

# The Texas Star

## Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter

February 2023 Volume 21 Number 2



image by Lucy Griffith



The February Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, February 27. Doors open at 6 for socializing. The business meeting is at 6:30, and the presentation by Dr. Maureen Frank, "The Greatest Grackle: Tips and Tricks for Youth Wildlife Education," will begin at 7:10. Dr. Frank is an Associate Professor of Conservation Biology at Sul Ross State University and the James A. "Buddy" Davidson Endowed Professor with Borderlands Research Institute. Previously, she worked as an Extension Wildlife Specialist for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Prior registration is required for attending the meeting/AT session via Zoom. You will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. You can log into Zoom at 6pm on February 27. To register for virtual attendance, click [HERE](#).

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...JEFF SCHWARZ

What is it about old men and weather? Let's talk about it. I've been collecting daily rain data at my home for the last four years – the last 18 months as a member of CoCoRaHS\*.

It's in my blood. My dad was the official rain gauger for Boerne for 50 years, then my oldest brother took over. Mother Nature has been kind to me so far this year in the rain department. I've had 3.36" of precipitation at my house in the first 40 days of 2023. CoCoRaHS maps tell me that I'm in the wettest spot in the chapter so far this year. I live in the far southeastern corner of our chapter area. Those in the western half of the chapter have only experienced about half of an inch.

I talk about all this for the purpose of promoting the CoCoRaHS program. There are only 81 individual CoCoRaHS reporters in total in our 10 county chapter area. Records show that 49 active chapter members participated in the program so Hill Country Master Naturalists are the lion's share of the local CoCoRaHS members. In 2021, we logged 1400 CoCoRaHS volunteer hours. Sign up today at [cocorahs.org](http://cocorahs.org) to get your official rain gauge and you, too, can be well on your way to your 40 volunteer hours per year. Don't have a yard or an open spot to place a gauge? Check with your neighbor or maybe there's an open space nearby where you can set up and educate the neighborhood.

\*CoCoRaHS (pronounced KO-ko-rozz) is a grassroots volunteer network of backyard weather observers working together to measure and map precipitation in their local communities. By using low-cost measurement tools, stressing training and education, and utilizing an interactive website, their aim is to provide the highest quality data for natural resource, education and research applications. The only requirements to join are an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather conditions and a desire to learn more about how weather can effect and impact our lives. Their webpage provides the ability for observers to see everyone's observations mapped out in "real time," as well as providing a wealth of information for our data users. CoCoRaHS officially began on June 17, 1998. The network today has over 25,000 active observers in the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and the Bahamas.



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On another note, we enter 2023 with over 200 active members and over 400 inactive members. Wouldn't it be great to reverse those numbers?! We can't do it in a year, but your 2023 Board will set out goals this year to make being a member feel like being part of a rewarding, fun, satisfying, scientific, serving, educational community. Work with me, here. If you have suggestions for improvement, send them to a Board member or Director. We want all active, inactive, and future members to feel welcome in the chapter and ready to engage with our mission:

The Texas Master Naturalist mission is 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 for the State of Texas.

## This Month We Honor



### Initial Certification

Karolyn Andrews

### Recertification

Bob Binney, Bernard Warren

### Milestones

Jane Jamison, David Matthews, Anne Ryan, Jeff Schwarz - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Greg Watson - 1000 hours, Gold Dragonfly

*Congratulations to members who received awards in person at the January meeting.*



Sharon Noack, Kathy Loring



Debbie Thomson, Lois Gaines



Laura King

From David Matthews, Class Training Director

The New Class Committee is excited to announce that applications for the Fall 2023 class are now available online at <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/become-a-member-of-the-class-of-2023/>. Also, a draft of the class schedule is available at <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/need-to-know-basics/>.

The format of the class differs from years past. The content remains the same, as does the textbook. A host of distinguished regional and statewide experts are scheduled to present. Switching to this new format incorporates Wednesday evenings (5:45-9pm) via Zoom with Saturday field trips. There will also be class presentations at most of the field trip sites. More details will appear over the next few months in this newsletter.

Hats off to a hard-working and enthusiastic New Class Committee whose volunteer hours are creating a truly meaningful and memorable introduction to the Texas Master Naturalist program.

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

# SAVE THE DATE



## SPRING

### Native Plant Sale



Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>  
At Riverside Nature Center  
9 a m - 12 p m



Native Plants selected to thrive  
in our climate & soil.

830.257.4837 or [www.riversidenaturecenter.org](http://www.riversidenaturecenter.org)  
150 Francisco Lemos Kerrville, Texas 78028





The Boerne chapter meeting will be at 6:30 on March 7 at the Cibolo Nature Center. The speaker will be Haeley Giambalvo, who serves on the boards of the Alamo Area Master Naturalists and the NPSOT San Antonio Chapter. The title of her talk is "Jumpstart Your Native Garden." She will focus on the "few small changes to what you are growing that can make a big impact in terms of supporting more insects, birds, and other wildlife."

The Kerrville chapter meeting will be at 1:30 on March 14 at Riverside Nature Center. The speaker will be Dr. Andrew Sanson. He is a former Executive Director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Executive Director of the Texas Nature Conservancy. The title of his talk is "Water Resources and Management."

The Fredericksburg chapter meeting will be at 6:30 on February 28 at St. Joseph's Halle, 212 W. San Antonio Street. Our speakers will be Debbie Windham and Bob Lowdowski, who are trail guides at Enchanted Rock.

From Nancy Huffman, President of the Native Plant Society of Texas, Kerrville Chapter

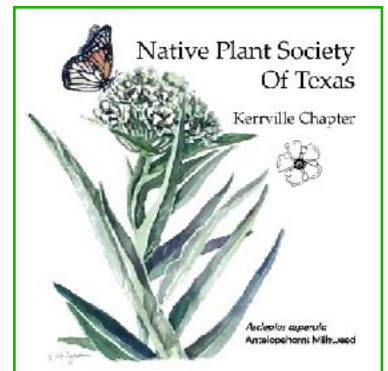
We would like to invite all members of the Hill Country Master Naturalists to join us in support of our mission. Our meetings continue to be free and open to the public as well as provide Advanced Training opportunities for you, but your dues help us to provide educational outreach to our community and beyond, young and old alike. Furthermore, we are always looking for more of you who want to volunteer with our organization, for which you can receive Volunteer Hours.

We are involved in developing an ever-increasing array of educational programs, including a Speaker's Bureau, a native gardening series at the Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library, author and special guest speaker programs, a nature journaling club, and a book club. Recent programs have focused on pollinators, wildlife, soils, and water resources, just to name a few. In addition, we host native garden tours and field trips that are only available to our members. We also maintain and support several native plant gardens in the city of Kerrville.

Whether your interests lie in native plants or in any one of the many subjects that you might be involved in as a Master Naturalist, plants are related to them! Your support will help us reach more people so that we all might learn more, teach others, and be inspired to take care of our local natural resources for future generations.

Please consider becoming a member of NPSOT/Kerrville Chapter at <https://npsot.org/wp/become-a-member> and come to our meetings, which are held at Riverside Nature Center on the second Tuesday of each month. The business meeting is at 1:30 and the program begins at 2:00.

Sow Some Wild Seeds,  
Nancy Huffman



From Betty Clyburn, Board Member, Gillespie County Friends of the Night Sky

Gillespie County Friends of the Night Sky has been organized with the help of the Hill Country Alliance, Blanco County Night Sky, and Kerr County Night Sky groups.

We are happy to report that our first event of the year will be at Ab Astris Winery in Stonewall on Friday, April 14 at 6:30. Astronomers with their telescopes will be present to guide you through the Night Sky as well as providing information to educate you and your neighbors about the importance of protecting the Night Sky and how you can achieve responsible outdoor lighting. We will also have a program at 7:00 by Stephen Gorman, TPWD, on the "Mythology and Legends of the Night Sky." You will be able to purchase wine and there will be two food trucks.

So put April 14 at on your calendar and come enjoy the wine and the stars. For more information, contact me at [clyburn\\_sa@yahoo.com](mailto:clyburn_sa@yahoo.com) or 713-822-7597.

From Catherine Gauldin, Social Media

### Our Chapter Has Two Very Active Social Media Channels

#### YouTube

- On the YouTube Channel there are 43 videos on a variety of subjects including videos about Chapter Meetings and Events and Instructional videos.
- Since March of 2021 the content on Hill Country Chapter YouTube Channel has received **21,431 views**.
- There are currently **264 Subscribers** to the Channel; the majority of those subscribers are not part of our Chapter. Become a Subscriber and you will be notified each time a new video is posted.

#### Facebook page

- Last year from January 12, 2022 to December 3, 2022 the content on our Facebook page was viewed **36,548 times**.
- This year from January 2, 2023 to February 10, 2023 there have been 23 posts and the content has been viewed **6054 times**.

Both Channels are open to the public and can be accessed through the links at the top of the homepage of our website.





The Texas Waters program informs and educates Texans about the most precious natural resource Texas possesses, its water. Many challenges face our state concerning water, particularly in our aquatic habitats that provide the water for wildlife. Texas Parks and Wildlife values the natural and cultural resources of Texas, and we want there to always be drinkable, swimmable, and fishable waters in our great State.

The Texas Waters Specialist program develops a corps of well-informed volunteer specialists who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of aquatic resources and aquatic habitats within their communities for the state of Texas. In this session, learn what the Texas Waters Specialist program entails and how to become certified; also see the growth and successes of your fellow Texas Master Naturalists.

Join us March 14 at 12pm. Register for March's TMNTuesday with this link:

<https://tpwdevents3000.webex.com/webappng/sites/tpwdevents3000/webinar/webinarSeries/register/f1ebaeacf3da40418f33551942371641>.






## RNC Special Programs

### *Land Stewardship for Birds & Other Native Wildlife*

Learn about land stewardship with certified wildlife biologist & author, Rufus Stephens. Rufus will explore how to care for your property to benefit the land and the wildlife on it, with a special focus on native plants and birds. He will review tools & techniques that can help you develop land stewardship goals for your property & get you started on being a better land steward.

**Program Fee:**  
**\$20 per person**

\*Proceeds go to benefit RNC educational programming

**Saturday, March 4, 2023**  
**10am - 12pm**

**RSVP: Limited Seating!**  
**Call 830-257-4837**





*About the Speaker:*

Rufus is a Certified Wildlife Biologist, an educator, and coauthor with Jan Wrede of the recently published book *Attracting Birds in the Texas Hill Country: A Guide to Land Stewardship* by TAMU Press. He has worked as a wildlife biologist for 34 years, 23 years with TPWD. He is one of the founders of the Texas Master Naturalist program and in recognition for this accomplishment was a co-recipient of the Wildlife Management Institute's award for Innovation.

[www.riversidenaturecenter.org](http://www.riversidenaturecenter.org) | 150 Francisco Lemos St, Kerrville, TX 78028

## The View from Rusty Bend



*The spare beauty that is Lady Guadalupe in winter*

### Ornithotherapy

Is it that I know  
by the sound that raven's rowing by?  
Not vulture or dove  
with their own sailing song.

That this raven must know me  
for when I "becaw" at her, always  
she answers with a buttery burp.  
Or that the questioning call

at midnight from a Great Horned Owl  
will bolt me with a joy that stays for days.  
Then again, ask me how I know that watching wrens  
can mend a broken heart.

I've learned on cold mornings to search  
for Towhee to do his hokey-pokey,  
dancing in dead leaves,  
his whole self in and out.

A *skree, skree* scolding from Cooper's Hawk  
rings in my brain, a soundscape, prodding.  
A flock of Cedar Waxwings forever holds a gift,  
to waken a wildness in spirit.

My medicine. My medicine with wings.

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Truly a dry January at Rusty Bend. Not just dry, what can only be called a hard dry. You can feel it underfoot, almost hollow, absent moisture. I can stick my thumb in the cracks in the ground and the scars of truck tires across the pasture look like they might stay for years.

I yearn for a walk with my father. I would ask him what he remembers about the drought in the 50s that just went on and on. I know where the dead oak trunks are from that time, haunting grey ghosts. I know the dying trees in Austin made J. Frank Dobie cry.

I'd point out the worry of no insects, no grubs, and where have the turkeys gone? The river is clear as it usually is in winter but running oh so thin. The armadillos look to be digging to China, and we must watch our step.

Thank goodness for the mast crop. Acorns startling us still as they pepper the roof. The pecans on the river have a constant stream of four-legged and winged visitors. They belly up to a buffet of nuts.

I'd show my father the drought monitor map. What a bulls-eye of exceptional drought looks like, painting the whole county a dusky orange. Then we could complain about neighbors taking risks with their burn piles.

I think his advice would be to make friends with waiting— then save every drop. Good time for erosion control and planning a rain garden. Also he would remind me to take your pleasures where you can. Keep the water sources and the feeders full for you never know who might drop in.

Like the way-out-of-her-range Scott's Oriole who dropped from the sky after days of wind. She sat stunned on the porch, weaving back and forth for an hour. Then she fell asleep at the feeder, poor doodle. Finally fortified with some suet and dried fruit, she has made herself at home these past few days. I guess she is waiting for the weather to turn, and so are we.



*Rare visitor, Scott's Oriole shining in the sun*

Poem, images and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2023

*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, is available from <https://www.studiocomfortexas.com/store/p580/book-wingbeat-atlas.html>. Comments welcome at [lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com](mailto:lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com).*



## 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.



**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.**

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 7:10-8:10PM.

### **Board of Directors 2023**

President.....Jeff Schwarz  
Vice President.....Kim Ort  
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Treasurer .....Ron Scoggins  
Advanced Training Director ....Deb Youngblood  
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Chapter State Representative...Vern Crawford

Chapter Advisor: Michelle Hagerty

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](mailto:Lenore.Langsdorf@hillcountrytmn.org).

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 the Membership Director  
[membership@hillcountrytmn.org](mailto:membership@hillcountrytmn.org)

