District Q&A, Annual Reports, Assistance with Individual Plan Preparation

You may attend any workshop regardless of the county you live in or where your property is located.

Landowners must have a current 1-D-1 appraisal to be eligible for the Wildlife Tax Valuation.

An email will be sent the week of the workshop with more information on what to bring.

Lunch will not be provided. Please bring a sack lunch or plan to eat at a local restaurant.

Questions? Contact Jessica Alderson, 210-309-2416 or Jessica.alderson@tpwd.texas.gov .

From Donna Dutton

Tales of Two Naturalists

Although our winter has been quite mild so far, we still have another month to go in which we may experience weather cold enough to make us want to stay inside by a nice fire and read a good book. Even better would be if the book were about a naturalist! I have recently read two books which I think fit that bill quite nicely, and I want to share them with you.

They are ***Chrysalis – Maria Sibylla Merian and the Secrets of Metamorphosis*** by Kim Todd and ***Where the Crawdads Sing*** by Delia Owens. They are quite different works. The first is a biography of a woman who was born in 17th century Germany and traveled to South America while studying the metamorphosis of insects; in contrast, the second is a work of fiction set in the 1960's in the marshes of North Carolina's Outer Banks. But both relate the lives of women in love with nature, passionate and even obsessed with it, each in her own way. Let me tell you a bit about them, so that you can decide with which one to begin.

Maria Sibylla Merian was born in Frankfurt, Germany in April of 1647, into a family of artists and printers. Her father ran a publishing house which specialized in books with elaborate illustrations. Her fascination with nature began through her beautiful and sought-after drawings, especially those of flowers, butterflies and moths. Her first publication, a book of flower drawings entitled *Blumenbuch*, was published in 1675. Gradually, however, she saw that such illustrations were incomplete unless they contained the flowers on which the butterfly actually took nectar, the eggs which the butterfly laid, the caterpillar and the plant which it consumed, and the chrysalis from which the butterfly emerged. Her drawings began to encompass the entire natural history of her subjects. And thus, began her fascination with the process of metamorphosis.

At this time in the history of science, belief was still strong for the theory of spontaneous generation. Leeuwenhoek had only recently perfected the first microscope. Darwin was not born until 1809. But Merian followed her curiosity - studying, documenting, and drawing the life processes and metamorphoses of many moths and butterflies; frequently proving the scientific beliefs of her day incorrect. Following the twists and turns of Merian's life and her dogged determination to understand and explain metamorphosis, the author reveals to us a woman who was a devoted naturalist in an era when this was most unusual. The book is beautifully illustrated with her drawings. Author Kim Todd also wrote the award-winning book *Tinkering with Eden* and has contributed essays and articles to *Sierra*, *Orion*, *Backpacker*, and *Grist*, among others.

Kya Clark, the protagonist in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, couldn't be more different. Born in a shack in the marshes of North Carolina's Outer Banks around 1945, she was abandoned by her mother and left with her alcoholic, violent father when only six years old. She mostly raised herself and in doing so, established a love affair with nature and the marshes. The prose describing the wildlife, sunrises, sunsets, swamps and sea is so lyrical that it makes one stop and read portions aloud several times to hear how beautiful they sound. The story, both a bittersweet coming of age tale and suspenseful murder mystery, keeps you turning page after page. Kya's relationship with the gulls, which she feeds each evening even when she herself has almost nothing to eat, is heartwarming. The Cooper's hawk which keeps swooping past her door brings a smile to her face, and to the reader's. She not only knew, studied, and understood nature; she was an integral part of it. She drew and documented it as only one who has loved it passionately could.

The author, Delia Owens, has been a wildlife scientist in Africa and coauthored three internationally bestselling non-fiction books about her experiences. Her writing credits include publication in *Nature*, the *African Journal of Ecology*, and *International Wildlife*, among others. She was awarded the John Burroughs Award for Nature Writing. *Where the Crawdads Sing* is her first novel, and I for one sincerely hope it will not be her last!

SAVE THE DATE!
Spring Native Plant Sale & Earth Day Festival
Riverside Nature Center, Kerrville

Saturday, April 18, 2020, 9am - 2pm
Co-sponsored by
Native Plant Society Kerrville Chapter and Riverside Nature Center

Native wildflowers, shrubs, grasses and trees will be available.
Plants are sourced from local nurseries.

Earn TMN volunteer hours by helping with the event.
If you would like to volunteer email Sharon Hixson at sharonhixson859@gmail.com.
Watch for more information in future issues of this newsletter.

From Martha Miesch

Nature Study at the Kroc After School Program



We had a fun day of nature study with the after-school students on October 17. Some of our regular volunteers were not able to come because of family issues, but Susan Parker, who is in the new Master Naturalist class, was there and did a great job with the kids along with Martha and Pete Miesch. We announced a scavenger hunt for the kids and after receiving



instructions they left the classroom and were out on the grounds in minutes finding examples of everything. Afterwards, they were called back to the classroom to share some of their best finds.

Butterfly Program at the Kroc After School Program

Sharon Hixson showed the students an outstanding slide presentation teaching about the history of butterflies and their many species on November 21. Amazing facts were shared with the students and

adult volunteers. Connie Fluegel, Tyra Kane, Martha Miesch, Patty Scafford, and John Sloan soaked up the information—including that there are 145 different butterfly species in the Hill Country! Sharon described the butterfly life cycle/metamorphosis and discussed in some detail the American Snout, Red Admiral, Sulphur, Cabbage White, and Swallowtail. Did you know the two-tailed Swallowtail can

be five inches wide? It was good to learn that Gregg's Mistflower are special attractors for the Queen and Monarch butterflies. After we gazed at Sharon's beautiful slides, the students colored pictures of butterflies. My guess is that we all will look at butterflies with more interest.



From Lucy Griffith

The View from Rusty Bend



Raindrops on sage

Attention

Home—the place of attention.
Where you know that swirl in the road
marks the dust bath of a jackrabbit.
Or that a particular Canyon Wren ends
her descending aria with a startling yee-haw.

That on our longest of days,
the sun retires on the breast
of the northwest horizon
and begins a steady southern swing
to the little knoll where we mark its winter twin.

Our lives held in this gentle cup,
palmed within an arc of light.

*First published by
Canary Environmental Literary Journal, 2018*

Winter solstice and all is monochrome at Rusty Bend. With drought and multiple hard freezes it's as if a color-extractor passed over the land. The bright sight of Vermillion Flycatcher provides relief. The grasses are wind polished and reflect the sun, which is also a welcome sight after days of the gloomies. Nothing like a norther to crisp up the air, fine-tune the horizon so that each oak, elm and juniper is etched clear as a wood-cut.

Andy and I amuse ourselves though, with the constant parade of activities outside the window. Merlin Diary: we always know when one is near by the behavior of the birds. They will suddenly vanish, then tip out to take a drink at the bird bath, on guard for marauding Merlins. Black-crested Titmouse assumes a defensive position. He stands on the edge of the birdbath, facing away from the water. He scans the area, then reaches around for a drink over his shoulder. Intriguing adaptation. Last year we saw titmice being hauled off by Merlins like little gray bombs. This year, they're more vigilant.

The noises are also different this time of year. There is the rat-a-tat-tat of acorns hitting the roof. The glorious bugles of Sandhill Cranes as they drift south, skein after skein. Gray Fox cough-barks a circle around the house at midnight. I "bee-caw" at two ravens as they wing toward a hunters shot. They mutter back.

Carolina Wrens give us a show at the Bark Butter station on the porch. They love peanut butter and do a little dance when it gets on their pink feet. They fan their tails and hiss at interlopers, flamenco style. When there are two Carolinas on the feeder we call them North Carolina and South Carolina.

We have also hung a birdseed bell for additional feeding in this hard weather. Golden-fronted Woodpecker claims it as his. He's so comfortable digging out all the choice bits, that he lounges on his back in the wire frame. Lazy Boy.

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We are winding up ranch chores for our Wildlife Valuation Annual Report. The fireant mounds have been treated all year, and the turkey feeder is bulging with high protein supplement for strong eggs this spring. We had great success with new birdboxes around an old field, fledging more than 90 Eastern Bluebirds, Carolina Chickadees, Ash-throated Flycatchers and Bewick's Wrens. The new water trough is buried and has visitors day and night. All that is left is the never ending chore of managing the regrowth cedar. They really stick out this time of year in their evergreen skirts. I set a goal of fifty each time I go out with loppers, reciprocating saw and extra batteries.

It seems we are deep in winter dormancy this year. All is resting, or hiding, or waiting. Waiting for spring, but even more, waiting for rain. Don't even bother to look for me; wake me when the buds break.



Rusty Bend's new Solar Power Station

Poem, images, and essay by Lucy Griffith

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Lucy Griffith, PhD co-manages the Rusty Bend Ranch with her husband, Andy Robinson. She also writes poetry; her muse, a tractor named Mabel. The story of the Burro Lady of West Texas told in poems, We Make a Tiny Herd, has been published by Main Street Rag. Both Lucy and Andy are certified Master Naturalists. Comments welcome at lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com

APRIL 24-27, 2020

City Nature Challenge 2020

WHICH CITY IS THE WILDEST?

Be a part of a global challenge to see which city can document the most wildlife species. Join local events, make observations on your own, or identify species using the iNaturalist app.

For more information and to get involved in Texas, go to tpwd.texas.gov/naturechallenge

El Paso, Amarillo, Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Rio Grande Valley

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE, iNaturalist, NATURE TRACKERS, NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Advanced Training

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28 10AM-3PM ENCHANTED ROCK STATE NATURAL AREA
AT20-046. INTERPRE-TRAINING.

Katie Raney, our Regional Interpretive Specialist, will be at Enchanted Rock SNA to host a refresher training for already trained volunteers. Bring your sack lunch for a working lunch.. This training is for Texas Master Naturalists already approved and volunteering at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. Contact Ranger Jessica DeBoer, Jessica.Deboer@tpwd.texas.gov for information on becoming an approved volunteer.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28 7-8PM MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FREDERICKSBURG
AT20-003. THE STORY OF WILDSEED FARMS

The Fredericksburg Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas is honored to welcome John R. Thomas, owner and founder of Wildseed Farms, to our January meeting. Mr. Thomas founded Wildseed Farms in 1983. He currently has over 1,000 acres of wildflowers under cultivation in Texas; 200 of those are at the Fredericksburg location where he also serves over 400,000 visitors every year. 6:30pm light refreshments and social; 7:00pm meeting.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29 9:30-11:30AM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER AND FARM, BOERNE
AT20-044. CIBOLO NATURE CENTER HOST TRAINING

We need some enthusiastic and friendly faces to staff our Visitor Center and welcome folks. This position is indoors and does allow for some sitting. Learn how to become a visitor center host during this casual and interactive training. Go to <https://www.givepulse.com/event/153169-Visitor-Center-Host-Open-House-and-Training> for more information and to register.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30 6:30-8PM RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER, KERRVILLE
AT20-043. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN SEMINAR

Landowners in Ag or Timber– Come learn, from Plateau Land and Wildlife biologists, how a wildlife management plan keeps your already low property taxes in place. Free Seminar.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1 8:35AM-4PM ACC EASTVIEW CAMPUS, BUILDING 8500, AUSTIN
AT20-015. SKYWARN Spotter Training

Sign in / Registration starts at 8:15am the day of the training (please do not arrive before 8:15am). Certificate of completion will be presented to those participants, at the end of the day, for those completing the entire training session. This training is free and open to the general public; lunch on your own.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4 2-3:30PM DIETERT CENTER, KERRVILLE
AT20-021. THE GEOLOGY OF THE TEXAS HILL COUNTY

Very few places of the United States can claim a geological past as dynamic as the Texas Hill Country. Earthquakes, volcanoes, great mountain ranges, enormous seas, cave formations and eroding rivers are all geological processes that have left their evidence in our area if we only look around. So, let's all be geologists for an hour and take a virtual field trip to study the geology of this area. Registration closes at noon; Cost: \$20.00. Bill Lindemann and Jeff Anderson are the instructors.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4 6:30-8PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER AND FARM, BOERNE
AT20-051. RIPARIAN CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

Ryan Bass, Watershed Planning Coordinator for the City of Boerne, will present current information about Riparian Conservation and Restoration of the Upper Cibolo Creek.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5 9:30AM-12PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER AND FARM, BOERNE
AT20-038. FARM FIELD TRIP DOCENT TRAINING

Our field trip volunteers make a big impact by leading school children through inquiry-based, hands-on activities that teach them about science, nature, ecology, and agriculture. We will train you and pair you up with an experienced docent for as long as you want. Training is at Herff Farm; no cost.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 7AM-2PM CHOKE CANYON STATE PARK, THREE RIVERS

AT20-050. CHOKE CANYON BIRD FESTIVAL 2020

This year's Festival is organized to explore birding at Choke Canyon and highlight some terrific Texas birding and wildlife organizations, as well as hear from experts in the area. Whether you are an expert, novice, or just want to learn more about birds, we invite you to come out for a day at the park. Be prepared for the weather; dress in layers, bring binoculars, and wear sturdy walking shoes; bring your own drinks and a picnic lunch or visit Three Rivers prior to coming to the Park. For more information, contact Paul Jaure, 361-786-3868, ext.229, or paul.jaure@tpwd.texas.gov.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 8AM-3PM KERR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, HUNT

AT20-002. MONARCH LARVA MONITORING PROJECT

Cathy Downs and Craig Hensley will cover monarchs and milkweeds, how and why we monitor, and what you can do to help the monarch population. With this Citizen Science training you will be able to join the team at the Kerr, at another of the chapter monitoring sites, or on your own property. This is a very informative and interesting presentation. Email Gracie Waggener at gwaggener@flow-apps.com to register so that we can be sure to have enough materials for all attending. Please plan to bring a lunch.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12 9:30AM-2:30PM YMCA ROBERTS RANCH CENTER, COMFORT

AT20-024. STONES, BONES, INDIANA JONES... RECOGNIZING AND PROTECTING PREHISTORIC SITES IN THE HILL COUNTRY

Meet Stephen Bishop at the pavilion for a brief orientation followed by a hike to nearby site. Topics will include What are prehistoric sites? How best to record and protect them? What can be learned about the people who made them? Participants are requested to make a \$5.00 donation to Roberts Ranch for this event. Notes: Registration is required and is limited to 15; contact Craig Childs at craigc@ymcasatx.org. Bring your own lunch for a working lunch. Do not rely on GPS apps for direction. From Comfort/Boerne/San Antonio, Take HWY 10 West past Comfort to Exit 520, turn right at stop sign onto Farm Road 1341. At 1.5 miles, turn right on Hassenwinkle Road. The gate to Roberts Ranch is on Hasenwinkle Road. Go 5.1 miles (uphill). The gate is on the left; a small sign on the side of the road reads: YMCA.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 9AM-2PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER AND FARM, BOERNE

AT20-047. I-NATURALIST AS A LAND SURVEY TOOL

Learn to use as a land management tool to ID and document plants, birds, insects and more while contributing to Citizen Science! This indoor classroom instruction will be followed by a nature walk in the field documenting biodiversity with your phones and/or cameras. Craig Hensley, Texas Native Trackers Biologist, Texas Parks & Wildlife, is the instructor. Cost: \$30.00 for members, \$40.00 for non-members. Register now at www.cibolo.org/experience/events/calendar.html/event-form/i-naturalist-workshop/43316/tickets.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20 6:30-8PM TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY, FREDERICKSBURG

AT20-040. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN SEMINAR

Landowners in Ag or Timber—learn, from Plateau Land and Wildlife biologists, how a wildlife management plan keeps your already low property taxes in place. Free Seminar.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21 9:30AM-12:30PM ANHALT DANCE HALL, SPRING RANCH

AT20-013. SAVING FAMILY LANDS - LANDOWNER WORKSHOP

Topics will include conservation easements, the role of land trust organizations, open space and wildlife valuations, financial tools/resources available to land owners, and a panel discussion with landowners. Cost: Individual, \$15; Couple, \$20; walk-ins welcome. To register: www.hillcountryalliance.org.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22 9AM-4PM CIBOLO NATURE CENTER AND FARM, BOERNE

AT20-052. PRESCRIBED BURN: RESTORE YOUR LAND WITH RESPONSIBLE BENEFIT

When conducted properly, prescribed burning is safe and beneficial for wildlife and brush control. The instructors, Dusty Bruns and Ben Eldredge, will provide you with what you need to know to conduct a prescribed burn. Bring own sack lunch. Cost: \$50 for members, \$60 for non-members.

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 6:45 PM in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehmann Drive in Kerrville.

Join us at 6:15 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.

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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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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.

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