

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter

July 2021 Volume 19 Number 7



The July Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a virtual meeting on Monday, July 26, beginning at 6:30.

Go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88596485278?pwd=NWV5NFcwREFDL3hiR1BnclA3ejcrQT09>

Valerie Bugh will be our speaker. Her topic is "Moths - The Mysterious Majority." She is a local naturalist who runs the Fauna Project at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and is the author of pocket guides to "Butterflies of Central Texas," "Spiders of Texas," and "Unusual Insects of Texas." This program will cover both caterpillars and adults, identify the major families as well as some oddities, and look at the beauty of these often overlooked insects.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...Elsa Roberts

It's been a long time since I've seen the countryside look so beautiful in the month of July. Nature seems to be fickle sometimes. After the very rare extreme winter storm Uri, we are now being rewarded with a cool, wet summer compared to recent past summers and no one is complaining, I'm sure.

Here is some news many of you have been waiting to hear. Beginning in September, we will return to in-person Chapter meetings. Our hope is to conduct hybrid meetings, incorporating the option of attending by Zoom as well, and a test of our Zoom capabilities will be carried out from the UGRA location at the end of this month. Our meetings will be held in the UGRA lecture hall as in the past. The lecture hall has been reserved for our meetings from 5:45pm to 8:30pm on the traditional 4th Monday for September and October and on the 3rd Monday of November, which is the Monday preceding the Thanksgiving holiday. Visiting and socializing will be from 5:45pm to 6:30pm; the business meeting will begin at 6:30pm and our speaker will begin at 7pm. There will be no Chapter meeting in December, but an early December party is in the process of being planned. As for the July and August Chapter meetings, they will be conducted on Zoom.

Plans for the Spring Training Classes are well underway. The New Class Training Co-Directors were formally seated on the Board at the June Board meeting and gave their first report on the progress they and the New Class Committee have already made. They are planning for a more normal, uninterrupted training in 2022.

On behalf of all our members, I want to officially thank Tammy Thompson, UGRA's Assistant General Manager, for allowing us free use of their lecture hall for our Chapter Meetings and for the 2022 Training Classes. As most of you know, before the pandemic we had a project agreement with UGRA that allowed us to use the lecture hall in exchange for work in the Eduscape gardens. Thanks to the faithfulness of the project coordinator, Nancy Huffman, and her team, that agreement has been continued.

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As our Chapter's representative on the KAPP (Kerr Area Partnership for Preservation) I attended the July meeting on the 13th. Plans are being discussed for developing a Land Stewardship Award for both urban and rural properties. This is in the early development stages at this time, but the possibility of providing ecological benefits as the Hill Country population expands are encouraging. The development of this new organization may be slow, but every effort is being made to offer quality solutions and incentives that will help protect and preserve all the things we love about living in the Hill Country. In the long run, I believe our Chapter will benefit from being part of this, due to the ideas being promoted on how to publicize these efforts and the coordination of the influential people and organizations involved in the effort. The possibility exists that no one in our area will be able to say they didn't know the Texas Master Naturalist Organization existed. Hey! I can dream, can't I?

Join us on Zoom or Facebook for the July Chapter meeting on July 26.

Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley

- 6/5/21 What Happened to All the Critters I Used To See?
- 6/12/21 Why Native Plants?
- 6/26/21 What is Happening to Our Land?

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



**Be The
Change.**

txmn.tamu.edu/bethechange



July 20th 12pmCST

Chapter Panel

With our Be The Change series in full momentum, this month's webinar will offer a chance to pause and reflect on the progress of the series so far.

The July 20th Be The Change webinar will focus on how our TMN Chapters have been able to contemplate and incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion ideas and resources shared thus far.

Various master naturalist chapters are working towards these efforts and will share case studies of experiences they've had in their progress. Join us to collaborate and share resources your chapters may still need as your organizations build toward becoming more inclusive and diverse.

Registration <https://tpwdevents3000.webex.com/tpwdevents3000/onstage/g.php?MTID=e78d6869812ef53c3f1c1d342f68a5075>

This Month We Honor



Initial Certification - Class of 2021

Dan Gallagher, Patrick George, Patti Guin, Carra Millikien,
Ann Ryan, Phillip Youngblood

Special Recertification - Class of 2021

Trudy Eberhardt, John Fiore, Linda Fiore, Trudy Lawrence, Debbie Thompson

Recertification for 2021

Joe Braly, Kristie Denbow, Lois Gaines, Diane Gierisch, Pamela Goolsby,
Veronica Hawk, Tyra Kane, Carol Knutson, Myrna Langford, Sarabeth Mayfield,
Sharon Noack, Tara Randle, Laurel Rhodes, Eldon Sheffer, Robert Shock,
Constance Weaver, Debbie Windham

Milestones

Laurel Rhodes - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Janis Aterbury, Mildred Dworsky - 500 hours, Brushed Silver Dragonfly

Sheryl Pender - 2500 hours, Polished Silver Dragonfly



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

This year's agenda may look a little different, but we still have over 100 concurrent technical sessions lined up with a huge variety of topics – from laws & ethics to paleontology, from dendrology to bird conservation issues, and from youth programming to water quality community science. There are some really excellent speakers too! Join us early for some in-person pre-conference field sessions on **Thursday October 21** and a welcome social that evening. Officially, we'll kick off the 2021 Annual Meeting on **Friday October 22** in the morning, have technical sessions and keynotes through the whole day Friday and **Saturday October 23**, and run through **Sunday October 24** morning closing with our contest awards and 2022 recertification pin announcement. While we finish preparing the final agenda to share in the coming week(s), we've prepared a skeleton agenda with our registration pricing for this year's HYBRID event. For that agenda and further information, go to <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2021-annual-meeting/#agenda>. Our plan is to open registration the **first week of August**. With this year's hybrid event we will have TWO registration options: In-Person Registration and Virtual Registration. Early Registration Closes **August 31**.

Groundwater Management Area News

We would like to bring to your attention that Groundwater Management Area 9 (GMA 9) is accepting public comments on their proposed Desired Future Condition, which includes a 30-foot drawdown of the Trinity Aquifer. The Trinity Aquifer supplies critical flow to springs and rivers throughout the Hill Country. GMA 9 is accepting comments until June 30th.

GMA 9 is a regional collaboration of nine groundwater conservation districts (GCDs) that manage portions of the Trinity and Edwards Aquifers. As part of a regional planning process, GMA 9 is tasked with reaching a consensus on a Desired Future Condition (DFC) for this aquifer. A DFC is a quantifiable groundwater condition and serves as a management goal defining how an aquifer will look in the future.

As champions and stakeholders in the Hill Country, we all have a vested interest in ensuring that our groundwater levels stay high enough to sustain the beautiful rivers and swimming pools that we all enjoy, particularly as we move into the heat of the summer.

To summarize our comments, we recognize that the population of the Texas Hill Country is growing, that our current frameworks offer few tools for GCDs to deny permit requests that comply with the rules laid out by each district, and that we need more localized scientific studies to model the impacts of drawdown within distinct geographic areas of the Hill Country. In fact, the proposed 30-foot drawdown of the Trinity Aquifer is not adequately quantified, lacks important detail of aquifer characteristics, and does not protect the health of thousands of private wells and the springs that keep Hill Country rivers flowing.

If you agree that we should not be managing our groundwater supplies for depletion, you have options for how to make your voice heard:

1. **Sign your name onto HCA's comments.** If after reading, you would like to add your name to HCA's comments you can do so *by completing the form here*.
2. **Submit your own comments.** You can submit your own letter to GMA 9's Coordinator, Ron Fieseler, at the address below. GMA 9 provides a form for comments that can be found *here*.

Ron Fieseler, General Manager
P.O. Box 1516
Johnson City, Texas 78636

The public comment period ends June 30th! Sign onto HCA's comments or submit your own by that date.



From Greg Walton, President, Friends of the Sabinal

News From the Sabinal River Canyon



photo by Jeff Braun

Recently the residents of the Sabinal River Canyon became aware of a serious threat to the Sabinal River and the surrounding community. A Young Life youth camp bought 3000 acres and applied to the TCEQ for a permit to discharge up to 60,000 gallons of treated effluent into the river via a tributary.

This discharge would have severe consequences for water quality and aquatic life, for recreation in the river, and for businesses all along the river. It has private property implications for those owning property downstream from the discharge site, and it sets a very bad precedent.

Many local entities oppose this plan, including the Nueces River Authority, Keep Utopia Beautiful, Friends of Lost Maples, the Bandera Bulletin, the Uvalde Leader News, the Texas Hill Country River Region, the Bandera Canyonlands Alliance, and all of the county commissioners in Uvalde, Bandera, and Real counties.

There is a better way. Under TCEQ guidelines, Young Life has the option of applying for a Land Application permit. Many entities in the Upper Nueces Basin and beyond use Land Application permits, including the HEB Camp on the Frio, Alta Vista Baptist Encampment, Camp Eagle, Camp OTX, La Jita Girl Scout Camp, and virtually all of the camps in the Upper Guadalupe around Hunt. Lost Maples State Natural Area, Garner Park, the cities of Leakey, Camp Wood and (to a great extent) Kerrville, also use Land Application, rather than discharge into a public waterway. It is not only the preferred choice; it is the norm here.

Here are sources for further information on the Young Life/Sabinal issue:

<https://www.hillcountryalliance.org/editorial-rivers-are-lifeblood-of-region/>

<https://www.uvaldeleadernews.com/articles/editorial-rivers-are-lifeblood-of-region/>

<https://banderacanyonlandsalliance.org/save-our-sabinal>

From Daniel Oppenheimer, Hill Country Alliance Land Program Manager

Healthy Creeks Initiative Underway

This month, contractors will begin the annual control efforts to manage Arundo along the Pedernales River and several tributary creeks. Arundo, also referred to as Giant Reed or Carrizo Cane, is a non-native, invasive plant that can take over creeks and rivers.

Since 2016, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), Hill Country Alliance (HCA), City of Fredericksburg, and other organizations have partnered with volunteering landowners through the Healthy Creeks Initiative to control Arundo and enhance the creek-side (or riparian) habitat along Barons Creek, Town Creek, and other portions of the Pedernales River Basin primarily upstream of Johnson City.

Arundo, which has a cane-like stem that looks similar to bamboo, is a highly invasive, non-native grass that can grow more than 25 feet tall. This invasive plant has the potential to significantly damage the health of Hill Country streams and rivers by worsening flooding, displacing native plants, destabilizing banks, contributing to erosion, degrading fish and wildlife habitat, and increasing wildfire risk.

Landowners should not cut, mow, or bulldoze Arundo. These mechanical methods are likely to spread Arundo infestations to downstream neighbors through small fragments of the cane or root material.

Over the past five years, more than 115 landowners have volunteered to participate in the Healthy Creeks Initiative to control Arundo in the Pedernales River Basin using targeted, aquatic-approved herbicide application. This control method has the least impact on the stream ecosystem and is currently being provided at no cost to the landowners.

Oppenheimer encourages landowners to talk with their neighbors. “This invasive plant does not care about property boundaries. We need to be talking with friends and neighbors, making sure everyone knows about the threats posed by Arundo, the no-cost opportunity provided by TPWD to landowners, and the importance of our healthy riparian areas.” Healthy riparian areas comprised of diverse and abundant native plants mitigate floods, improve water quantity and quality, stabilize banks, reduce erosion, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

If landowners think they may have Arundo growing on their property or have any questions about the project, please contact me, Daniel Oppenheimer, at Hill Country Alliance (210-287-0478; daniel@hillcountryalliance.org) or TPWD project staff (healthycreeks@tpwd.texas.gov; 512-289-2740).

Arundo control efforts for the year will continue through August. To learn more about the Healthy Creeks Initiative, visit Texas Parks and Wildlife’s website at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/healthycreeks>.

The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. Visit us at www.hillcountryalliance.org.



From Rachel Thompson, Project Coordinator

Boerne City Campus Natural Area Restoration

This project is designed to restore approximately 13 acres of city property which lies along the Old Number Nine hiking trail behind Patrick Heath Library and the Boerne City Campus. The goal is to create a natural area which will be accessible from the trail and the library. The property is badly degraded by invasive exotic plants, primarily ligustrum but including Chinese tallow, chinaberry, and vitex, as well as by overgrowth of ashe juniper. It has been further altered by white tail and axis deer so that there is no undergrowth nor replacement trees surviving. An un-named creek that runs the length of the property creates a riparian area, but the banks are badly eroding with few existing grasses or plants to prevent the erosion.

Project activities will include baseline surveys of trees/plants/grasses, birds, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians, and mammals, then ongoing surveys as the project progresses, to ascertain changes in populations. Supervising and assisting with the clearing of the invasive plants will be a major task. Determining methods for stabilization of the creek banks will require consultation with engineers. A web soil survey and USDA list of plants for this location will be used, along with historical information, to determine what will be planted after clearing has taken place. Trapping and removal of axis deer may be recommended, and regardless, newly planted trees will require caging. Mulched trails will be created throughout the property to provide access by the public.

In the grassland area, to support the Boerne mayor's recent Monarch Pledge, a pollinator meadow—including a milkweed collection—will be planted. The Project Number is K1-06-B.

Comments: This will be a multi-year, joint project involving Texas Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas, Boerne Chapter, and the City of Boerne. As the population of Kendall County increases, there are fewer and fewer places where our residents can go to visit a natural area. This location is easily accessible to the many people who walk our urban trails and to visitors at the library. It will be an invaluable resource for the children's educational programs provided by the library. And, most importantly, it will provide another link to a wildlife corridor so desperately needed by our birds and pollinators.

Contact person for volunteers and questions: Rachel Thompson: rjat@alumni.rice.edu 713-824-2277

Advanced Training

WE HAVE MORE THAN 33 ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FROM JULY 20 - AUGUST 20.

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.



HILL COUNTRY TREE PROGRAM

Oak Wilt Management & Planting Trees in the Texas Hill Country

Thursday, July 29, 2021

38 Business Court

Fredericksburg, TX

Registration at 9:00am

Program is 9:30am - 11:45am

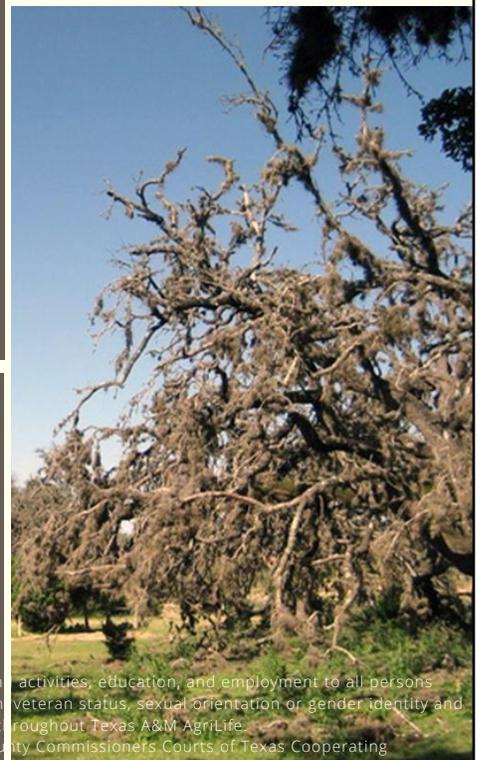
Cost: \$10.00

1 IPM CEU

Texas A&M Forest Service Biologist Robert Edmonson will be giving the presentation on oak wilt, frost damaged tree update, planting replacement trees, & identifying trees.

RSVP to the Gillespie County Extension Office at 830-997-3452 For additional info or questions, please ask for Beth McMahon.

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating





TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Fall Back Into Gardening: A Fall Garden Program

Friday, August 6, 2021

38 Business Court

Garden Door Prizes Too! Fredericksburg, TX

Cost: \$20

Registration at 8:30

Program is 9:00am - 12:15pm

Main program covers preparing a garden for fall.

Breakout sessions include:

"Alliums (Onions, etc.)"

"Growing a Fall Salad Garden"

"Cole Crops (Broccoli, etc.)"

RSVP to the Gillespie
County Extension Office at
830-997-3452.

For additional info or
questions, please ask for
Beth McMahon.

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

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



Join Team Riverside & Make an Impact

**Join our team effort in
keeping our river clean & safe
for wildlife and people**

**Register with UGRA & note you are part of
the Riverside Nature Center Team**

**We will be cleaning from
RNC to Tranquility Island and
up to Gibson's along Town Creek
on
Saturday, August 7th
8:00am - 12:00pm**

**Equipment will be picked up & ready for use.
Please wear appropriate attire, ie closed toe shoes &
bring your own gloves.**

We will meet in the RNC parking lot.

**For more information contact Becky
director@riversidenaturecenter.org
830-257-4837**

The View From Rusty Bend



Morning visitors

Origami

For Ruth Bader Ginsberg

*It is not true that the dead cannot be folded. Square becomes kite becomes song.
Even the act of remembrance creases the truth. ~ Yoon Ha Lee*

The day we lost you, dawn unpeeled to reveal
two Great Egrets, hung like mammoth ornaments
in the tallest cottonwood, depleted
by overnight migration, spangled white

in pleated wings, nestled against papery green,
all day they punctuate the view, preening,
folding, unfolding, then resting still
as stone. Until the sun falls at last

over the lip of earth and a white comma of
new moon appears. Now they gather to each other—
lift, tucking their elegant necks, circling
once, twice, tracing a wider arc to catch

the flow as their buoyant, steady wings
beat the drum of darkness.

First published in Persimmon Tree Literary Journal

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Rusty Bend is teeming with new sights this wet June. With all the rain, the grass is high and heavy with seed. This seems to be ideal habitat for snakes and we are watchful for them. If we don't see them, the parids tell us where they are—with chickadee and titmouse alarms. Lizards slide underfoot and make you jump. In another new development, we now have frogs in the pond. We think they are Rio Grande Leopard frogs and they are amazing to watch. They jump up more than a foot to grab flies, of which there are also many, too many.

Each day holds a surprising spectacle. Twin armadillos chase each other around the house, pouncing on each other then racing again. A new fawn is suddenly standing in the road, all eyeballs and ears on pencil legs. More Pipevine Swallowtails than ever nectar in the grass. An unexpected visit by nighthawks delights us with their arcing dances at dawn and dusk.

We remember that June is the season of big bugs. Rhinoceros beetles as big as walnuts haunt my garden. A walking stick as long as my foot patrols the porch. The dragonflies are larger than the hummingbirds.

Juveniles everywhere are learning how to be birds. Titmice with their wispy crests, cardinals with black beaks, all learning how to feed, fly, bathe and lastly to land with a little grace.

So much to puzzle over. Why did Scissortailed Flycatchers build their nest next to the abandoned Red-tailed Hawk nest? What made the first clutch of Canyon Wrens come back to spend the night on the porch? Where is that rat snake headed? Why are my tomato leaves curling? Is it too hot to work on fence? Will the neighbor's crop of cut hay be ruined by that surprise shower? Where are the bluebirds? Why are so many bird nests being abandoned with just an egg or two?

When it is all too much, we retire to the river, teeming with brim and minnows, sunfish twirling in the light. Which way shall we face? Downriver, to see what has gone by? Or upriver, to watch what lies ahead?



Rio Grande Leopard Frogs

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. A joint project with wildlife photographer Kenneth Butler, [Wingbeat Atlas](#), is forthcoming from FlowerSong Press. Both Lucy and Andy are certified Master Naturalists. Comments welcome at lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com.



In September, we will resume meeting on the fourth Monday of most months in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Join us for our social time at 5:45. The business meeting will begin at 6:30 and the speaker will start at 7:00. 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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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
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membership@hillcountrytmn.org

