

# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the  
Texas Master Naturalist  
Hill Country Chapter

August 2021 Volume 19 Number 8



image by Lucy Griffith



There is no monthly chapter meeting this month.  
We anticipate a hybrid meeting in September.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...Elsa Roberts

Registration has begun for the 2021 Texas Master Naturalist Annual meeting and the registration form and full agenda is posted on the State website. Remember, early registration closes on August 31. Since this will be a hybrid event this year, it will give all our members the opportunity to attend either in-person or on line by WebEx. With the emergence of the Delta variant of Covid in Texas, our state directors are working on a "what if plan." A Covid Policy has been posted on the State website. Please review it when you complete your registration. Hopefully, changes will not be necessary, but stay informed and ready to be flexible if plans need to be altered. Please also browse through the contest categories and consider entering. Last year Richard Coleman entered the PGARP Project and won; whether you participate in photography, painting, writing or whatever, there is a category for you.

The guidelines for our chapters have not changed. We can still have in-person meetings and encourage social distancing. We are not required to wear masks but their use can be encouraged. We cannot require vaccinations and cannot ask about a person's vaccination status. We cannot perform contact tracing. The bottom line is, we can return to a more normal routine, but with the emergence of the Delta variant, please use the extra precautions you are familiar with.

There will be no August chapter meeting. I have been told this is a tradition, and I suspect it has to do with the beginning of school. If some of our long-time members know how this tradition was started and why, I would appreciate it if you would send me an email sharing that information.

We are planning to present a hybrid chapter meeting in September. The in-person gathering will be in the lecture hall at UGRA and if all goes well when we test out our equipment later this month, we will be live streaming the meeting by Zoom over the internet and to our Facebook page. This will be a big step forward as we strive to provide the means for our members and the public to have options for attending our monthly meetings.

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The Virtual Volunteer Fair Agenda & Registration will open on August 16 and the projects will be presented on October 31 and September 1. The registration and agenda information will be available on the State website. These projects are socially distanced projects which usually consist of gathering and submitting data. If you are looking for a volunteer project you can do on your own, there is probably one for you there.

Don't forget to order your Texas Master Naturalist license plates. I am beginning to see them around and remember, once they are on your vehicle, drive friendly. You are now representing our organization.

Plans are being made for a Holiday Party in early December at Camp Capers. This party will be on a Saturday and lunch will be served. More details will be available soon.

**IMPORTANT:** The Nominating Committee is on the hunt for Officer candidates. If you would be willing to serve as President, Vice-President, or Secretary, please contact Lisa Flanagan at [terlinguagirl@gmail.com](mailto:terlinguagirl@gmail.com). If you are contacted and asked to consider taking one of these positions, please don't let "no" be your instant answer. Review the duties for that position as described in the Chapter Operations Handbook and sincerely consider filling that spot for a year. Any of our current officers would also be willing to share with you their experiences while serving on the Board. The complete Chapter Operations Handbook is published on our website under the tab "About Us." The nominees for 2022 Officer positions will be presented to our members at the October chapter meeting and voted in during the November meeting.

In closing, I would like to remind everyone that the email addresses of our Board members and the Chapter support staff are listed on our website. In the past, most Board members used their personal email addresses to correspond with chapter members. The current listed email addresses are permanently assigned to positions rather than persons. These branded email addresses will not change as the people who hold those positions change. For example: my current branded email address is [president@hillcountrytmn.org](mailto:president@hillcountrytmn.org). Next January, when your new President is seated on your Board, this email address will seamlessly become her or his official chapter email account and I will be transitioned to the Past President's account. You will always be able to reach any Board member by using the email addresses that are listed on our website under the tab "About Us."

## This Month We Honor



### Special Recertification - Class of 2021

Dot Maginot, Linda Miller, Nellwyn Sadler

### Recertifications

Diana Armbrust, Richard Adams, Penny Bryant, Trudy Eberhardt, Trudy Florence,  
Billy Guin, Robin May, Claire Mitchell, Tony Plutino, Mark Richardson, Ron Scoggins,  
Chuck Smith, Kathy Ward, Morgan Williams.

### Milestones

Lucy Spade - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly  
Tony Plutino - 500 hours, Brushed Silver Dragonfly  
Vivian Funk, Van Turner - 1000 hours, Gold Dragonfly  
Tom Harrigan - 5000 hours, Diamond Dragonfly

## Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley

- 7/3/21 The Joy of Watching Nature
- 7/10/21 Tips for Growing Native Plants
- 7/17/21 Fears of Nature are Greatly Exaggerated and Mostly Unfounded: Revised
- 7/24/21 Life and Changes on a One Acre Piece of the Hill Country
- 7/31/21 Tree Families of the Hill Country

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

For information on registration (now ongoing) and agenda,  
go to <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2021-annual-meeting/>

## Advanced Training

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

From Deb Youngblood, Advanced Training Director

Book Review:

*Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* by Suzanne Simard

This book begins with the author's admission:

"For generations, my family has made its living cutting down forests.  
Our survival has depended on this humble trade.  
It is my legacy.  
I have cut down my fair share of trees as well."

I was startled by her admission but as I read on, I came to understand that it was her close proximity to the forests where she grew up that taught her to respect them and recognize that something was terribly wrong with the way we understood them and the way we logged the trees. It was her struggle to grow personally and to search for scientifically grounded answers that kept me turning page after page.

Simard weaves her own personal story into this tale of scientific discovery. Make no mistake, her discoveries about trees and the forests are monumental, but her discoveries came at very high personal costs. She never stops asking questions about the trees and she never stops asking questions about her own life either. Therein lies the value of this book.

The author comes to understand the interconnectedness of trees, fungi, bushes, plants, sunlight and humus just as she comes to understand the interconnectedness of family, relationships, the next generation and the wonderful messiness of it all.

Throughout the book she stays close to the science. She never talks down to the reader so look out - you may find yourself looking things up to understand fully what she is talking about. When you do understand, you will share her excitement with each new discovery. This is science at its best.

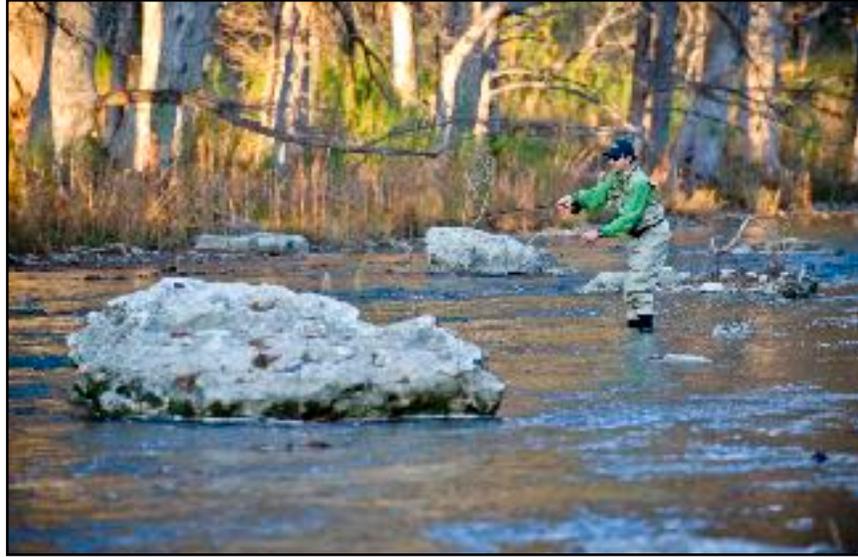
And her personal story, interwoven into her scientific progress, is one of the human condition, of loss, and of hope. She struggles with loss but finds hope in the next generation, in her children, and in her students. She also finds it in the trees and in the way trees nurture their next generation. Hope is the nexus, the confluence of scientific knowledge and personal understanding, the link to both ways of knowing.

Although Simard's research was conducted in the forests of British Columbia, you may find yourself talking to your trees after reading this book. At a minimum, you will never look at your trees in the same way again. For certain, you will know that no person or tree grows in isolation.

Published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2021

ISBN: 9780525656098 (hardcover); ISBN: 9780525656104 (ebook)

## Recovering America's Wildlife Act: Resources and Updates



*TPWD photo*

Nationwide, experts have identified more than 12,000 Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including over 1,300 here in Texas. The majority of these are at-risk fish and wildlife — like many grassland birds, bees and butterflies, and freshwater species.

Unfortunately, America lacks a dedicated funding stream to conserve vulnerable wildlife and help prevent thousands of species from becoming endangered. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would be the most significant investment in wildlife conservation in a generation — it would fund proactive, voluntary efforts to address the nation's looming wildlife crisis and conserve our natural heritage for future generations.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, **H.R.2773**, would provide \$1.3 billion per year to states, and \$97.5 million to tribal nations, from existing revenues to fund wildlife conservation, habitat management and restoration, outdoor recreation, and education programs. Of this, Texas would be eligible for more than \$50 million per year to implement the Texas Conservation Action Plan and help stabilize the at-risk species in our state.

The **Recovering America's Wildlife Act** was also recently introduced in the U.S. Senate! **S.2372** will provide critical investment in conservation and restoration efforts to help #RecoverWildlife across the country. This bipartisan legislation will create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs and will boost the economy!

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recently shared the following **press release** about their support for the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R.2773) bill.

Carter Smith, Executive Director of Texas Parks and Wildlife notes..."**While it would do much to protect fish and wildlife that need it most, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would also mean a long-term investment in the public health and well-being of all Texans, as well as stewardship of our home ground.**"

Read the **press release** and learn more about the numerous benefits to wildlife and people.

If you choose to get involved as a private citizen, please visit: <https://www.txwildlifealliance.org/take-action>.

Riverside Nature Center  
Native Plant Society of Texas - Kerrville Chapter  
Texas Master Naturalist - Hill Country Chapter  
invite you to...

# SAVE THE DATE



FALL  
Members only!  
Native Plant Sale

Orders Accepted:

Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>

Pick Up Date:

Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>

Watch [www.riversidenaturecenter.org](http://www.riversidenaturecenter.org) for more details

# **UGRA 18th Annual**

# **River Cleanup**

## **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)**

## The View From Rusty Bend



*Thunder Moon*

### Tractor Triolet

I am drawn to ride a slow sense of time,  
dawdling, a just-right speed to read the world.  
Tractor, donkey, or a horse bred fine,  
I am drawn to ride a slow sense of time.  
To linger in those places where nature rhymes,  
to smell and taste the wind uncurled.  
I am drawn to ride a slow sense of time,  
dawdling, a just-right speed to read the world.

At Rusty Bend, July arrived with an armload of rain lilies. So much rainfall the birds were soggy-feathered for days. Green, green as we have never seen before so that a second round of wildflowers bursts forth to celebrate. New pleasures to observe accrue each day—the brief potent sunsets that sneak in between showers, then like a treasure hunt, there are muddy tracks of bobcat and porcupine to find each morning, how the smell of the river shifts with each rise as if it is breathing.

After the second clutch of Canyon Wrens decamps to learn the ropes of crack hunting on the river, the papa wren returns and systematically demolishes the nest. We've seen this before a couple of times, but this year the nest was woven so tightly and was so tall that it took him three days to dismantle it. We are perplexed as to his reasons and speculate that he wants to discourage youngsters from hanging out. *You can't go home again.*

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Moth hatches explode to grace each evening. They swarm in such profusion that even non-flycatchers sweep in and nab. There is much practice and play as the juvenile birds learn how to feed themselves. We watch goldfinches learning to ride down flower stems, pin them to the ground and fill their beaks with sticky seed.

I enjoy outdoor chores in the cooler weather, weeding the garden, pruning the trees, refinishing a bench. As I work one morning, I listen to ravens nearby as I sand and scrape. They sound like they are chuckling, back and forth, for almost an hour. Eerily human and conversational. Perhaps they wonder if the grasshoppers will show up soon in the neighbor's field. When its big hopper time, ravens come from all around, thirty or forty of them. A festival of crunchy protein.

Plenty of mowing to do. With all the rain, our grasses seem to grow overnight. I find new ones I have to look up in a five-pound book of Texas grasses. Lots of dropseed and gramas, especially Hairy Grama, which my granddaughters hilariously call HAIRY GRANDMA in their outside voice. There is something very satisfying about mowing with my tractor named Mabel. The sun is on my back. I have a broke-in hat. The breeze ripples across the field. The cut grasses spool out behind me in such a satisfying line. I know I am adding organic matter to these old fields but I have to say, it's the nice line that draws me. A task with a clear beginning and end. The smell is intoxicating and rich as a haybarn. Now look. The ravens have come, gliding around me like sentinels. They bee-caw, see what I am up to as if to remind me— if you ever feel alone, just slow down.



*Canyon Wren Nest Demolition Derby*

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](mailto:lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com).*



In September, we hope to 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.

**Board of Directors 2021**

- Elsa Roberts -- President
- Katy Kappel -- Vice President
- Jeralyn Hathorn-- Secretary
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- 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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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](mailto:membership@hillcountrytmn.org)

