

# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the  
Texas Master Naturalist  
Hill Country Chapter

September 2021 Volume 19 Number 9



*alligator gar*



The September Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a virtual meeting on Monday, Sept. 27, beginning at 6:30.

Go to [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88596485278?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88596485278?pwd=NWV5NFcwREFDL3hiR1BnclA3ejcrQT09)

[pwd=NWV5NFcwREFDL3hiR1BnclA3ejcrQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88596485278?pwd=NWV5NFcwREFDL3hiR1BnclA3ejcrQT09)

Dan Daugherty, a senior fisheries scientist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Heart of the Hills Fisheries Science Center, will be our speaker. His topic is "New Technology for an Old Fish: Understanding the Life History of the Alligator Gar."

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...Elsa Roberts

Anyone wishing to apply to be part of the 2022 Training Class can do so by completing the application which is now active on our website. Applications can be submitted until November 3. The New Class Committee, working with Membership and Communications, has done an excellent job preparing for this event. Due to the work that Carla Stang, Membership Director, has done using the outreach table in many locations around the Hill Country, I anticipate the 2022 Training Class will fill up fast.

If you have not signed up to attend the TMN Annual Meeting that begins on October 21, either in-person or virtually, please consider doing so. The presenter agenda with a description of each topic is now listed on the State website and I am sure there will be something you will not want to miss.

### REMINDERS

**Covid virus:** Due to the spread of the Delta variant, there will be NO in-person Chapter meeting this month. We were disappointed that our hopes of returning to normal has been interrupted by this virus that won't go away, but our main concern is to not do anything that could put our members' health in jeopardy.

**Board Officers:** These terms will end on December 31. According to our Chapter's Protocol concerning the election of new officers, the Past President, Lisa Flanagan, will be accepting nominations for these positions until our October Chapter Meeting when the list of nominees will be presented to our members. They will be voted on at the November Chapter Meeting. So far, we have members who have agreed to have their names submitted as nominees for President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, but no one has agreed to be nominated as Secretary. Please consider submitting your name for this position, and contact Lisa ([Pastpresident@hillcountrytmn.org](mailto:Pastpresident@hillcountrytmn.org)) if you are willing to serve.

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The minutes of our Board Meetings are a very important document that records the actions taken at our Board Meetings. We can refer to them if there is any need to clarify any action the Board has taken months or even years ago.

Recertification: There are approximately three months remaining to complete your annual recertification requirement!

As of August 31, 116 members have recertified. This is 50% of the active members.

Of those not yet recertified, 20% have over 40 volunteer hours and are shy on AT hours.

65% who have over eight AT hours are shy on volunteer hours.

25% of active members do not have the required number of volunteer or AT hours yet.

There are still lots of AT events on the AT calendar. Many are virtual, the weather is getting cooler, and there are plenty of projects that need some assistance. Please let me or other members know if you need assistance locating a project that fits your interests, so you can get your hours completed. Project leaders... make your needs known! It's a WIN – WIN!

The year end is fast approaching. It seems that once October arrives, time speeds up with all of the fall activities and holiday festivities. Please check our website often. The Fall Plant sale is coming up with orders being taken on October 3 and 4. Watch for the list of plants that will be sent out toward the end of this month. We have not cancelled the December 4 holiday party at Camp Capers, yet, but we are closely monitoring the Covid situation to determine if we will be able to follow through with that. It would be nice to be able to assemble together for a few hours of fun, but we won't be taking any chances.

## This Month We Honor



### Initial Certification

Alice King

### Special Recertification - Class of 2021

Patti Guin, Anne Ryan, Phil Youngblood

### Recertifications

Jean Bodine, Becky Etzler, Connie Fluegel, Terry Lashley, Scot Powell, Glen Randow

### Milestones

Travis Linscomb - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Rachel Thompson - 500 hours, Brushed Silver Dragonfly

Teresa Coleman - 1000 hours, Gold Dragonfly

Bob Binney - 5000 hours, Diamond Dragonfly

## Recent Hill Country Naturalist Columns by Jim Stanley

- 8/7/21 Life Around the Backyard "Creek"
- 8/14/21 Animal Behavior Studies: Fascinating Stories of How Animals "Think" and Act
- 8/21/21 The Other Common Oaks in the Hill Country
- 8/28/21 A Glimpse of the Hill Country in 1846

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

From Deb Youngblood, Advanced Training Director

### How to View the Calendar On Our Website as a List of Advanced Training Events

To view the Advanced Training Calendar, go to

<https://txmn.org/hillcountry/events/category/advanced-training/>

#### *To view the calendar as a list of events:*

- Look in the upper right-hand corner of the calendar to the right of the blue button "Find Events"
- There is the word "Month". This is the default view.
- Click the little carat to the right of "Month"
- Choose "List" to view all events as a list.
- Choose "Day" or "Week" to view a day-by-day view or a view of a full week.

Since we do not have many photos on our calendar, attempting to sort by Photo will not return very many results.

#### *To export a single event to your Google Calendar:*

- Open the event by clicking on the title of the event on the calendar
- Scroll down to the "+Google Calendar"
- Click on "+Coogle Calendar" to automatically add the event to your Google calendar

#### *To add to all events to your Windows 10 calendar (Note: Formatting is lost with this feature) or a MAC (Note: Formatting remains)*

- Scroll to the bottom of the calendar
- Click on "+ Export Events"
- Choose a location where you can find the file and Choose Save.
- Locate the file on your computer
- Double click on it
- If you have multiple calendars on your system, choose the calendar to which you would like to save.
- Choose "Add to calendar"

From Carla Stang, Membership Director

## Calling All Mentors for the Class of 2022

Greetings Hill Country Master Naturalists! It is that time again. Similar to patterns we learn about in nature, conducting the TMN Basic Program has some of its own inherent patterns...the pattern I am referring to AND soliciting for is a call for volunteers to be mentors, each of whom supports one or two members of the new class of students. The excitement of conducting a new class starts to build as applications are approved by the Board of Directors and as the mentor/mentee pairings take shape. It is a foundational "first impression" moment when mentors first meet with their mentees prior to classes starting. This introductory meeting really sets the stage for what the student will experience in classes, field trips, volunteer activities, and becoming part of our Hill Country Chapter. Read on for more information.

The new class will start in Feb 2022 and graduate in May 2022. Class size will be at least 30 students, maybe more, contingent on the status of COVID. This means we need about 30 mentors. Once the Board of Directors selects the students (goal is before Dec 1) I will pair each student with a mentor. The pairing process includes looking at the mentor and student home geographic locations and similarities in volunteering preferences. Sometimes the pairing isn't an exact "fit" but everything works out in the long run.

I will hold a Mentor Program meeting (Zoom or in-person, depending on status of COVID) prior to the start of classes. The meeting is to get everyone on the same page in terms of understanding desired mentoring expectations, particulars of the upcoming class, schedule, locations, field trips, etc. so you can be a good resource for your mentee. Typically, we ask the mentors to meet with their mentees prior to the start of classes and maintain regular contact with them throughout the course. Contact with your mentee can be via email, phone, text, or in-person. Why not invite your mentee to go with you on a project volunteer activity or attend an AT session? Remember, students start earning volunteer and AT hours after their first day of class so this ultimately helps them meet their initial certification requirements.

Being a mentor helps the student explore and learn about the Hill Country and the various projects we support and gets them involved in our chapter. *Mentoring is a big deal...* Please consider being a mentor again in 2022! If you've never been a mentor before, please consider volunteering as a mentor for someone in the Class of 2022.

Thank you...If you are interested in being a mentor and/or have any questions about mentoring, please contact me at [membership@hillcountrytmn.org](mailto:membership@hillcountrytmn.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/>



Making Friends and Influencing People for Conservation  
with Kelly Simon Sam Kieschnick, and Tony Henehan

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in general, and the Wildlife Diversity Program's Urban Wildlife Technical Guidance Team specifically, has long recognized the need to increase our interactions with and response to traditionally underserved audiences. We recognize that implementing change at the Department-wide level can only be accomplished where the rubber hits the road: at the level of individual employees and their teams. Our team decided to transfer from our interest in theoretical ideas of change to applied approaches in enacting change. We planned out specific actions with calendar targets to create actual, measurable progress toward the goals of increasing our understanding of and building connections with all audiences. We are finding that the transition from *talking about* change to *accomplishing* change can be challenging, especially with audiences that were previously underserved.

Our team, called the *Urban Listening Tour*, has done some impressive work gathering information and finding underserved places, but we are finding some unanticipated challenges in other areas. In this presentation, we're going to talk about the specific actions we decided to take, what we hoped the outcomes would be, and what some of the real-world roadblocks have been. To inform "Be the Change" sessions, the authors collected information on the progress on these goals, and then conducted anonymous interviews with each member of the team to understand some of the roadblocks we've encountered. In this presentation, we encourage ourselves to face these personal roadblocks and hope our experiences can benefit other groups as we all start to break down the walls between good thoughts and powerful actions.

To register, go to <https://txmn.tamu.edu/bethechange/#september>.

From Michelle Haggerty, Texas Master Naturalist Program Director

### Plant Party 4

The fourth iteration of the plant party will take place the week of September 22. These are quick 15 minute presentations put on in cooperation with TPWD, Agrilife Extension, and USDA-NRCS to expand knowledge of the biology, life history, management strategies, and sometimes just plain neat facts about the vegetation of Texas and how humans, livestock, and wildlife interact with it. The topic list and the registration link are below; please attend if interested, and share with anyone you think is interested, as registration is free and open to the public. The presentations will be recorded and uploaded for later viewing. If you sign up now you will receive an email when the recordings are posted even if you can't attend the live event next week.

Plant Party #4: Foraging into Fall

Cost: Free

Time: 10 - 11:30 AM CST

To register: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PlantParty4>

#### Topics Covered:

Keeping Your Winter Coat on for Soil Health: Importance of Residual Vegetation Cover

Microbes in the Dormant Season: How Soil Activity Changes with Seasons

Reading Plant Quality in the Fall: Nutrition and Palatability Changes of Vegetation

Fall Plant Use by Wildlife: Change of Season and Wildlife Needs

Obnoxious Plant Management: Targeting End of Growing Season Management Effectively

Tim Siegmund, Private Lands Program Leader  
TPWD-WL Division 903-426-1834

From Laura Creuzada, Texas Department of Transportation Environmental Affairs Division

### Roadside Chat - The Wonders of Wildflowers

You've seen wildflowers blooming along Texas' roadsides, but did you know that TxDOT plants over 50,000 of those seeds each year? Intentional landscapes and wildflowers benefit everyone – from erosion, to critters, to travelers. Join us for a free webinar to learn about the history of our program, how TxDOT manages the roadside and other wonders that our biologists encounter in the field.

Date: Sept, 28, 10am Speakers: Sandra Chipley, TxDOT Landscape Architect,  
Travis Jez, TxDOT Maintenance Division, Matt Buckingham, TxDOT Biologist

To register: <https://txdot.webex.com/txdot/onstage/g.php?MTID=ed061c3c29a9c3552d1ea49bc9d04439b>

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



*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.

# Save Our Sabinal

## or How a Small Texas Town Protected Its River and Its Heritage

The Sabinal River, on the southern rim of the Edwards Plateau, is similar to other rivers in this part of the Texas Hill Country—the Guadalupe, Medina, Frio, and Nueces. It is fed by innumerable clear springs emanating from limestone recharge features and is lined with large cypress trees. The name Sabinal, in fact, means “cypress groves,” and was bestowed by early Spanish explorers. The water quality, like all the rivers here, is high. John Graves, the noted Texas author, called it “one of the purest, if not the purest, of all Texas rivers.” For local residents, it represents not only the lifeblood of the community, but a manifestation of the Creator, a link to our past, our personal and family histories, a connection to our ancestors, and a legacy to our descendants.

In December of 2020 the residents of the Sabinal Canyon became aware that a summer camp in the upper part of the Canyon, Lonehollow Camp, had applied for a sewage discharge permit with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. They sought permission to discharge up to 60,000 gallons of treated sewage per day into a tributary of the Sabinal River. This of course created considerable opposition. It was of particular interest to me, since the discharge point would be on the ranch my great-grandparents had originally settled in about 1900. My grandfather and father had both grown up there, and I spent summers there as a kid, although the ranch had recently passed from the family. A leading environmental group in the Sabinal Canyon, the Bandera Canyonlands Alliance (BCA), sprang into action, and in conjunction with many local citizens and other civic groups, we mounted a campaign of opposition. This campaign brought together folks of all political stripes, with conservative ranchers, liberal tree huggers, and everyone in between who were opposed to this sewage discharge permit. Most residents of the Sabinal Canyon, whether those whose families had been here for many generations or recent arrivals, view the river as sacred; part of our family history and cultural heritage. We see ourselves as protectors of that history and heritage. We started by creating an identity for our opposition campaign. Having lived in Austin and known about the Save Our Springs Alliance. I thought something along the lines of “Save Our Sabinal” might convey our message well. “SOS” is an old nautical term indicating an emergency requiring immediate assistance, and the reference to “Our” river reminded people that Texas rivers are owned by the people as a whole, and not by an out of state corporation. Obviously, this only worked because the word Sabinal begins with the letter S. (If we were on the Blanco or the Brazos or Buffalo Bayou we might have been known as the SOBs!) I suggested this name to the group and our effort became known as the Save Our Sabinal campaign.

The owner of the camp is Young Life, a large religiously-oriented corporation that includes university chapters, lawyers, water experts, wealthy donors, and a former Speaker of the Texas House. The BCA created three work groups, or committees. First, a communication committee was formed to educate the public, generate educational materials, collaborate with other groups, and coordinate the overall opposition effort. This communication committee, on which I served, began by gathering the local groups that opposed the plan, so that it would be clear that we were not outsiders, although most of the BCA board members were not local. Lending local support was Keep Utopia Beautiful, the Sabinal Canyon Coalition, the Utopia Park Board, the Utopia Water Board, the Cibolo Nature Conservancy, the Texas Hill Country River Region, the Hill Country Alliance, the Bandera County Democratic Club, members of the Hill Country Master Naturalists, the Friends of Lost Maples, the Headwaters Alliance and the Texas River Protection Alliance. These groups provided tremendous advice and support. Most shared their member lists with us, so that we could spread our message further.

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We created a dozen or so handouts, with maps, explanations, case studies of other rivers, and directions to the TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) and BCA (Bandera Canyonlands Alliance) websites. We held a town hall meeting for local residents in March. The head of the Nueces River Authority, two county commissioners, and a county judge attended. One of our group created a four-minute video which both explained the issue in everyday terms and emphasized the discrepancy between Young Life's mission statement about stewardship and their discharge application. Our goal was to convince Young Life to change their plans. We hoped they would instead adopt Land Application techniques, which enable them to irrigate their own property with this effluent instead of dumping it into the Sabinal River. The second committee focused on science issues, general water quality and water treatment issues, and particularly, the adverse biological and chemical effects of treated sewage water on pristine rivers of the Hill Country. This committee received a lot of technical assistance from the Nueces River Authority, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department staff, and the Bandera County River Authority. We began to access past water quality data and other information, scientific studies of sewage contaminations, and case studies from places like Blanco, San Marcos, and Leander, all of which had had disastrous experiences with effluent in their rivers. The third committee took on legal issues, and in particular the regulatory approval process, its various and complicated steps, and how we might impact it. The legal committee was also responsible for hiring an attorney and soliciting donations for future legal fees.

We realized that wide publicity was the key to raising awareness of our campaign. We printed up signs and t-shirts with the Save Our Sabinal logo, started a website, and used existing local Facebook pages to spread the word. Something which helped us enormously was that the TCEQ had a public comment webpage in which members of the public were allowed to make comments. Those comments, and the contact information for those who wrote them, were public information, and so we were able to identify hundreds of citizens who were opposed to the discharge. We compiled mailing lists of local and state-wide discharge opponents. By using Facebook, Instagram, a change.org petition, and email we began to educate the public about what was being proposed and why it was a threat to the river. Dumping treated sewage into a pristine Texas river of the Hill Country was such a bad idea that a great many people wanted to help defeat it. We developed a monthly electronic newsletter that we sent to interested parties while we continued to build our email address list. As a result, the County Commissioners and County Judges of Uvalde, Bandera, and Real Counties passed resolutions calling on Young Life to withdrawal its application. These unanimous county resolutions gave our cause a degree of gravitas that we hadn't had before. We sent articles, videos, comments, newspaper editorials, county resolutions, letters to the editor, scientific articles, maps, news releases and other information to both local newspapers and state-wide publications like Texas Monthly and the Texas Observer, both of which assigned reporters to the story. We approached the San Antonio television stations; one of them (KENS) did a news article on our fight to Save Our Sabinal. The Utopia school newspaper ran supportive articles.

Ultimately, Young Life decided to do the right thing. In August 2021 they withdrew their discharge application and substituted a permit request for Land Application of the effluent. This would allow them to use the effluent as a liquid fertilizer for cropland, sports fields, and landscaping around their camp, thus reducing the amount of ground water required to do the same task. A campaign like this is to some extent a battle of narratives. We chose our narrative early and we stuck to it; we were protecting a Texas river. We kept our message simple: this was not about Young Life's religious orientation, and it wasn't an effort to stop their development. It all boiled down to one clear simple message: NO DISCHARGE.

We relied heavily on the "Don't Mess With Texas" theme because we knew it resonated with our stakeholders and the public in general. We emphasized that Young Life's headquarters are in Denver, although some of their senior people lived in Texas. We did not refer to the treated wastewater as "effluent," but instead referred to it as "treated sewage" or "septic water" that would be "dumped" into the river—emphasizing that this is fecal material, and so the idea of discharging it into a river was offensive.

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Young Life's decision to abandon their discharge application and instead use Land Application was a major victory for the citizens of the Sabinal Canyon, and in fact for the citizens of Texas as a whole. Ultimately it was a good thing for Young Life itself: they can point to their wastewater system as a state-of-the-art facility, on the leading edge of environmental protection, and consistent with their corporate values. Moreover, Young Life has since been welcomed into the community as a responsible neighbor. The Save Our Sabinal campaign has demonstrated how a small group of concerned citizens can use social media and public persuasion to convince a large corporation to do the right thing. We hope that the techniques employed and the lessons learned in the Save Our Sabinal campaign will be useful to others who seek to protect our beloved natural Texas.

Riverside Nature Center  
Native Plant Society of Texas - Kerrville Chapter  
& Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library Present:

## ***"Wanted! Mountain Cedars: Dead or Alive"***

*Join us for a presentation & book  
signing event by author Elizabeth McGreevy*

**October 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 2:00 pm  
at Kerr Regional History Center  
425 Water St. Kerrville, Tx 78028**

A story of mountain cedar trees and how to replace  
anti-cedar sentiments with a constructive approach  
to land management.



Elizabeth McGreevy is a natural resources consultant, writer, and public speaker. A sixth-generation Texan, McGreevy has produced ecology-based development and management plans in the Texas Hill Country for more than twenty years. Her research on the Mountain Cedar (Ashe Juniper) has been featured in magazines, tv, and talk radio, including a radio show she hosted on KDRP Radio in Dripping Springs as "The Cedar Lady".

(830) 257-8422

[www.kerrvilletx.gov/1597/Calendar-of-Events](http://www.kerrvilletx.gov/1597/Calendar-of-Events)

From Deb Youngblood, Advanced Training Director

### Guadalupe River Cleanup, 2021

We had a great time down at G-Street on Saturday, August 14. We had 15 Texas Master Naturalists out working. It was hot but lots of fun. We generously estimated finding about 140 lbs. and worked for two hours. We had two kayaks working the river banks and everyone else was on foot, most wearing waterproof boots.

We did find some interesting things. Phil Youngblood and Janis Arterbury found single shoes. Martha Bean found a car antenna. Frank Garcia found a pair of shoes, a cell phone, and a strange little orange squid. Ron Childers found barbed wire and was really happy about that. Bob Binney, Dot Maginot, Robert Shock, Constance Weaver, Trudy Eberhardt, Nancy Huffman, Katy Kappel and Lucy Spade found more usual items — a fiberglass panel, large wood panel, a tangle of wire and lots more — and it was all good.



As far as most unusual goes, I nominate Frank Garcia. (I know. I am only supposed to nominate a thing but read on...) Finding one shoe is not unexpected but he actually found a *pair* of shoes. That could make you keep looking for a body. The cell phone was a fun find but the orange squid made us all do a double take and had us laughing.

Katy Kappel had one more find - maybe not all that unusual but certainly the best! Katy found a new friend while picking up trash. Turns out that new friend picks up trash on her own as she walks and was wondering if anyone ever got out there to do the job. She joined in and helped pick up trash and then helped Katy carry it all back to the parking area. That was a super find.

Martha and I found the most interesting live thing and it was found in the weeds at the gravel parking lot. We found bees. It appears that bees have taken up residence in a large plastic water meter box. They look like native bees to me but I'm no expert. We did not disturb them but all agree that a beekeeper needs to be called to move them. UGRA has been advised.

We had 15 people in our group and we worked for two hours. No heat strokes, but September is starting to sound a whole lot better than August for next year's clean up. We were very grateful for the water UGRA provided and snacks from the Kerrville Garden Club. We sure needed them.

Thank-you to all the volunteers who came out to work. Typical of Texas Master Naturalist, Hill Country Chapter members, we had a good time, too.



# Monarch Festival

## Saturday, October 23

### 10 am -1pm



Our Monarch Festival on October 23 will be an excellent way for parents and families to enjoy a day on the farm while engaging in learning about how to protect and support monarchs.

During the Farmer's Market at Herff Farm, families can participate in:

- Monarch tagging
- Archery lessons
- Tossing milkweed seed balls
- Children's "butterfly" yoga
- Hikes through the Herff Farm Monarch Meadow
- Marigold picking to celebrate Dia de los Muertos
- Many more activities

Donations (suggested \$10 per family; \$5 individual) collected at the event will provide more native plants for the pollinator garden at Herff Farm. A lush pollinator garden is a haven for pollinators and ensures their survival.

From Lucy Griffith

### The View from Rusty Bend



*Red Fox Visit*

Nocturne with Armadillo and Treefrogs

Darkness is an open hand.  
So begins the overture as  
bats divide the dusky sky, then  
fireflies rise like wraiths

against curtains of night,  
notes of light and dark.  
Catch the crickets harping,  
in their sopranos.

Treefrogs the size of thimbles  
carol an alto line, threading  
we are here, we are here.  
Again, again.

Nocturnal—synonym for noisy.

The sharp retort of buckfight,  
the flop-splash of fish,  
turkeys squabble-gobble  
sorting themselves to roost.

The chitter of kingfisher as he  
patrols the river.  
Owl call and response. Call and response.  
Armadillo bulldozes dry leaves.

Porcupines trill their whereabouts.  
A sonata of surprise.  
Darkness mends.  
Let us fold our wings and listen.

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At Rusty Bend this mild August, we got a break from the dog days. We were hit with a few hot ones but didn't experience the usual desperate hope for rain. I remember looking east with my father when I was young, seeing towering clouds over San Marcos that never found their way to us. This year, they did.

So this August, the air has been nectared with the vanilla smell of Kidneywood blossoms that just keep blooming. The flowers tumble with the black, white and yellow of Sonoran bumblebees. That sweet smell is mellowed with the tang of cut hay as crop after crop rises with the rains.

Animal encounters seem more frequent and intense. Each dawn, we sit with coffee, eager for the sun to rise to make a morning. Who might come by? The ravens are first, flying over the house to the neighbor's field where the grasshoppers have camped. They come in pairs and fly with purpose. So many ravens arrive, we wonder where they've been hanging out and how they know the buffet is open. We see one raven practicing his half twist in one corner of the field. Flipping over to fly upside down, no predator above him, just performing over and over, or maybe just because he can.

Cooper's Hawk flies by encumbered. In his talons hangs a mockingbird who had a very bad day. Red-shouldered Hawk noisily announces his whereabouts while Zone-tailed Hawk perches quietly for hours. Just as occurred last year, in mid-month a White-tailed Kite appears hovering over the pasture as if a pair of hedge clippers could fly. Such sharp-winged drama in black and white.

We empty the ashes from our fireplace within sight of the house to entice dust baths. One afternoon, three turkey hens and a poult stroll by for spa day. One by one, the pampering begins. Lady Turkey settles mid-pile as if on a nest, peck, peck, peck to loosen the ash. Then, she side fluffs with her wings to loft ash beneath her. Peck, then fluff. Several times. All done, she wanders off, now a striding grey ghost, to let the other girls have a chance. We watch the procession in wonder. Then, boom! A mighty shaking and a powder bomb explodes like a comic book from the bushes. White clouds drift with the breeze.

Right after reading *Fox and I* by Catherine Raven, a rare red fox pops up in front of the house and looks right at me. She takes a little nap in the sun, has a good scratch, marks her presence, and saunters off. We see the male the next day. They call to each other, cough-barking to grace the dusk.

August is rescued by delights from the sky. Most mornings, we watch clouds float by like a movie, our daily gift from the Gulf of Mexico. In the evenings, the moon shows off, then Scorpio and later Orion rise. I count bats at dusk, at first just one, then a few, now hundreds wheel by. As I sit and wait for the stars to emerge and the symphony to begin, Canyon Wren lands on my toe.



*Steam after storm sunset*

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).*

T E X A S



We meet on the fourth Monday of most months (but not during pandemic) in the Upper Guadalupe River Authority Lecture Hall at 125 North Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Join us at 6:15 for social time. The business meeting begins at 6:30. The Advanced Training speaker starts 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
- Nancy Scoggins -- Treasurer
- Deb Youngblood -- Advanced Training Director
- Catherine Gauldin -- Communications Director
- Carla Stang -- Membership Director
- Tom Burke -- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- Anne Ryan & Carra Millikien— 2022 Class Directors
- Trudy Eberhardt -- 2021 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:  
Lenore Langsdorf, Editor  
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  
membership@hillcountrytmn.org

