

# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the  
Texas Master Naturalist  
Hill Country Chapter  
June 2021 Volume 19 Number 6



photo by Mick Thompson; creative commons



The June Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a virtual meeting on Monday, June 28, beginning at 6:30.

Go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88596485278?pwd=NWV5NFcwREFDL3hiRlBncldA3ejcrQT09>

Our speaker, Patsy Inglet, is President of the Bexar Audubon Society. She has traveled to every continent to see as many birds as possible, banded birds in the field, monitored birds in the nest, and taught many children and adults the basics of birding.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . . . Elsa Roberts

On June 24, your Chapter Board members will certify and install the 2022 New Class Directors. They have already started to work on the 2022 Spring Training Class program and will have had two 2022 Class Committee Meetings by the June Board meeting. They are Carra Milikien who will assume the title of New Class Director and Anne Ryan, who will assume the title of New Class Co-Director. However, they will both share equal responsibilities and authority, working together as Co-Directors. As the saying goes, "Two heads are better than one" and that may turn out to prove true since our government health authorities are warning of a possible Fall resurgence of a variant strain of the Covid-19 virus. We all certainly hope this does not come true, but if it happens, with Carra and Anne working together, we will have a much better chance of keeping our Spring Training on schedule without delays.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Sheryl Pender, 2021 Class Director, who will be yielding her place on the Board to Carra and Anne. Without a doubt, she went far beyond the obligations of her listed duties and structured an excellent training program that met all the Covid requirements that were put in place by our State Directors. While only obligated to fill the position for one year, she agreed to remain until a training program was formed and a new class was completely trained and graduated. Most of the 2019 Class Committee also remained committed to work with Sheryl until the job was done. Their triumph was realized on May 11 when the Class of 2021 graduated and took their places as "well trained volunteers" within our Chapter. Thank you, Sheryl, for your commitment to the Hill Country Chapter and a job well done.

**It's ALMOST here!**

**Our Texas Master Naturalist Specialty License Plate is coming!!!**

*continued on next page*



Get ready to join us and show off your Texas Master Naturalist membership, support of the program, love of dragonflies, and commitment to conservation education through volunteer service all over your city, county, Texas, and beyond! By purchasing a Texas Master Naturalist license plate, you will be directly providing financial support back to our program and its conservation and stewardship of Texas' natural resources. ANYONE can purchase this plate and \$22 of each \$30 annual plate fee comes directly back to the Texas Master Naturalist Program for continuing our mission.

Once ready, the plate will be available for purchase on the website: <https://www.myplates.com/>

When ready for purchase, we'll send out an announcement via our website and our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. If you want to be among the FIRST to hear about the plates release, follow us on social media or join our email listserv.

For more information, go here: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/tmn-license-plate/>.

#### KAPP Report (Kerr Area Partnership for Preservation)

The KAPP Committee, under the leadership of Mayor Bill Blackburn, held this month's committee meeting on June 8. It was decided at that meeting that we would work on establishing a tree trail in the downtown area of Kerrville. Jeremy Walther, Director of KUTS (Kerrville Urban Trail System), volunteered to take the lead in locating and identifying significant trees that could be included on the trail. We are asking that the members of the various organizations that are represented on this committee help us by contributing any information they may have concerning trees that are worth highlighting on the trail. These trees will be marked on a map and signage will be provided with information about the tree. If you know of any trees in the downtown area that have a story to tell, whether on commercial or private property, please send that information to me at [elsa.roberts@gmail.com](mailto:elsa.roberts@gmail.com). It could also be a tree that is just an outstanding specimen or one that has survived against all odds. Any information you can share, be it hearsay, legend, or rumor, is worth consideration. These will be clues that will assist us as we will be attempting to look for more information in the historical records of Kerrville. Please share your "stories" with me, including a possible timeline if possible, and we will try to find some evidence within the records. I think it sounds like an interesting project and could be an educational one as well. If we are successful in producing this initial tree trail, this will most likely be expanded area wide in the future. The focus will be to highlight the importance of trees, the benefits they provide, and the joy they bring to us all.

In closing, I hope all of you are planning some things you enjoy this summer. I feel like I've been let out of jail after the summer and winter of 2020. And the rain has been wonderful even though it is becoming less frequent now. Looks like sunny days are here again. Happy summer everyone.

## This Month We Honor



### Initial Certification (Class of 2021)

Trudy Eberhardt, Dot Maginot, Nellwyn Sadler

### Recertifications

Lee Booker, Dale Bransford, Mackenzie Brown, Susan Clark,  
David Davies, Marylein Davies, Ginny de Wolf, Randy Fuentes, Lucy Griffith,  
Bob Hansen, Wendi Leonard, Carl Luckenbach, Susan McKinley, Barbard Marquer,  
Charleen Moore, Andrew Robinson, Carla Stang, Van Turner, Sherry Wilson

### Milestones

Nancy Scoggins - 250 hours, Bronze Dreagonfly  
Darryl Pitts - 500 hours, Brushed Silver Dragonfly  
Tyra Kane - 1000 hours, Gold Dragonfly  
Gary Fest - 2500 hours, Polished Silver Dragonfly  
Gracie Waggener - 10,000 hours !!

### Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley

- 5/1/21 Predators and Prey: A Complicated, Often Misunderstood Relationship
- 5/8/21 Lichens and Other Things That Grow on Trees
- 5/15/21 Bugs: We Couldn't Live Without Them
- 5/22/21 Small Changes in the Environment Can Have Large, Unexpected Consequences
- 5/29/21 How to Learn to Identify Native Plants

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



## Texas Master Naturalist 2021 Annual Meeting October 21st-24th

Put it on your calendar now as we prepare for our 22nd Texas Master Naturalist Program Annual Meeting, an event to gather, learn, and celebrate another year of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. We're preparing this year's meeting as a HYBRID Event – both online and in-person at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Marriott. The event will be held the weekend of Thursday through Sunday, October 21–24, with plenty of activities throughout the event! Join us for a long weekend of greenspace adventures in the hideaways of our largest urban area in Texas.

From Mary Pearl Meuth, Texas Master Naturalist Assistant Program Director



It's finally here! We're excited to announce the official launch of the Texas Master Naturalist Specialty License Plate, available to order starting June 21. Show off your Texas Master Naturalist membership, support of the program, your love of dragonflies, and commitment to conservation education through volunteer service all over your city, county, Texas, and beyond! By purchasing a Texas Master Naturalist license plate, you are directly providing financial support back to our program and its conservation and stewardship of Texas' natural resources. ANYONE can purchase this plate and \$22 of each \$30 annual plate fee comes directly to the Texas Master Naturalist Program for continuing our mission.

**There are three ways you can apply for a specialty license plate:**

1. Online at <https://www.myplates.com/> (beginning June 21)
2. Through the mail to the local county tax assessor collectors office with form VTR-999 (the form may be obtained from the [TxDMV.gov website](http://TxDMV.gov))
3. In person at the local county tax assessor collectors office with form VTR-999.

From Sheryl Pender, 2021 New Class Director

Jana Baxter presented a haiku as part of her Personal Field Trip:

Beyond walking dogs

Creekbed, meadow, bluff,  
Woodland, too—ecosystem!  
Forbs, Trees, grasses. blooms,

Array now noticed.  
Invasive? Native? Seek™ knows!  
Seeing with new eyes.



## UGRA VOLUNTEER SUMMER STUDY

The Guadalupe River is one of the highest rated recreational and scenic rivers in Texas and is Kerr County's central asset. The river provides water to the citizens for domestic, agricultural, municipal, and recreational purposes. Therefore, maintaining excellent water quality is essential. Water quality is determined by the amount of contaminants in the water; as contaminant levels increase, water quality decreases. There are many types of potential contaminants originating from many sources. The objective of this study was to determine the level of one specific contaminant, E. coli.

E. coli bacteria levels are commonly monitored to assess the quality of surface water because they are an indicator of water contamination. E. coli originates in the intestines of warm-blooded animals and the presence of E. coli indicates that warm-blooded animal feces have reached the water and that other pathogens may be present. Sources of E. coli can include inadequately treated sewage, livestock, pets, birds, and mammals.

Each summer, the Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) tests E. coli levels at popular swimming holes throughout Kerr County. The results of this Swimability Study are compared to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) standards for contact recreation. For a single grab sample, the standard for contact recreation set by TCEQ is 399 colonies of E. coli bacteria per 100 milliliters (mL). If E. coli levels are greater than 399 colonies of bacteria per 100 mL, then there is a higher risk of contracting waterborne illness while swimming.

In 2004, UGRA began the Volunteer Summer Study Program to supplement data collected during the Swimability Study and to include interested members of the community in water quality testing. The information collected by the volunteers also helps identify areas in need of further investigation.

During the summer of 2020 we were assisted by 39 volunteers who collected 451 samples at 45 locations throughout Kerr County. UGRA commends the efforts of these volunteers for taking an active role in protecting the water quality of our river. Working together, we can maintain the pristine nature of the Guadalupe River and protect our community's most valuable natural resource.

If you would like further information, please contact  
Tara Bushnoe at 830-896-5445 or [tarabushnoe@ugra.org](mailto:tarabushnoe@ugra.org).

### REGISTER FOR THE 2021 VOLUNTEER SUMMER STUDY

[Link to registration form](#)

### 2020 VOLUNTEER SUMMER STUDY REPORT

[View Report](#)



*1 on 1 with a Naturalist*

**Every Friday 10am-12pm**  
**@ Riverside Nature Center**

**Jim Stanley, naturalist, author, and columnist will be available to meet one-on-one to answer questions, discuss various topics, or listen to ideas about nature.**

During this current health crisis, we ask you to be mindful of those around you by practicing safe distancing & wearing a mask when possible.

Riverside Nature Center Presents:

# NATURE NIGHTS

Every Tuesday  
6-7pm

@ Riverside Nature Center  
150 Francisco Lemos St.

FREE FAMILY FUN

RSVP  
@ RIVERSIDENATURECENTER.ORG  
OR (830)257-4837

**June 8**  
FOSSILS,  
MINERALS, &  
GEMS



**July 13**  
MASON BEE  
HOUSES



**June 15**  
AQUATIC  
ORGANISMS



**July 6**  
OWL PELLET  
DETECTIVES



**June 22**  
HILL COUNTRY  
CRITTERS



**July 20**  
TRAIL WALK



**June 29**  
BEETLES



**Aug 3**  
TRASH TO  
TREASURE



**Jul 27**  
BUG BINGO



**UGRA 18th Annual**

# **River Clean Up**

**Volunteers Wanted!**

- Conduct a cleanup in Kerr County on your own or in a small group anytime from July 1 to October 31.
- Pick your own site or select a site identified by UGRA. Suitable sites can be anywhere in the watershed (roads, drainage areas, bridges, waterways).
- UGRA will support your cleanup by providing supplies and coordinating trash drop off locations.

**Let's Keep *OUR* River Clean!**

**T-shirts For First 400 Volunteers!!  
Snacks and Prizes, too!!**

**For more info and to register, visit:  
[www.ugra.org](http://www.ugra.org)**

## Advanced Training

**WE HAVE MORE THAN 33 ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FROM JUNE 15 - JULY 15.**

To read the list of dates and titles, go to the Advanced Training calendar at <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/chapter-calendar/>. Chose "Agenda" at the top, right, of the calendar. This will bring up a list of the dates and titles for these events. Then click on any title to bring up complete information on that event.

The View from Rusty Bend



*Rusty Bend rainbow*

Stitched into a curve in the river

each evening in spring, she sits  
still as limestone.  
Her eyes blaze—so many wings  
in the transept of her view.  
Mending the tremble of sparrows  
in the grasses, she counts the *pit-ti-tuks* of  
tanagers racing wasps and bees.  
Raven rows by, then  
murmurs a glottal goodbye.  
From its perch on a bone of oak.  
flycatcher's signature sally  
paints a metaphor of risk and return.  
Inhaling the citrus of crushed herbs,  
smelling the river's personality, she is  
a woman, literate in her landscape.  
As the light fades, a cartwheel of  
black confetti spins against the dusk,  
bats dancing with the night.  
Then a simmering of sounds, peepers and owl  
trills, that last splash of bass.  
She says goodnight to the moon and stars,  
waves at the space station and the track  
of its glow, three beating hearts in a star.  
Now time for sleep, she lies quietly,  
sets an intent for morning—then  
grows another heart to hold it all.

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Rusty Bend, green as a jungle documentary, is thriving with all this rain and coolness. An extra ten feet deep, the last river rise gave the Guadalupe a good scrubbing after the slow waters of the long drought.

Our colorful visitors have arrived in profusion. I like to imagine the Painted Buntings flying all night up from Mexico, looking down and seeing our little house on the cliff, exclaiming: "There it is, the one with the solar panels. Home! Where we were born!" They come right back to the white millet feeders, bathe wildly in the bird bath, shake off the dust from the long trip. We work hard to control cowbirds so they can nest in peace here and it seems to be paying off.

Most of May adds new chapters to the Nest Box Chronicles. Andy reports on goings-on at the parks, how the titmouse mamas fuss at him when he checks their nests, how few bluebirds are nesting this year, perhaps slowed by the cold snap. We have an Ash-throated Flycatcher in one box nearby. We call her trashy-ashy as her box smells horrible, full of dead deer hair and other fragrant junk.

Poor Athena the Screech Owl had a bad run-in with a rat snake. It had slithered way up in the tree and was eating the eggs as she struggled to protect them. By the time I saw the snake in the box, she was exhausted. Andy lifted her out, fearful of what he would find as she must have been fending it off for hours. He reached to pick her up and she would have none of it. Athena clacked and clicked at him before flying away. That box is now repositioned with a predator guard. We have heard her calling so hopefully she starts another nest.

The other major happening was the fledging of six Canyon Wrens from their nest on the porch. It's fascinating to watch the parents teach them by demonstration. First, how to climb a rock wall to safety. Then how to fly to a bush. Then how to fly to a tree. Their little tails are the size of my thumbnail. They do tiny deep knee bends. They eventually fly down to the river. A few days later they are back on the porch, learning the finer points of bug-hunting cracks and crevasses. Lastly, they start to learn the descending melody of their characteristic song. They miss notes and shorten the ending but it is unforgettable.

The firefly season is in full swing. Each evening we retire to the porch to watch them rise. We think an ample firefly show is a sign of a healthy biome. More than that though, we imagine each tiny lantern is sending a message, flashing "thank-you, thank-you" for rain.



*Pincushion/Perfumeball Daisies*     *Gaillardia suavis*

Poem, images and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2021

*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 awarded the 2020 Willa Literary Award for Poetry as well as the Wrangler Award by the Cowboy Hall of Fame. Both Lucy and Andy are certified Master Naturalists. Comments welcome at [lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com](mailto:lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com)*

T E X A S



We meet on the fourth Monday of most months (but not during covid restrictions) 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.

**Board of Directors 2021**

- Elsa Roberts -- President
- Katy Kappel -- Vice President
- Jeralyn Hathorn-- Secretary
- Nancy Scoggins -- Treasurer
- Deb Youngblood -- Advanced Training Director
- Catherine Gauldin -- Communications Director
- Carla Stang -- Membership Director
- Tom Burke -- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- Sheryl Pender -- 2021 Class Director
- Billy Guin -- 2020 Class Representative
- Lisa Flanagan-- Immediate Past President
- Vern Crawford -- State Representative

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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[LenoreLangsdorf@gmail.com](mailto:LenoreLangsdorf@gmail.com)

The Hill Country Chapter does not recommend or endorse organizations or commercial sources mentioned in our newsletter. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and editor.



*Questions about our chapter?*

Email Carla Stang  
Membership Director  
[hillcountrymembership@gmail.com](mailto:hillcountrymembership@gmail.com)

