

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter
April 2022 Volume 20 Number 4



tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/old-tunnel image



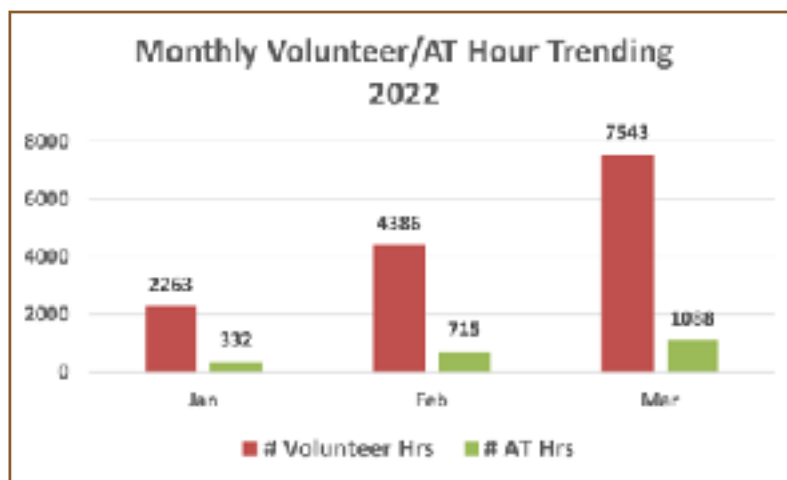
The April Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, April 25. Doors open at 6 for socializing; the business meeting is at 6:30, and the presentation by Nyta Brown, the Old Tunnel State Park Wildlife Biologist/Park Superintendent, will be from 7-8. Nyta Brown conducts bat research and works on bat conservation efforts around the state. "Bats: Habits and Habitats" is the title of her presentation, which focuses on bats' importance for the environment.

We have a new security precaution: We must pre-register for attending via Zoom by clicking [here](#). You will receive a confirmation containing information about joining the meeting.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE....Carla Stang

Hi everyone,

April is National Volunteerism month, and so I want to highlight the number of Advanced Training and Volunteer hours you all have done *already* this year. It's plain to see that you all love what you are doing, and you are doing it well. Please accept my personal hearty "thank you" for all you do to support our chapter and the communities in the 10 counties represented in our chapter.



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Have you heard of or ever done a BioBlitz? When I first heard the term, I didn't have a clue, but I was intrigued. If you don't know, a BioBlitz is a citizen-science effort that focuses on finding, identifying, and recording as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. Bioblitz's are often done as a biological inventory or biological census of property. Clearly, this is a great time of year to get outside and do a BioBlitz because of all the activity that's happening in nature in the spring. And, citizen scientists (that's you) of all experience levels can do a BioBlitz! Read on for the 5 W's of 2022 BioBlitz activities, also known as the City Nature Challenge.

Who can do a BioBlitz: Small groups and/or individuals. AND you can earn TMN Volunteer hours!

What do I need to know?: First of all, you *do not* need to know the names of everything you are observing in nature. That's one of the ways the app iNaturalist comes into play.

What you *do need to learn* is the basics of using iNaturalist app, especially if you plan to do a bioblitz by yourself. Download the iNaturalist app on your smartphone and/or download the app on your PC and transfer photos from your camera (smartphone or traditional camera). If you are part of a team doing a bioblitz, you can pair up with someone who does know how to use iNaturalist.

iNaturalist Training options: There are several training sessions (virtual or in-person) coming up:

- **iNaturalist Training – April 19, 2022 (TMN AT credit available)**
Craig Hensley at Riverside Nature Center 1pm – 3pm.
Register by calling 830-257-4837 or go to riversidenaturecenter.org.
Includes hands-on practice.
- **iNaturalist Training – April 26, 2022. (Lunch and learn); (TMN AT credit available)**
Sponsored by San Antonio River Authority – Open to the Public
Online – via Microsoft Teams. 12pm-1pm.
RSVP contact – Minna Paul mpaul@sariverauthority.org

You can also watch some iNaturalist tutorials on YouTube (NO TMN AT credit). Here are two basic videos:

- 15 minutes: Web/PC version. Establish an iNaturalist account. Upload Easy to explore iNat.
[iNaturalist Web Tutorial - Bing video](#)
- 13 minutes: iNaturalist on mobile phone. Install app on phone; establish an account; [How to use iNaturalist - Bing video](#)

Where can I do a bioblitz?

A bioblitz can be done almost anywhere: Your property; a city or state park or natural area, etc. In other words: both urban and rural settings.

Several small group bioblitzes are being coordinated to take place at locales within our chapter's areas.

Check out already scheduled locations you can participate in by clicking on

[City Nature Challenge 2022: San Antonio's Journal · iNaturalist](#)

Why are bioblitzes being done? Our chapter's involvement is being done to encourage our chapter members and the public to be part of a citizen science activity. Doing bioblitzes during this specific period is part of a broader activity called the City Nature Challenge (CNC). (Go <https://citynaturechallenge.org> for further information.) An added benefit of anyone's participation is that all the information from your bioblitz will feed into the CNC data bank

When will the bioblitzes happen? To have our participation and observations count in the CNC, they must be entered into iNaturalist between April 29 – May 2, 2022.

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How can I be a part of a BioBlitz? 1) Do the basic iNaturalist training, download the app to your smartphone and/or PC, and individually or as a group participate in gathering nature data. 2) Look for locations for group BioBlitzes and get in touch with the point of contact listed. 3) Go outside and do a personal BioBlitz at a location of your choice. 4) Tag along with someone else who is doing a BioBlitz and see how it's done.

Whether you do a few observations or 50, your data feeds into a larger data bank and helps organizations like Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Master Naturalists, the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, and many others get research grade observational data supporting a real-time status check on the health of many species.



Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend and contribute to Board of Directors meetings. The board meets at the Riverside Nature Center at 2:30 on the Monday of the chapter's monthly meeting.



TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST
2022 ANNUAL MEETING
HOUSTON, TX
OCTOBER 20-23

Put it on your calendar now as we prepare for our **23rd 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 an in-person event at the Omni Houston this fall **Thursday, October 20th to Sunday October 23rd**.

This year's Annual Meeting will be hosted in the heart of one of the most ecologically diverse urban centers in the nation. Houston is nestled in the Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes ecoregion of Texas, inviting a wide variety of wildlife and vegetation. With a temperate climate and abundant rainfall, more well-known species include the Houston toad and the whooping crane. The conference, held at the Omni Houston, sits on the shores of Buffalo Bayou, creating 160 acres of greenspace in the heart of downtown Houston, and re-introducing the natural world to those who call the city their home.

For more information and the Call for Proposals, (deadline: Tuesday, May 31) go to

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/WhctKKXPlqGLZRWtzLGfVfSGhqQXtDkgwtRWGtgPdnCRpqSQjZCvRHJflqNKfHrGWQnSLL>

This Month We Honor

Recertifications

Stephen Bishop, Lee Booker, Norma Bruns, Koy Coffey, Kristie Denbow, John Fiore,
Linda Fiore, Billy Guin, Jr., Patty Guin, Katy Kappel, Sandy Leyendecker, Pam Lienhard,
Dot Maginot, Diane McMahon, Sheryl Pender, Darryl Pitts, Eldon Sheffler, Deb Youngblood

Milestones

Lee Booker, Linda Fiore, Patty Guin - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly
Constance Weaver - 2500 hours, Polished Silver Dragonfly



The Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter continues to have in-person monthly chapter meetings. Our next chapter meeting and advanced training session will be April 25. The public is welcome to attend. Our monthly chapter meetings and Advanced Training sessions are HYBRID: You have the option to attend in-person (at Upper Guadalupe River Authority in Kerrville), via Zoom, or Live Stream via Facebook. There is a new process for pre-registering if you want to attend via Zoom.

To pre-register, click the following link or copy the link into your browser:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYvc-CsrjgpEtnjsTPvgKHlbEnNz0Wf_GF.
 You will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Doors open at UGRA at 6pm for socializing. A short business meeting will be held at 6:30 and the Advanced Training session will be from 7 to 8. There is no cost to attend. The UGRA Building is located at 125 Lehmann Drive, in Kerrville. Our chapter website (<https://txmn.org/hillcountry/>) has links to our virtual platforms.

Congratulations to members who received awards when in person at the March meeting:



Lucy Griffith and Andy Robinson



Lisa Marler and Gracie Waggener



Please join us as we celebrate
THE COMMENCEMENT
OF THE CLASS OF 2022

*** AND ***

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER'S
TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

WHO?

The Class of 2022 Students & Guests

All Hill Country Chapter members
(current & past years)

All Speakers from the 2022 Class

WHEN?

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

8:00 am—2:00 pm

Open house

Come early ... stay late

8:00 am Activities begin

11:00 am Commencement

12:00 pm Lunch

WHERE?

Joshua Springs
Preserve Pavilion

716 FM 289
Comfort, Texas 78013



Please RSVP by May 3

membership@hillcountrytmn.org

or call Dot Maginot (830) 377-0902

UPDATES ON 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES

Congratulations to Mackenzie Brown for submission of the winning logo for our 20th Anniversary!

- T-Shirts with the special logo on it are in the works and will be for sale to all interested.
- Participate in a BioBlitz!...either on your own OR in a group as a part of the City Nature Challenge. Check out the CNC website for more information. [City Nature Challenge 2022: San Antonio · iNaturalist](#)
- Starting at the April 25 Chapter meeting we will begin showing video snippets of our Chapter's oral histories that we have started to collect from our members.
- Join the Class of 2022 Celebration as they wrap up their training course on May 10 at Joshua Springs Park and Preserve in Boerne. We've expanded the invitation to include past and present members of our chapter family and the speakers as part of our anniversary activities.
- Field trips will be coordinated for members during the late-summer and fall time frame.
- Chapter Volunteer Appreciation Party will be in September this year, rather than December.

Keep your eyes peeled for more details!



On Tuesday, April 26, the Fredericksburg NPSOT Chapter will host an in person presentation at Gilbriar Gazebo, 208 Danos Drive, Fredericksburg. Social gathering starts at 6:30; the presentation begins at 7:00. Guests and area newcomers are always welcome. Our speaker, Sue Blackwell, is the owner of Green Life, an interior plant and design business in the San Antonio and Austin areas. She is working to complete the last level of the beekeeping program at the University of Montana in order to become a Master Beekeeper, and is currently serving as the vice president of the Kerrville Beekeeping Club. Sue's love for plants led to her fascination with bees and the intricacy of the hive's social structure. She realized the benefits of honeybees and their importance to the environment and that everything that the hive produces is useful. Sue provides bees for agriculture exemptions in three counties. Her presentation is entitled "Pollinators and Their Importance."

NPSOT Kerrville chapter meetings are generally held on the second Tuesday of each month from 1:30-3:00 at Riverside Nature Center, 150 Francisco Lemos Street in Kerrville. The May 10 meeting will be in-person, beginning with a brief business meeting at 1:30 pm and followed by the presentation of "Growing Native Plants from Seed" by Chuck Janzow at 2 pm. The chapter's field trip on April 23, 9am-2pm, is open to Texas Master Naturalists. Come see an urban wildflower garden that has won a Water-Saver Garden award. The owner and docents will be available to answer any questions about the garden and native plants. The event is free but registration is required to receive the details of the home's location. To register, go to https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdTaWqoTjItOR-GdSDfnpvJ0aVp_tyjAjTU2DL9ozOBm6jBvQ/viewform. Visitors will be required to sign a liability form before entering the garden.

Boerne NPSOT Chapter Meetings are at the Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium, 140 City Park Road in Boerne. The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 3 at 6:30. Eddie Seidensticker will present "Restoration of Coastal Marsh at San Jacinto State Park." The Spring Plant Sale will be on April 23, 9am-1pm, at Herff Farm.



Upper Guadalupe River Authority & Riverside Nature Center present

EduScape Talk & Tour

The UGRA EduScape is an award winning demonstration garden that contains numerous examples of water conservation & storm water detention practices that you can incorporate into your own landscaping. The EduScape Talk & Tour will feature presentations by leading experts, followed by a tour of the EduScape.

Talks & Tours are *FREE* to All

May 4th • 1pm

Urban Riparian & Watershed Protection Planning

Lucas Gregory, PhD, Texas Water Resources Institute, Texas A&M AgriLife Research explains how a healthy riparian area functions in an urban setting.

June 8th • 10:30am

Native Plants & Waterwise Gardening

Veronica Hawk, Native Plant Society of Texas & PGARP discusses the importance of using native plants in our landscapes.

To Register: 830-257-4837 or rnc.kerrville@gmail.com

UGRA classrooms: 125 Lehmann Drive, Kerrville

From Amy Zesch

Cactus Webinar Leads to a Web of New Connections

I always try to fulfill the Master Naturalist AT requirement early in the year. Since I live in one of the most remote areas of our chapter I appreciate the chance to accomplish this through webinars. In February my husband, Hal, and I attended a webinar about research on the endangered Black Lace Cactus (*Echinocereus reichenbachii* var. *albertii*). The plant looked very much like one I had photographed on our ranch in the northeast corner of Mason County. I confess, I understood very little of what the webinar panelists presented; they covered sophisticated genetic analyses of this species and its close relatives. I did learn almost immediately, however, that I was confusing the endangered Black Lace Cactus with the much more common White Lace Cactus (*Echinocereus reichenbachii* subsp. *caespitosus*). Feeling like a “baby botanist” I didn’t want to show my ignorance, but Hal jumped into the chat box and mentioned that we had White Lace Cactus “all over the place.”



White Lace Cactus (photo by Amy Zesch)

Imagine our surprise when, ten minutes after the webinar ended, we received an email from the coordinator. One of the panelists wanted to know more about the White Lace Cactus on our ranch - would we mind sharing our contact info? The panelist turned out to be Peter Berresford from Yorkshire, England, a deputy editor of Cactus World magazine and a researcher and conservationist of cacti worldwide. To carry on the study discussed in the webinar, he was planning an expedition to Texas in April. Over the next few weeks of correspondence our ranch became part of his itinerary. Hal and I were delighted when Peter arrived in Mason on April 11 with his colleague Chris Best, Texas State Botanist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Hal, Peter, Chris, and I got acquainted over coffee and then set out for the dry, rocky hills of the ranch. We spent the day collecting tissue samples of White Lace Cacti about to burst into bloom. (Sadly, a specimen in flower eluded us - everything seems behind schedule this year.) As we worked, Peter taught us how to choose, collect, and catalog the samples. From Chris we learned fascinating details about plant biology and evolution. Additionally, since Chris specializes in the conservation of all kinds of endangered native plant species, we realized we had gained a valuable new coach for stewardship on our land. By evening we were good friends, toasting the success of the day with more friends, winemakers Dilek and Robb Parr. As “baby botanists,” scientists, and winemakers shared insights and began making plans to meet again, the “web” of connections grew.

Webinars, which began as a pandemic adaptation for Master Naturalists to receive advanced training have widely expanded our opportunities to learn, and we should not underestimate their power to further the causes of research and conservation. In our case, what we thought would be a one-hour online AT credit “blossomed” into an extensive lesson in plant genetics, an energetic day of fieldwork in the Hill Country, AND meaningful new friendships. May the powers that be continue to offer Master Naturalists webinars that reach far and wide in their scope, both in terms of geography and subject matter!

From Rachel Thompson; photos by Ken Butler

Boerne City Campus Natural Area Project

The Boerne City Campus Natural Area project (KL-06-B-NPA) is a restoration project on 13 acres behind the Boerne library and along the Old Number Nine trail. Despite massive overgrowth of very large ligustrum trees, no understory, and a degraded riparian area, over 50 species of birds and 30 species of butterflies have been identified by our Master Naturalist volunteers since surveys began in August.

We are excited about what we may find as the property is transformed! Our first efforts have been focused on removal of ligustrum. On April 23 and April 30, from 9am to 2pm, we will continue the process with the help of the Salsa Squad, the Alamo Chapter's expert invasive removal team. Cheryl Hamilton, founder of the Balcones Satellite of the Texas Invaders Program, will speak at the library amphitheater at noon on April 23 about native alternatives to non-native invasives (AT credit has been requested).

If you are interested in joining us for the work days, for the presentation, or for more information, contact Rachel Thompson at rjat@alumni.rice.edu.



Question Mark Butterfly



Hermit Thrush

The View from Rusty Bend



Waiting for spring on the Guadalupe

Planting Song

Anticipation—satisfaction
another season, another round:
Mama's in the garden
planting 'maters in the ground.

Spring at last arrives, to bestow another round,
so the dirt yields soft to warming.
feeding 'maters in the ground—
to start that sweetness forming,

so bacon has a friend in lettuce, yes,
what's lost has now been found,
balls of sun live in our salads
from those 'maters in the ground.

We'll have summer on each pizza,
pears and cherries by the pound,
satisfaction that will echo
from those 'maters in the ground.

Satisfaction, a soft echo from
those 'maters in the ground.

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March marks the time of return at Rusty Bend, when the arrival of a Yellow-throated Warbler can make your whole day. We keep an eye out for migrants but first we listen. Each morning we tune our ears for the *quick, get a beer* song of the White-eyed Vireo. Then frogs and crickets near the river sing a hymn to welcome the return of warmth. The honey smell of Elbow Bush is also a first. Then a million yellow flowers of agarita, with its lush vanilla tinged with lemon, scent the breeze.

Not a typical exuberant spring though. As if hesitant, maybe waiting for rain, the trees aren't greening up yet. I can't blame them, it is so dry underfoot, a desiccated crunch I haven't heard since the last drought. Waiting for rain. We all are. I notice our neighbor isn't planting. I may have to practice my raindance.

Still it's finally warm enough for tomatoes and my asparagus have come back, shooting up literally overnight. Six weeks of tender tips ahead. So reassuring, I shouldn't be surprised but the return of plants and birds and animals feels like a gift every year. I'm not sure what it is, a message to persist? A lesson in resilience? The turtles pop up on the river like miracles. Ah. The turkeys wander by. Butterflies double daily. My mind somehow eased.

Of course we are entertained by the nesting shenanigans of the birds. Small scale, the Canyon Wrens are extracting every bit of cotton from the nest materials buffet. Titmice join in, carrying away streamers of cotton as if they've got a cloud by the tail. Large scale, we laugh at the pile of sticks on the bridge that tells an unhappy story of raven efforts at a new nest.

The Red-tailed Hawks are doing a tag-team approach to brooding. Some days, when the male comes in for a landing, she is off like a shot. Reminds me of a mama who has had enough and needs a break. She will play with the thermals for a while and then return, we hope refreshed.

Next we hope the Summer Tanagers will arrive with the Painted Buntings not far behind. Many were born here last year. We wonder, do they remember? Do they look down from above and see our place on the river, with food and water and shelter and think, that looks like home? We've got the welcome mat out. We celebrate their return.



A usual suspect, still a handsome fella

Poem, images and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2022

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 of bird poems and images, with wildlife photographer Kenneth Butler, Wingbeat Atlas, can be ordered from Wingbeat Atlas — FlowerSong Press & Juventud Press

Comments welcome at lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com



Chapter meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month (except in December). Members and the public are welcome to attend in person or virtually. There is no cost to attend.

In-person: We meet in the auditorium at the Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) Building at 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Doors open at 6PM for socializing. Business Meeting begins at 6:30PM. Advanced Training session is 7-8PM.

Virtual: Links are available at txmn.org/hillcountry/.

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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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?

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