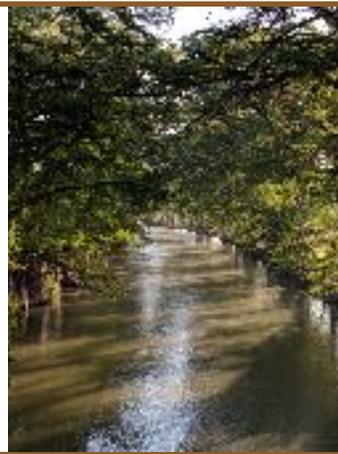


The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter

August 2020 Volume 18 Number 8



Guadalupe River image by Lucy Griffith



In accordance with scientific advice and government recommendations, there is no monthly meeting this month.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Elsa Roberts

It is certainly a typical August in Central Texas, hot and dry but that has not stopped many of our outside projects volunteers from following through on their commitments. As the weather cools later this fall, hopefully more of our members will be able to complete their recertification VMS hours by getting involved in these projects.

There will be a fall plant sale in October. It will be a members only, pre-order sale; not a "browse and shop" sale as we have had in the past. Only members of RNC, NPSOT and TMN will be invited to participate in this sale. A flyer with complete details will be sent to you at a later date and information will be posted on the RNC webpage. Stay tuned for the final details.

Since our 2020 training class had to be postponed due to the virus mitigation guidelines, our Membership Director, Carla Stang, developed an extensive mentor program to bridge the waiting gap that our new trainees have found themselves in. She has an article in this newsletter that explains some of the details about the activities they will be engaged in until we are able to conduct the official training class. If one of our "almost trainees" shows up at one of your projects, please make an effort to introduce yourself and look for opportunities to share your experiences as a Texas Master Naturalist with them. A big thank you to all those who have volunteered as Mentors during this period of time.

Here are highlights from the August Presidents meeting with our State Directors, Mary Pearl Meuth and Michelle Haggerty.

1. The virtual annual TMN meeting registration is now underway. As of August 10 over 450 people have registered. The sessions that are being offered are outstanding. Please go to the TMN web site and explore your options. Invite your friends and family members to register too. It is not necessary to be a TMN member to participate. Couples who wish to share a screen and attend a session only need one registration. Registrants may also share their screen with those who have weak, unstable connections or no connection at all. This is allowed but, please don't abuse the privilege. In other words, please don't host a group viewing.

continued on next page

When: October 14-17, 2020

Where: From the comfort of your home office, back patio, or reclining chair.

Go To: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/> and register today.

2. The review of the CMOP (Chapter Management and Operations Protocols) is underway. Please send any suggestions for updating the protocols that govern how our chapters operate to Lisa Flanagan, terlinguagirl@gmail.com by August 19. COVID-19 based changes will not be considered.

3. Recertification requirements have not changed other than ALL webinar ATs will be accepted to fulfill your eight-hour requirement. While across all the chapters the VMS records show service hours down 20% from last year, our chapter's record is outstanding. According to the VMS records for our members, 108 people have given 17,020 hours of service this year. This is per Sandy Leyendecker, our VMS director.

4. On September 2, there will be a Virtual Volunteer Fair presented by Texas A&M University and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. Please watch for a "Save the Date" email with complete information.

The transition of our chapter's web page is now completed. When you have time, take a look at the new format at <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/>.

This Month We Honor



Recertifications

Jean Bodine, Jill Boyter, Donna Dutton, Matt Farmer,
Susan McKinley, Rachel Thompson, Morgan Williams, Amy Zesch

Milestones

Ron Childers - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Carla Stang - 1000 hours, Gold Dragonfly



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To register for the Annual Meeting, go to

<https://web.cvent.com/event/d0012216-ad2d-4ae0-9e8b-195d8ad7884d/regProcessStep1>

The cost for this year's virtual event is a flat rate of \$55 for all attendees for the full virtual conference. Registration includes access to 90+ general sessions, virtually-offered technical sessions, and some fun surprises offered the weeks surrounding the Annual Meeting. While we're not able to offer discounts this year, we are happy to offer this lower registration price for our meeting with the new virtual platform. Due to the virtual format and reduced registration fees for this year's Annual Meeting, there will be no refunds.

As an added bonus, the first 250 registrants will be mailed a Virtual Registration Box with Texas Master Naturalist-themed desk items. Included in the Virtual Registration Box will be a *surprise* naturalist-themed book donated by our sponsor, TAMU Press. These items will be mailed mid- to late September and will arrive prior to the Annual Meeting.

If you can't register early, don't worry—we'll have additional 2020 Annual Meeting and TMN items available for sale (brand new items that haven't been sold before!) through the AgriLife Bookstore in place of the usual in-person General Store. Keep an eye out for more information coming soon about these items!

You will have a session list and access to our Agenda Matrix during the registration process, or you can click the links below to look through our sessions before you register. All registrants will automatically be signed up for all general sessions (e.g. Socials, Awards Ceremony, etc.). Although these general sessions are not required, we highly recommend you attend to reconnect, network, and stay up-to-date with the <https://txmn.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Full-Session-Descriptions.pdf>, as we would during an in-person event. NOTE – the registration page for selecting sessions is quite lengthy – 90+ sessions in all. Please take your time or feel free to complete registration and then change/update your agenda selection later as the event approaches.



<https://txmn.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Virtual-Agenda-Matrix7.21.pdf>

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Full-Session-Descriptions.pdf>

You will be able to sign up for overlapping sessions, and you'll have the chance to change your selections through our Annual Meeting App (launching early fall).

If you have any questions about any of the contests we're hosting this year, please reach out to Mary Pearl Meuth (mpmeuth@tamu.edu) or Michelle Haggerty (mmhaggerty@tamu.edu)

We look forward to "seeing" you in October!
Mary Pearl & Michelle

From Carla Stang, Membership Director

Update on the Interim-Mentor Program

Each of the 31 prospective students has been matched with a mentor and everyone is off and running. Program guidelines were sent out to the mentors and the prospective students the week of August 3. The feedback I've received so far is that folks have been excited to be doing anything related to nature, whether it is attending a class or volunteering. We have had TMNs step up and offer to lead "mini-field trips" to several locations, such as Lost Maples, Enchanted Rock, Old Bat Tunnel, and Devil's Sinkhole.

There are also "mini-training sessions" that other TMNs have offered to do. Topics are: Land Management/Stewardship, Plant ID, and Birding Basics. In all cases, these mini-sessions are being led by Hill Country Master Naturalists. What a great way to get new folks out into the hill country to explore and learn!

The Event Calendar will continue to evolve as activities get developed and confirmed and will go through mid-December. We'll take a break in the action over the holiday period and pick up again mid-January. I'd like to give a big shout out to all of the mentors and TMNs who are helping to make this gap period a meaningful experience for the prospective students until we're able to put on the TMN Basic course. You are setting a great example of volunteerism and support of our TMN mission.

From Shelly Plante, Nature Tourism Manager, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

New Fall Birding Classic Registration Now Open

We have been hard at work since last March to create a one-of-a-kind Fall 2020 Birding Classic for birders throughout the state to enjoy fall migration. The event may look a little different, and there may be more virtual gatherings than in-person outings, but we hope that there is something for everyone in this newly imagined birding event. In particular, the new expanded Big Sit! with its 50-foot diameter circle might be a great way to get your chapter together at a social distance, wearing masks to keep everyone safe. There are also new categories for teams with members spread throughout a region (or the state) where you each bird your local patch and meet up virtually to share your lists into a single team list for the day. More details on those changes and more below!

So, gather your friends, family, and fellow Master Naturalists to join your team for this Fall Birding Classic!

Register today: www.birdingclassic.org Registration deadline: September 14, 2020

Tournament Dates: October 1-31, 2020 (your choice of day).

Novice birders, expert listeners and everyone in between are welcome! There are many categories to choose from, based on your birding ability and region of the state. There are half day or full day tournaments and categories with team members scattered across the state or region as well as categories for teams of people who have been quarantining together. There's something for everyone!

Full rules (<https://tpwd.texas.gov/events/great-texas-birding-classic/rules-and-registration/rules-and-regulations>) for the 2020 Birding Classic offer more details and have been adopted to ensure that health and safety is the top priority as we have fun, connect with one another (virtually or safely in person), and fundraise for avian conservation work throughout the state of Texas. Registration fees and sponsorship dollars go toward Conservation Grants for birding, nature tourism, and habitat restoration and enhancement projects throughout Texas. Select winning teams will help choose which projects are funded. The more teams that register, the more funds we can award! Even if your chapter decides to pass on registering a team this year, maybe you have a project that fits the conservation grant criteria to submit for funding consideration. Visit <https://tpwd.texas.gov/events/great-texas-birding-classic/prizes> for more details.

If you have any questions about the event or any of these rule and category modifications due to the pandemic, contact me at 512-389-4500 (office) or 512-241-9163 (cell).

From Sheryl Pender, 2020 Class Director

News, Newness, and Opportunities

While it may seem like we (2020 Class Committee) have become dormant these past few weeks (was it just July 9 that we met? seems like ages ago!), I can assure you there is **NEWS**, there is **NEWNESS** and there are open-ended **OPPORTUNITIES** for 2021.

NEWNESS: Chapters' Training Directors have meetings and training with TPWD and TAMU Directors (AKA "State Directors").

We are all on the cutting edge of providing education and training for new TMNs in an era of continuous change.

As of August 11, twelve TMN chapters are continuing with 2020 fall training classes. They have geared up virtually with some innovative field/lab experiences and many lectures on-line and previously recorded.

When the pandemic was declared in March and Texas began shutting down, many chapters were in the middle of their traditional spring training classes. Not just postponed, but cancelled, stopped, as in no more classes scheduled until.....can you imagine??

The State Directors (Michelle and Mary Pearl) were inundated with requests, cries for help, what-ifs, and totally new-never-before-considered questions. Issues are being resolved, time has helped heal the crisis, and new thinking, opportunities, and ways of work are evolving.

Some chapters resumed their spring curriculum in May and June with *huge* modifications in how to deliver content and experiences to their trainees.

Enter the virtual world...distance learning.....on-line education. With these concepts and practices some chapters were able to fulfill their Basic Training program.

NEWNESS: Basic Training and Advanced Training: a Distinction and a Definition

These are two terms with specific definitions. We all know what "AT" is.

I have recently learned that our 2020 New Class Committee is responsible for *Basic Training*. These two words are now used to distinguish these two important training functions of a chapter: BASIC TRAINING and ADVANCED TRAINING.

We have called it a course, our curriculum, the chapter's TMN certification training, new class schedule, etc. To keep clarity and uniformity, TPWD and TAMU are using the words *Basic Training*. If you have gone to the new TMN website, you may have noticed the words "basic training."

The State TMN Program mandates topics to be covered in *Basic Training*. Our Class Committee's 2020 plan included both the TMN Program's mandated topics as well as additional "core" and "optional" topics required by our chapter.

This amounted to about 75 hours of lectures/class instruction and field trips. The TMN program requires a chapter to offer a 40 hour *Basic Training* to qualify for certification.

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More recently, the State TMN Program Directors have identified the following topics as “universal,” with content that could be easily shared among chapters (and will eventually be available via the TMN YouTube channel for sharing). Why? Because these topics (from the textbook and TMN Basic Training objectives) are not ecoregion-specific and the content can be generally applied:

Land Stewardship
Ecological Regions
Historic Naturalists
Citizen Science

Ecological Concepts
Texas Water Resources
Law and Ethics
Interpretation: Volunteers as Teachers

I foresee more information about the TMN Program’s goals to support and assist chapters to conduct Basic Training within the standards and guidelines that have existed.

Our Hill Country chapter has performed “above and beyond.”

Many chapters do not have the resources we are fortunate to have had and/or have developed for lectures and field trips. Additionally, I believe the State TMN program is moving in a direction to provide reputable recorded lectures on these “universal topics” as a strategy to help all of the chapters continue to survive, and to conduct virtual classes in this environment of restrictions and limitations where space capacity, social distancing, and safety of participants are paramount.

OPPORTUNITIES: Fast-Forward to Hill Country Chapter

Here we sit, with a fantastic mentor program underway and time to figure out how, when, where, and what is in store for our 2021 Basic Training. We must monitor the ever-changing “return to service” guidelines from our sponsors as well as our counties’ guidelines and restrictions. We have to find venues to accommodate our classroom requirements. We have virtual/on-line opportunities to consider for our chapter’s training. We have the opportunity to increase the field and lab experiences in small groups. We have to swing big and step outside the box we have been accustomed to for over a decade of successfully certifying TMNs each year.

What does that mean for us? Meld tradition, opportunity, and newness.

When the Advisors and I met in July to discuss postponement of the fall training program, our President asked that the 2020 Class Committee continue to evaluate how to move Basic Training forward into 2021.

We will resume this evaluation in September at our 2020 Class Committee meeting.

To facilitate this meeting Committee members will read, think about, comment on, and question my outline: New Direction: Strategic Planning for 2021 Certification Training.

We all know the art and science of putting together a solid, well-built curriculum. We have all the components.

How we re-start for 2021 is now our task.

Recent Hill County Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley

- 7/4/20 The Most Common Shrubs and Vines of the Hill Country
- 7/11/20 Different Habitats Found in the Hill Country
- 7/18/20 Seed Dispersal: Observing Nature at Work
- 7/25/20 Saving Water and Plants in the Hot Dry Summer

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

From Tara Bushnoe, Natural Resources Coordinator, Upper Guadalupe River Authority

UGRA 2020 River Clean Up – Reimagined!



Last month, UGRA made the decision to cancel the one-day Annual River Clean Up event for the first time in 16 years! The decision was made in the interest of public safety and due to current guidelines for public gatherings.

Since we have many people in our community dedicated to keeping the watershed clean, we wanted to still honor that enthusiasm by offering a modified cleanup format. UGRA “reimagined” the one-day event to be done in small groups, at your own pace, and when you have time between now and November 1. I invite you to participate in our 2020 River Clean Up – Reimagined! We’ll still support your cleanups by providing supplies and coordinating trash drop off areas. Volunteers will also receive our Annual River Clean Up t-shirt and other freebies provided by our community partners and be eligible for the prize drawing! (All those who complete a cleanup before the deadline will be entered into the drawing. There are over 30 prizes and you will get an entry in the drawing for each cleanup day you complete).

If you are interested in participating, identify an area in the Guadalupe River watershed that is in need of a cleanup or select a site identified by UGRA. Suitable sites can be anywhere in Kerr County including streets, roadways, ditches, dry creek beds, and waterways. When it rains, trash from any of these locations has the potential to wash into the creeks and the Guadalupe River.

You can register to conduct your cleanup at a time of your choice between now and November 1st. You can sign up for more than one cleanup day, too! Registered volunteers can pick up supplies at UGRA on Thursdays or Fridays from 8 AM – 5 PM. After your cleanup, you will be asked to transport your trash to one of the identified drop off locations, return supplies to UGRA, and complete the reporting form.

Please visit <http://www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/river-clean-up> for complete details and sign up today!

From Tom Burke, Volunteer Service Projects Director

Hill Country Master Naturalist Pandemic Project Update

Despite activity restrictions and some inaccessible projects, chapter members have continued to provide volunteer service. Look at the data for March 15—July 25:

161 volunteers worked 8225 hours on 83 approved projects!

Projects with >300 hours include Chapter Administration [1915 hours], Old Tunnel State Park [751], Monarch Larva Monitoring Project [436], Fredericksburg Nature Center [398], Kerrville Schreiner Park [360], Albert and Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area [354], and CoCoRaHS [327]. Thanks to all for lots of hard work during difficult times and summer heat.

New projects and project opportunities.

1. NEW. Pollinator Garden Boerne Convention and Visitor Center. Rachel Thompson is the coordinator. This garden is a demonstration garden for the Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program. Contact Rachel (rjat@alumni.rice.edu) to help out. Code volunteer hours under KL-06-A-NPA.
2. NEW. Hill Country iNaturalist Project. This new project will catalog and share observational data. Anyone can participate. Data can be from any date or month but must be from our 10-county area. You can join the project on the iNaturalist site—and also receive training there if you need it. Each of us will have access to the data, which should provide unique insights into what's happening locally as well as build an enlarging database of observations. Travis Linscomb has agreed to be the project coordinator (travis.linscomb@gmail.com). This is a solo project—no social distancing or group meetings required. Volunteer hours should be entered under HC-00-G. Texas Nature Tracker activities should continue to be reported CC-01-A.
3. EXISTING. Mason Mountain Prairie Dogs. Hal and Amy Zesch have worked to establish two prairie dog colonies at Mason Mountain WMA. New animals are expected in September. If you have interest in working on this unique project, contact Hal at hal.zesch@gmail.com.

From Mary Pearl Meuth, Texas Master Naturalist Program Assistant State Coordinator

Are You A Texas Master Naturalist Seeking Volunteer Project Opportunities?

We've got something new to share. In an effort to provide you with as many opportunities as possible to continue your volunteer service from a distance or virtually, the TMN State office will be hosting our first ever Virtual Volunteer Fair. What can I expect? The Virtual Volunteer Fair will happen on Wednesday September 2 (final time TBA) with a series of 10-15 minute long project sessions highlighting each of the potential projects submitted by our two sponsoring agencies, Texas Parks & Wildlife and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

An agenda of project proposals will be shared by August 25th with all connection details for the Virtual Volunteer Fair. Projects will be listed in an "agenda" or catalog of sorts with information on the focus of the project, number of hours anticipated, experience/expertise needed or additional training if needed. Potential project ideas include the following:

Recruiting curators for needed Texas Nature Tracker projects; TMN Chapters adopt Wildlife Viewing Trail maintenance and surveys; Develop flora or fauna guides from collected photos or data; Develop social media content; Perform accessibility reviews on our web pages; Review web pages for accuracy, information updates, broken links, etc.; Literature reviews covering the next Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) species you will be focusing on; Mining field resource data; Writing short article spotlights on species of concern or management practices.

For more information, go to <https://txmn.tamu.edu/virtual-volunteer-fair-september-2nd-2020/#>. Registration will be announced soon; for now, save that date.

Hi everyone,

Seems like forever since we have had a Chapter Meeting, and does not look like we will be able to have one anytime soon. I miss seeing everyone.

Since we can't get together, I will be setting up a chapter merchandise table at Riverside Nature Center to take shirt orders, sell hats and bags, and all of the chapter "swag." This will be on the 4th Monday morning of each month starting in August. I will be there from 10:00—1:00 on the porch, so come find me!

Something new for you – lunch bags! They are insulated to keep your things cold, and the perfect size to take to your project or the park for that picnic lunch. Of course with the HCMN Logo.

Along with the bags I also have new chapter bandanas. They are great as a napkin, sweat stopper, emergency face mask or a fashion statement for your HCMN bag.

Here's a list of the clothing we have. You can email your order to me (gwaggener@flow-epps.com) with your credit card information. A 3.5% fee (required by the credit card companies when the card isn't presented) will be added to your order. Or, send your order to me at 2703 Bandera Hwy., Kerrville 78028 with a check for the exact amount. Send it to me soon so I can have it ready for you to pick up.

I hope to see you soon!
Gracie Waggener



T-shirt - Sizes S to 5XL \$20.00
Color: Galapagos Blue, Natural, Heliconia Pink

Ladies V-Neck T - Sizes S to 3XL \$20.00
Color: Heathered Orchid, Sapphire

Men's / Ladies' Denim Shirt - Sizes S to 6XL \$34.00

Man's / Ladies' Columbia - Long or Short Sleeve
Men's Sizes S to 2XL Ladies' Sizes, S to XL \$58.00

Fleece Pullover \$60.00
Men's Sizes S to 3XL Ladies' Sizes XXS to 3XL
Color: Sand, Charcoal
Ladies' only: Aqua, Powder Pink

Windbreaker - Sizes S to 6XL \$30.00
Color: Green With Hood or Without Hood



ALL PRICES INCLUDE THE COST OF LOGO AND STATE SALES TAXES
PLEASE CHOSE YOUR STYLE AND SIZE CAREFULLY
ALL ORDERS ARE CUSTOM ORDERS - ALL SALES ARE FINAL

How to Grow a Pollinator Garden

As Master Naturalists, I am sure you are all planting pollinator-friendly gardens at home, but the bees and the butterflies need even more. The Resurrection Garden at Zion Lutheran Church in Kerrville is in its second year, and here is what I have learned:

1. **If you talk about native plants, folks will listen.** The volunteer coordinator from my church realized that I was a Master Naturalist and asked if I would help to spruce up the dreary landscaping at the church. I agreed, providing that only native plants were used.
2. **Recruit help.** There was no full time gardener, so we organized a garden club. After the first year, I realized that we could be a HCMN project, which brought us a few more dedicated helpers.
3. **Get expert advice.** Richard Coleman and Pam Leinhard of the Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Project spent a morning evaluating the grounds. They produced an extensive report with recommendations for plants for each area. We used this report to set priorities and choose plants.
4. **Be realistic.** The target area was huge and bare, interspersed with thickets of non-native trees and trash. In some distant era, black plastic had been spread and crushed granite piled 6 inches thick on top. There was no way we could clear it all at one time and start over. The PGARP report suggested smaller areas which could be attacked.
5. **Find financial support.** Church members designated Thrivent grants to purchase trees during the fall 2018 plant sales and others made donations. We received a “Bring Back the Monarchs” grant from NPSOT in March. Donated plants have been a big help. Some local pollinator gardens are overrun with with plants that we would like to have.
6. **Find a way to water.** In time, the native plants will survive without watering. But for the first years, our baby trees and perennials need help. Eventually we contrived a sprinkler system that could reach all of the monarch garden and a soaker for most of the front area. If it only turned itself on!!
7. **Learn as you go.** We are using a number of plants that the deer have not bothered at my home. In November 2019 we assembled 30 packages of donated wildflower seeds, mixed them together with sand, and spread them in an area 25 x 25 ft. After an initial explosion of Cowpen daisies, we are still finding new flowers coming up. I wonder what it will look like next year.
8. **Be patient.** We are in the blistering heat of summer and will not plant anything new until fall. We plan on several more trees that we hope will grow up to screen the garden from the nail studio next door. Many plants take several years to really get going. It took 26 years for the Riverside Nature Center to become the garden it is today. That gives me hope!



Butterfly weed (*Asclepis tuberosa*)
with Gregg's Blue Mistflower
(*Eupatorium greggii*)



Rock Rose
(*Pavonia lasiopetala*)



Mexican Hat (*Ratibida columnaris*) and
Prairie Verbena (*Verbena bipinnatifida*);
Cowpen daisies (*Verbesina enceliodes*)
in back

UGRA & Riverside Nature Center present:

Eduscape Talk & Tour Webinar

Hillside Stewardship: Reducing Erosion and Catching Water

Tuesday, August 18

1:00pm-2:30pm

**Presented by
Daniel Oppenheimer**



When landowners can slow and sink water into the land, this physical process provides a variety of benefits. This FREE webinar will discuss some simple & advanced stewardship practices for improving the health of our hillsides.

At the conclusion you are invited to stay put and enjoy a virtual tour of the property surrounding the UGRA building, which has been aptly named, the EduScope: a landscape with a purpose.

For more information on the Eduscape visit ugra.org/major-initiatives/eduscape

**To register for the Talk & Tour Webinar go to
riversidenaturecenter.org/2020/07/30/eduscape-talk-tour-2/**

Daniel Oppenheimer is the Land Program Manager at Hill Country Alliance, where he works with landowners and communities across Central Texas on land stewardship projects.





SUMMER 2020
CITIZEN SCIENCE OPPORTUNITY
**HONEYSUCKLE LEAF
BLIGHT SURVEY**

Honeysuckle leaf blight is a fungal disease of invasive bush honeysuckle and other honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) species. Symptoms include:

- Yellowing patches on leaves that turn tan and then dark brown
- Dead, dry leaf tissue and distorted leaf shape
- Damage varies from just few spots on a plant to the majority of leaves

We want your help!

Use the iNaturalist app (free for iPhone and Android) to take photos and submit observations of any honeysuckle leaf blight you see.

Learn more:

[WWW.INATURALIST.ORG/PROJECTS/
HONEYSUCKLE-LEAF-BLIGHT-SURVEY](http://WWW.INATURALIST.ORG/PROJECTS/HONEYSUCKLE-LEAF-BLIGHT-SURVEY)

QUESTIONS? EMAIL E.CROCKER@UKY.EDU



Forest Health
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment



The View from Rusty Bend

Drought Frequency

*In a palestill landscape of drought
beneath the skimmed milk of sunbright sky,
try tuning attention to a fresh frequency.*

*Forsaking wide focus, dial down—
to spot tiny white stars of Heliotrope,
candelabra blossoms of Kidneywood.*

*Grass seeds nod in heavy dismay, weighty
Rescue Grass, the layered fans of Hairy Tridens,
yearning for a deluge.*

*Sniff with care for the citrus crush of forbs,
and with the gift of an easterly,
smells of salty dunes borne on the wind.*

*Now finetune the ear. On one channel
Field Sparrow sings. Notes pure as a piccolo.
On another, mockers run their medleys like a piano bar.*

No rain, yet this thunderstorm of song.



Saharan Sand cloaks the sun

July at Rusty Bend, and all is burnt toast. The road to the house is dusty as baby powder. Against a drab backdrop, with day after day of heat and humidity, changes loom, large and small. We notice what is newly present as well as what is absent.

Canyon Wrens are back from a month-long hiatus. Their song is the world's best way to awaken. One male ends his descending aria with an idiosyncratic boo-boo-tweet! It is also a time of big bugs: grasshoppers three inches long, dragonflies as big as a fist, sticky Hellgrammites on the porch wall, the mighty Sonoran Bumblebee. What is missing? Early migrants such as White-crowned Sparrow, and most of the larger butterflies. One night this week, most of the male Painted Buntings headed off to Mexico. Our new feeder is a mid-air fueling station for the females and juvenile buntings feeding heavily on the white millet before migrating south.

We wonder how they know when to leave. As poet Marie Ponsot put it "Days dangle for them, dipping/down & up, then dip less & less /& slow, till left sun and right storm/halt at a balance..."

Freshly present are the ripe purple persimmons, songs of our new bluebirds and the welcome sight of turkey poults learning to master the platform feeder. We have watched white-tail bucks in velvet get their antlers slick and shiny. One has a sore front leg and carries its flag of a tail distinctively at three o'clock.

Another parade of change is the molting season. Juvenile cardinals with their mottled black beaks and emerging colors look like they were on the losing end of paint-ball fight. I find a huge primary feather from a Turkey Vulture. Most of our "big" birds appear bedraggled as if they took flak during their feeding runs. Ravens, Black Vultures, Hawks, no summer finery for them.

continued on next page

Most mornings we watch a clutch of Rufus-crowned sparrow fledglings learn to feed from their mama. She has a feather that sticks out all katywhompus. Late bloomers, these ones. We invent dialogues: *Mama, I could pick up that seed, but it tastes better when you put it in my mouth.*

I notice a large bird hovering over the neighbor's field. Its wings are black and white and pointed as hedge trimmers. I get out the field guide. Yep, it's a White-tailed Kite suspended in mid-air, agile as a Kestrel, mesmerizing me with a black/white flash. The next day, after a morning run, I come back to the barn to fill the birdbath. The sun hangs over my shoulder and shines on the lone bather. Golden-cheeked Warbler, right in the middle, splashing with wild abandon. I watch for many minutes. I feel like I won the lottery.

Lastly, our favorite seasonal change is to watch the clouds march up from the gulf, slip into the hill country, and slide by. After Hurricane Hannah, the sky was a veritable sampler of clouds. Nimbus, stratus, cirrus, cumulus. Mares tails, flat bottomed, cupped. Not much rain, but oh what a show. While watching this hypnotic play of clouds, a hummer flew up and deposited a gentle tap on my head. What was her message?



Working remotely *Image courtesy of Julia Robinson*

Poem, first image and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2020

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 just been awarded the Wrangler Award for Poetry by the Western Heritage and Cowboy Hall of Fame. Both Lucy and Andy are certified Master Naturalists. Comments welcome at lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com.

ADVANCED TRAINING

MONDAY, AUGUST 17 6:30-8:30PM WEBINAR

AT20-411 JUST ENOUGH LATIN TO GO PLANT SHOPPING

Carol Clark will present the scientific names that will enhance your gardening and plant-buying skills. Reference handouts are included and can be found here in pdf & Word formats: <https://npsot.org/wp/dallas/resources-and-links/meeting-minutes-handouts/> . This is a Williamson County Chapter meeting. Join at 6:30 for social time and troubleshooting connections. The presentation begins at 7:00. Registration is required; you will receive an email with a Zoom link. Contact information: <https://npsot.org/wp/virtual/contact-us/> . To register, https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYkdeirqjMuHdbSMiRSxWm9Rgpd4i3ab_LY .

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 10-11AM WEBINAR

AT20-395 PECAN IOM AND WATER ISSUES

Larry Stein will discuss Weevil and Stink Bug control and late season water issues with regard to pecan trees. For more information or to register for this free program, please call the Kimble County AgriLife Extension Office at 325-446-2620.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 12-1PM WEBINAR

AT20-364 GRAZING AS A TOOL FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Contact Information: clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov. To register, <https://bit.ly/D7webinar> .

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 1-3PM WEBINAR

AT20-338 READ YOUR LANDSCAPE

In this online presentation Daniel Oppenheimer of Hill Country Alliance will discuss the effects of water runoff and erosion. You will discover several ways to mitigate these problems. At the conclusion you are invited to enjoy a virtual tour of the property surrounding the UGRA building, which has been aptly named, the EduScape: a landscape with a purpose. To register, riversidenaturecenter.org or call 830-257-4837. Once registered you will receive an email with the meeting details.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-334 COMPOSTING BASICS

Participants will learn about various composting methods and how to decide which method will be best for their situation. To register, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/109421919908> . This program will repeat on August 20, 6:00-8:00pm; register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/109458152280> .

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19 12-1PM WEBINAR

AT20-397 TAXONOMIC STATUS AND OCCURRENCE OF THE RIO GRANDE SIREN

Dr. Richard Kline and Dr. Drew Davis are the presenters. They will attempt to provide clarity regarding the Siren species that inhabit south Texas by using mitochondrial DNA sequences, including samples from previously unreported populations, and discuss the challenges associated with Siren trapping and the development of and application in conducting surveys using environmental DNA (eDNA) assays. Contact Information: https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity. To register, <https://bit.ly/3ie65pa> .

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 12-1:30PM WEBINAR

AT20-318 WEBINAR OUT WEST: WESTERN MONARCH CONSERVATION: OVERWINTERING

Speakers will provide updates on overwintering habitat, including conservation status, an explanation of habitat selection by micro-climates, grove management, and actions being taken to implement the Western Monarch Conservation Plan. To register, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfx1-bjKOjIbSpYzfWF3NFcSIK3UyWh066UiLFjBDoOdstDIg/viewform> . Contact Information: <https://monarchjointventure.org/about-us/contact-us> .

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 12-1PM WEBINAR

AT20-365 TURKEY HABITAT AND PLANT ID

Contact Information: clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov. To register, <https://bit.ly/D7webinar> .

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-334 COMPOSTING BASICS

Participants will learn about various composting methods and how to decide which method will be best for their situation. To register, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/109458152280> . This is a repetition of the program on August 18.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-382 TOP 100 PLANTS OF NORTH TEXAS

Contact Information: wateruniversity@ag.tamu.edu . To register, <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/august-20-2020-top-100-plants-of-north-texas-virtual/>

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 7-9PM VIRTUAL

AT20-398 THE EXTRAORDINARY LIVES OF LICHENS

Cat Cort, mycologist and ecologist, will discuss the biology of lichen "symbiosis", their global distribution, and what we know (and don't know) about lichen biodiversity. To Join Zoom Meeting, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y6roq8wl> Meeting ID: 845 9569 1095 Passcode: 396634

One tap mobile +16699006833,,84595691095#,,,,,0#,,396634# US . Contact Information: info@centraltexasmycology.org .

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21 12-1PM WEBINAR

AT20-418 WILD NEIGHBORS SERIES: ECOLOGY OF INVASIVES

Darrell Huchinson, Balcones Canyonlands Preserve biologist, will go beyond a list of Texas invaders to explore how species introductions can become widespread and alter ecosystem function. Contact Information: johanna.arendt@traviscountytexas.gov . To register, <https://signup.com/go/mrFUyI> .

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 10:30AM-12PM WEBINAR

AT20-403 LEVERAGING SPECIES GENOMES TO SUPPORT CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTIONS

Case studies of blue oak, valley oak, and sugar pine. To register, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/leveraging-species-genomes-to-support-climate-change-adaptation-tickets-116314177837> . Upon registering, you will receive a confirmation email with the Skype link. Contact Information: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Contact> .

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 12-1PM WEBINAR

AT20-366 SUPPLEMENTAL WATER FOR WILDLIFE

To register, <https://bit.ly/D7webinar> . Contact Information: clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov .

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 1-2PM WEBINAR

AT20-212 BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR MONARCHS AND OTHER POLLINATORS

You will receive additional details about participating after registering. This series is a collaborative effort between the Monarch Joint Venture and the National Conservation Training Center. Contact Information: info@monarchjointventure.org . To register, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeubBuT8knsWbWoeQjgZQ64YO58y5XVFib2VWS6V3xE129Jmg/viewform> .

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 1-2PM WEBINAR

AT20-339 CRITTERS, PLANTS, AND SCENERY OF BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

Max Traweek, retired TPWD District Leader of the Edwards Plateau Wildlife District, is the presenter for this guided virtual tour of Big Bend NP. To register, riversidenaturecenter.org or call 830-257-4837. Once registered you will receive an email with the meeting details.

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TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-356 WATER U DOING? WATER EFFICIENT SPRINKLERS

Learn how minor do-it-yourself repairs and simple irrigation tips can make a major difference in your waste and water bill. To register for this free webinar, <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/august-25-2020-water-u-doing-water-efficient-sprinklers-virtual/> .

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 6:45-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-412 THE LICHENS AMONG US

Bob Harris will discuss how to recognize and identify lichens and where they are found. Contact Information: <https://npsot.org/wp/virtual/contact-us/>. You will receive a Zoom link with information on how to register.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26 6:30-7:30 WEBINAR

AT20-343 AN INTRODUCTION TO BATS

Nyta Brown will discuss the bats that live at Old Tunnel State Park and elsewhere in Texas. Contact Information: bexaraudubonsociety@bexaraudubon.org . To join the Zoom meeting, dial 346-248-7799. When you enter, give your first and last name in order to be admitted. Meeting ID: 860 4875 6627
Password: 27153 .

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27 12-1PM WEBINAR

AT20-396 TEXAS WILDSCAPES: GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Contact Information: clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov . To register, <https://bit.ly/D7webinar> .

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-357 TEXAS TREES

Learn about tree selection and proper planting practices, as well as proper watering, pruning, common insect issues and diseases. Contact Information: wateruniversity@ag.tamu.edu . Or call; 972-231-5362. To register, <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/august-27-2020-texas-trees-virtual/> . A link will be emailed to you.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29 10AM-4PM WEBINAR

AT20-416 MLMP VIRTUAL TRAINING

The Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) team will lead this virtual training to learn how to collect data to contribute to knowledge about the monarch population. Volunteers are critical to informing and inspiring monarch conservation. This session will be relevant for both newcomers and individuals who are already participating in the MLMP or another monarch citizen science project! During the MLMP training, you will learn about monarch biology, monitoring procedures, and data entry protocols. You will have the opportunity to ask monarch biologists your questions about monarchs and monitoring. Additionally, the training will give you the chance to virtually connect with other volunteers across the country. The four-hour training will be conducted in two sessions, from 10am - 12pm (CST) and again from 2pm - 4pm (CST). During the break, you will have an opportunity to use your newfound knowledge! The training sessions will be held over Zoom. Instructors are Katie-Lyn Bunney, Laura Lukens, Wendy Caldwell, and Karen Oberhauser. Please note that if you would like materials mailed to you the registration deadline is August 19th. If you would like to attend, but the cost of registration is a barrier, please contact either Katie-Lyn (kbunney@monarchjointventure.org) or Laura (llukens@monarchjointventure.org). To register, <https://donate.monarchjointventure.org/event/mlmp-tr>. Contact Information: <https://monarchjointventure.org/contact-mlmp> .

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1 11AM-2PM WEBINAR

AT20-409 BIRD CAST: WHEN AND WHERE BIRDS MIGRATE

This is a free webinar interview, including audience Q&A, with Cornell Lab of Ornithology associate researcher and BirdCast project leader Adriaan Dokter. Contact Information: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 1-800-843-BIRD (2473). Registration is required: https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ptvXWJi9RJaKGEXDJJolFA.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-358 PLANT COMBOS & COMPANIONS

This class will help you create year-round aesthetic beauty by combining plants that offer refreshing seasonal interest with vibrant contrasting colors and textures. Revamp poor drainage zones, deep shade spots or heat islands with ecologically friendly combos that will save you time and money. Companion plantings can even optimize the success of your edible garden by utilizing natural biological controls. To register for this free webinar, <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/september-1-2020-plant-combos-companions-virtual/>. Contact Information: wateruniversity@ag.tamu.edu or 972-231-5362.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 12-1PM WEBINAR

AT20-406 WHY HERBICIDE TREATMENTS FAIL

Dr. Megan Clayton will outline some of the most common mistakes made when applying herbicides and how to improve your control next time. To join this free webinar, press the green button "Enter the Room" at <https://texasrangewebinars.tamu.edu/webinars/why-herbicide-treatments-fail/>. Contact Information: Pete Flores, pflores@ag.tamu.edu.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5 AND SEPTEMBER 12 19:30AM-12PM

AT20-350 SUPER SOIL BIOLOGY

Kim Martin and Laurie Bostic, owners of Barking Cat Farm, focus on growing high quality crops in an organic and sustainable manner. In this two-day class, they will focus on different types of organisms that live in the soil and learn how to manage them for optimal soil health. You will take away an understanding of how to use soil biology in your organic gardening to grow tasty, healthy, nutritious food. Contact Information: <http://brit.org/hours-and-locationinfo@brit.org> or 817-332-4441.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-353 RAINWATER HARVESTING: HOW TO BUILD RAIN BARRELS

Register for this webinar at <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/september-8-2020-saving-from-a-rainy-day-diy-rain-barrel-class-virtual-class-only/> and a link will be mailed to you. Contact Information: wateruniversity@ag.tamu.edu or 972-231-5362.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 6-8PM WEBINAR

AT20-381 MADE FOR THE SHADE: SHADE GARDENING

Learn about the many native and adapted plants that thrive in shadier spots and gardening under mature trees as well as turf alternatives and hardscape options for low light areas. To register, <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/september-10-2020-made-for-the-shade-shade-gardening-virtual/>. Contact Information: wateruniversity@ag.tamu.edu or 972-231-5362.

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We meet on the fourth Monday of most months (but not this month) 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:

Lenore Langsdorf, Editor
LenoreLangsdorf@gmail.com

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Questions about our chapter?

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