

# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the  
Texas Master Naturalist  
Hill Country Chapter  
April 2023 Volume 20 Number 4



*image by Vern Crawford*



The April Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, April 24. Doors open at 6PM for socializing. The business meeting is at 6:30, and the presentation by Craig Hensley, a life-long naturalist and educator who has shared his passion for and love of the natural world with audiences from Minnesota and Nebraska to across Texas, is at 7:10. He served as a Texas Nature Trackers Biologist for more than three years after one year as Wildlife Biologist for Comal and Kendall Counties and more than eight years as the Park Interpreter at Guadalupe River State Park. His topic will be "Tracking the Serpents of Texas through INaturalist and Herps of Texas."

Prior registration is required for attending the meeting/AT session via Zoom. To register for virtual attendance, click [HERE](#). You will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting, and can log into Zoom at 6PM on April 24.

From David Matthews, Class of 2023 Training Director

Field trips are an essential part of Master Naturalist training. This year's fall class is scheduled to visit two outstanding nature centers, a wildlife management area, a demonstration site for permaculture, two incredible natural areas, an amazing gorge carved by a flood event, and a private nature preserve.

The focus here will be on Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve. Traditionally, classes have experienced an introductory tour aboard the Bluebonnet trailer with stops at Madrone Lake, a manmade bat cave, and a hilltop site with dinosaur footprints. This year will start out that way, but will feature an optional extended stay. The cost of this optional "deeper dive" will be a donation in an amount determined by the participant.

Members of this year's class can opt to spend the night in a climate controlled dormitory style bunkhouse. Overnighters will have the chance to hike, view a bat emergence, and earn three hours of Advanced Training. Hill Country chapter's own Lisa Flanagan will give an evening presentation on Dark Skies. On Sunday, ranch manager Steven Fulton will discuss Cedar Myths and Facts. Later that day, participants will learn to identify native trees using a dichotomous key. Once trainees have opted in or out for the extended stay, around 40 spots will be made available for interested HCTMN members.

## This Month We Honor

### Recertifications

Dale Bransford, Norma Bruns, Tom Collins, Jack Davis, Kristie Denbow, Jane Jamison, Barbara Jansen, Christopher Keating, Sandy Leyendecker, Pam Lienhard, Ric McCormick, Diane McMahon, Andrew Robinson, Robert Shock, Lucy Spade, Mary Thomas, Gracie Waggener, Kathy Ward, Constance Weaver, Kathy Webster



### Milestones

Lorri Kendrick, Patricia Poore - 250 Hours, Bronze Dragonfly  
Veronica Hawk, 1000 Hours, Gold Dragonfly  
Deborah Windham, 2500 Hours, Polished Silver Dragonfly

*Congratulations to members who received awards at the March meeting.*



Patti Guin



Bob Binney, Molly Houck, Katy Kappel, Nancy Huffman, Patricia Poore, Kathy Webster, Mark Hults  
Front row: Trudy Eberhardt, Dot Maginot

From Lisa Flanagan, Chapter VMS Administrator

Recently, there were complaints from people who had been dropped from the active list.

Well, if you don't enter any volunteer hours for the year, we assume you are no longer active. Although you are busy with projects, please remember to ENTER YOUR HOURS. Our organization's funding relies on people entering their hours. If you want to start entering hours again, and so become active on the Volunteer Management System, let Sandy ([sandy325@windstream.net](mailto:sandy325@windstream.net)) know. She can change your status.

Any time you have questions about entering hours in VMS, feel free to call me (830.928.2080).

From Gracie Waggener, Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center

Our iNaturalist Workshop is this Wednesday, 10:00 at the Tatsch House in Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park. This is going to be a fun day to come and learn a new skill, and it is always a treat to get to learn from Craig Hensley. It is also an opportunity to learn about the upcoming City Nature Challenge! The park and gardens are looking really pretty this spring, with lots of things to get your list started. We will have coffee, water and some snacks. Please consider the environment by bringing a re-usable drink cup. We will have coffee, water and snacks.

We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday.

## 2023 Spring Water Revival

Despite ongoing drought, Hill Country Alliance announces second annual Spring Water Revival month.

Long-awaited rain is here and spring is in full force – native grasses are tall and green, trees have erupted in fresh leaves, and bluebonnets are gracing roadsides across the region. Unfortunately, despite recent rain and vibrant floral displays, rainfall counts are still off to a rough start.

Last year, the Hill Country Alliance celebrated our first annual Spring Water Revival – a month-long springtime celebration of our region's incredible waters – our bubbling springs, pristine streams, and flowing rivers.

In an ironic twist of fate, since last spring the region has seen countless creeks and springs dry up in response to one of the cruelest one-year droughts on record. Jacob's Well stopped flowing for the longest period in history and the Highland Lakes, which receive much of their flow from spring-fed rivers, saw historically low inflows. Hill Country springs are the lifeblood of the region, supporting local economies, drinking water supplies, recreation, and countless plants and animals. The ongoing drought has left residents across the Hill Country worried about our collective water future.

Despite the challenges posed by the drought, this year the Hill Country Alliance is celebrating its second annual Spring Water Revival Month, all April long. "The ongoing drought has been hard on the Hill Country," says HCA's Water Program Manager Marisa Bruno, "and it's an important reminder not to take our springs for granted. The goal of our Spring Water Revival month is not just to celebrate our springs, but also to educate community members about their local water resources and highlight ways to get involved."

This year's Spring Water Revival will include a social media campaign that highlights some of the many grassroots groups working to protect local waterways, along with examples of Hill Country communities protecting water resources through local ordinances. The Hill Country Alliance is also sharing water resources and events throughout the region at [www.SpringWaterRevival.org](http://www.SpringWaterRevival.org). Join us for events, activities, and news celebrating the Hill Country's water – one of our most precious resources.



The Boerne Chapter monthly meeting will be on Tuesday, May 2 at 6:30 at Cibolo Nature Center. The speaker will be Ben Pfeiffer; his title is "Discover the Fireflies of Central Texas."

The Fredericksburg Chapter monthly meeting will be on Tuesday, April 25 at 6:30 at St. Joseph's Halle. Paula Stone will be the speaker.

The Kerrville Chapter monthly meeting will be on Tuesday, May 9 at 2PM at the Riverside Nature Center. Andy Sansom will be the speaker; his title is "Water Resources and Management."

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

### Native Landscape Certification Program Level 1 in Kerrville

Native plants are crucial to all life on our planet. Not only do they provide us with oxygen but they are literally sunlight energy stored in an edible source that all animals, including us, either directly or indirectly eat! Pollinators depend on them just as we depend on pollinators for much of our food. We all need to learn more about how we can incorporate more natives into our own landscaping.

Date: May 6 from 8AM to 4PM at Riverside Nature Center.

At our NLCP Level 1 class you can learn about the benefits of native plants, desirable plants for your area, and design considerations for your landscape. NLCP is a state-wide program, but classes focus on the characteristics and plants in the region in which they are taught. NOTE: The content is specific to the Kerrville area. In addition, you can receive 7 hours AT for this class!

The NLCP Level 1 class is in-person so you get hands-on knowledge from participating. The class is divided into two portions: classroom and a plant walk in the gardens of Riverside Nature Center. After the class, you can take the optional on-line test to be certified. This will also qualify you to take further courses offered by The Native Plant Society of Texas.

Please see the following link for more information and to sign up!

<https://nativeplantsocietyoftexas.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/nativeplantsocietyoftexas/event.jsp?event=1464&>

For more information, please contact us at: <https://npsot.org/wp/kerrville/contact-us>.





## Wildlife Field Research - Spring 2023

Cibolo Center for Conservation, Boerne

Sunday, May 7 - Saturday, May 13

Master Naturalists and other nature enthusiasts participate in this event, each bringing their own interests to the mix to create a colorful and fun science community. For some, the camaraderie and fun that is had during Wildlife Field Research bring them back year after year. Community Science engages citizens in the task of recording observations of the environment and its many inhabitants. These observations are used to make scientific assessments that inform land management and human behaviors that impact our world. New participants are trained by Team Leaders who provide instruction and guidance on how to conduct the surveys and record information.

### WILDLIFE FIELD RESEARCH SURVEYS:

Ant Survey, Amphibian Watch, Aquatic Survey, Butterfly Survey, Prairie Vegetation Photo Points, Prairie Vegetation Survey, Exotic Plant Removal, Small Mammal Trapping, Watersnake & Reptile Search

Lunch is provided on Thursday and Friday to all participants. We recommend that you wear outdoor clothes and closed-toed shoes. Bring a hat, sunscreen, and a water bottle. Long pants are recommended for surveys taking place in the tallgrass prairie. A raincoat will come in handy if inclement weather is in the forecast.

To learn more about our surveys, see our [MAP OF SURVEYS](#) to see Wildlife Field Research in action!

To sign up, go to Give Pulse ([link](#)), or to volunteer, contact [Darla@cibolo.org](mailto:Darla@cibolo.org).

# NEd Talk

## Explore eBird

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

# eBird

**Tuesday, April 18th | 1pm - 2:30pm**

Join the world's largest birding community! Used by millions of birders, Cornell University's FREE eBird app instantly reports birds seen & heard, uploads photos, audio recordings & videos. Users can store lists of birds seen by region, state, & country.



Local Top ebirder, Paul Sellin, will conduct a classroom style course on eBird's Explore functions & how Cornell utilizes all the user data, such as:

- WHO is report birding observations for a region, & what did they see &/or hear? See photos, audio recordings, & video for those species.
- WHO has reported the most species for a region?
- WHAT are some of the best places to bird in a region?
- WHAT is the best time to see a bird species in a region?
- WHERE are the birds going during the year?

eBird account not required, but can be created at <https://ebird.org/home>  
RSVP your seat(s) at **830-257-4837** or [mrc.kerrville@gmail.com](mailto:mrc.kerrville@gmail.com)

**Educational Program Fee: \$10**

[www.riversidenaturecenter.org](http://www.riversidenaturecenter.org)



# Native Plants



## Land, Water & Wildlife Expeditions

April 29, 2023 - New Braunfels, TX - Comal County

- \$50 per family (youth/adult pair)
- Youth ages 11-17 and a parent/guardian
- Meals and snacks provided
- Learn about prairies, the role of fire in our ecosystems, citizen science, and more!
- Take home native seeds!
- Learn from natural resource experts!

Apply for a safe, fun,  
and educational outdoor  
experience here!  
Space is limited!

[tinyurl.com/twanativeplants](https://tinyurl.com/twanativeplants)







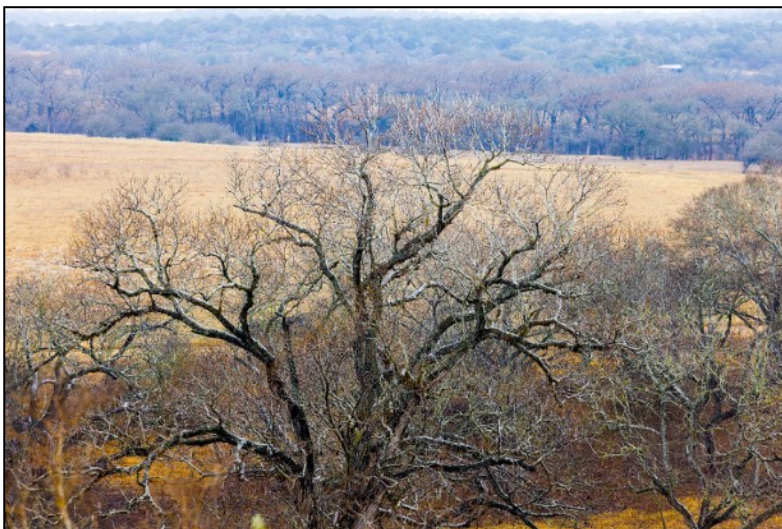


From Chad Timmons, Conservation Education Specialist, Texas Wildlife Association

I am collaborating with the New Braunfels Chapter of Native Plant Society of Texas and other partners to host a native plant workshop for youth ages 11-17 and an accompanying parent/adult on Saturday, April 29. During this event, participants will tour our prairie restoration project, learn about fire's role in our ecosystems, and how to use citizen science apps (Seek and iNaturalist), and have a variety of hands-on activities with NPSOT members. We'll be sending participants home with native seeds and a host of other resources. Breakfast, lunch, and beverages will be provided.

You can check out our program website at <https://www.texas-wildlife.org/family-land-water-wildlife-expeditions/>. I'm happy to answer any questions you have. Call 512-751-9488 or text [ctimmons@texas-wildlife.org](mailto:ctimmons@texas-wildlife.org).

The View from Rusty Bend



*Cottonwood in her dormancy*

From the furrowed cottonwood

I don't care what you call me,  
cottonwood/*álamo*/*Populus*,

but know this. I am sapped  
with all I've seen,

I've seen my sisters, the cypresses  
felled, each and every one,

still they struggle to return.  
Gravel pits and crushers spoil the air,

stain the water like gods of extraction.  
I cry *enough*.

I miss the songs that used to rule,  
that sweet tune of river and wind.

My branches shine black with rain  
or pose, white-shadowed with snow.

My spring buds swell with medicine  
and smell like bliss.

My toothy leaves, as big as your face,  
shimmer and shake.

You watch me, I know.  
I see you at the window

wrestling with despair.  
I see you on the cliff and know

that I am healing you.  
Now you owe me—

are you listening?

*continued on next page*



March at Rusty Bend and I am full of questions. Will it rain in time for wildflowers? My Guide to Texas Wildflowers is dusty from disuse. I never cracked it last year, but there are verbena, daisies, and a few bluebonnets that buoy my hopes.

Have the Turkey Vultures returned from their wanderings? What day will we hear the first “*Quick, with a beer-check*” from the White-eyed Vireo? Ah, the return of things beloved. The reassurance that despite the world’s troubles, spring shoulders its way back in.

I know I’ve found the sure cure for doom scrolling: the daily delight of Wren TV. All three species hang out on our porch, the Bewick’s tail-flicking dance on the porch rail, the Carolina on the seed tube and the Canyon Wren regularly testing the acoustics from the top of the woodpile. Wren TV means soft thoughts, shedding worry and dread. I admire the big voice in such a tiny bird.

As my thoughts wander in this between time before full-on spring, I am pondering an expanded view of stewardship. Inspired by the canopy coming in, leaf by leaf unfurled from its winter fist, I am thinking about what we owe this habitat, leaf by leaf.

After so much extraction and overgrazing took it down to rocks and caliche, what is the ideal state for this soil, this slope and this drier weather? What steps should we take? What succession plants should we be looking for? I know we help the land heal by treating it tenderly—by slowing erosion with dead branches, by allowing the snags to stay for shelter, by slashing invasives, by sowing prairie grasses.

Nature was made to heal. Much can mend if we stay out of the way but humans seem to have lost a critical sense of balance. The neighbors’ pastures are turning into dry lots and any hope of returning grasses is fading there. I see trees cut down for “progress” as if we’ve forgotten that they clean the air we breathe.

When I think of reciprocity, I feel we owe much to this place that is full of birds and critters and the comfort of the cycling seasons. So I will chop thistle, slow the flow to capture every drop, and order more seed. I will eat venison. I will advocate in my biggest voice and wake early. My skin is singing—I am ready to wear the rain.



*Cedar Waxwing acrobatics at the bath*

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, can be preordered from [www.flowersongpress.com](http://www.flowersongpress.com)*

*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 Guadalupe Basin Natural Resources Center, 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Doors open at 6PM for socializing. The Business Meeting begins at 6:30PM. The Advanced Training session is 7:10-8:10PM.

### **Board of Directors 2023**

President.....Jeff Schwarz  
Vice President.....Kim Ort  
Secretary.....Patti Guin  
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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.

### **Questions about our chapter?**

Email Membership Director Dot Maginot  
[membership@hillcountrytmn.org](mailto:membership@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.

