

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter
May 2023 Volume 20 Number 5



photo by Vern Crawford



The May Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, May 22. Doors open at 6PM for socializing. The business meeting is at 6:30, and the presentation by Chris Distel, Professor of Biology and Field Station Director at Schreiner University, is at 7:10. Dr. Distel's research and teaching in ecology and conservation spans many groups of species, but he considers himself primarily a herpetologist. Many of his experiments evaluate the effects of pesticides on amphibians. His topic will be Hidden Marvels: The Amphibians 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 May 22.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...JEFF SCHWARZ

Congratulations to our chapter's newest 10,000 hour volunteer, Tom Collins! Tom has logged the hours into VMS that will put him over the top. Tom got his start 23 years ago as a Master Naturalist south of Houston, but he has been a perennial top 10 volunteer for our chapter for the last 15 years. His real start as a naturalist began as a child, though, playing and learning in the outdoors where he grew up as a sixth generation Texan near the creeks and woods of Helotes.

In 1999, Tom learned of the Texas Master Naturalist program and began working with others to create the Cradle of Texas Chapter in Brazoria County, which was commissioned on September 12, 2001. Tom was their first chapter president. His influence was felt in the state organization as well; he was on the State Steering Committee for seven years and was instrumental in shaping the bylaws and other managing documents for the state. In addition to being a Master Naturalist he has been a Master Gardener for 24 years. His interest in birds led him to become the co-compiler of the Freeport bird count, the first in the nation for several years. He served as the Sea Center Texas Naturalist, a volunteer for USFW Refuge doing census work, and a board member of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory where he is still on the Advisory Board. Tom transferred to the Hill Country chapter around 2007 after he and his wife, Sherry, retired to a ranch in Center Point. They manage their land under an Agricultural Wildlife Valuation to the benefit of butterflies, birds, and other native flora and fauna. He has logged 98 butterfly species and over 200 bird species on his property, but that's nothing compared to the nearly 5000 bird species he and Sherry have logged around the world in 30 different countries!

You're likely to see Tom at over a dozen volunteer programs across the chapter, but most of his volunteer time is at Love Creek Preserve, a property of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Bandera County. Tom started the Love Creek Butterfly Count, and it is now regularly one of the top three Counts in the nation. Love Creek relies heavily on volunteers, and they have a regular First Friday Work Day from 8:30 – Noon. I'm inspired by Tom to be there to see it myself – join me and let's see it together! It looks beautiful on the website: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/love-creek-preserve/>.

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Tom has been certified for 23 years, every year that the Master Naturalist program has awarded recertification. Soon he'll join a small team of volunteers who have logged over 10,000 hours in the program. Tom will be the fifth person in the chapter to reach 10,000 volunteer hours, joining Stephen Bishop, Ron Hood, Kip Kiphart, and Gracie Waggener. What great examples we have to follow!! Our organization is so thankful to be associated with these master volunteers who are leading the way to our chapter's remarkable service hours dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources.

Oh, by the way... in interviewing Tom for this story I found that he is a master storyteller in addition to being a Master Naturalist and Master Gardener! What a delight! He and his wife are both in the process of writing their autobiographies about their very varied childhoods, college, marriage (of 58 years), then immediately a tough Vietnam tour followed by 31 years with Dow Chemical. Applying their naturalists' skills on the Texas coast and the Texas Hill Country is an important part of their life stories. For more of his stories, buy the book!

This Month We Honor

Recertifications

Marylein Davies, Virginia de Wolf, Lisa Flanagan, Frank Garcia, Kimberly Gardiner, Paula Harley, Tom Harrigan, Virginia Hawk, Sarah Hilburn, Susan Logbrinck, Kathy Loring, Pat Lucas, Susanne Pyle, Nancy Scogins, Ron Scoggins, Carla Strang



Milestones

Carol Knutson, Nellwyn Sadler - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Carla Brady - 1000 Hours, Gold Dragonfly

Bob Hanson - 2500 Hours, Polished Silver Dragonfly

Tom Collins - 10,000 Hours, Polished Gold with Emerald Dragonfly

Congratulations to members who received awards at the April meeting.



Gracie Waggener, Jane Jamison, Kathy Webster, Tom Collins



Debbie Windham



MEET A POLLINATOR CHAMPION: Patricia Poore (Class of 2022)

Patricia's Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program (PGARP) request to be recognized as a Pollinator Champion was substantiated by over thirty-five native species of cacti, perennials, ornamental shrubs, cacti, succulents, and trees. She methodically documented and catalogued all of the plants, wildflowers, and trees which were on her property as well as those that she has planted. Patricia worked tirelessly to remove non-native species like boxwoods, clearing the space for new native plantings.

Her commitment to pollinator support, willingness to restore her land to a nurturing pollinator habitat, and understanding of native plant gardening certainly illustrates a **Pollinator Champion**. Congratulations!

UGRA Volunteer Summer Study



The Upper Guadalupe River Authority is looking for
volunteers to take part in the

2023 Volunteer Summer Study

From June 1st - August 31st, volunteers will collect water
samples at various locations along the Upper Guadalupe
River and its tributaries and submit them to UGRA for
E. coli bacteria analysis.

Master Naturalists Volunteer Code: KR-08-C-FR

To register, or for more information, scan the QR code or visit this link:
www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/volunteer-summer-study



If you have any questions, please
contact:

Matt Wilkinson
mwilkinson@ugra.org
(830) 896-5456 Ext. 235



June Program: Native Bees and Bee Habitat

FFNC Nature Series, Part III



Photo by Mildred Duworku

Presenter: Molly Keck, AgriLife Extension

When: June 16, 2023, 10:00-12:00 Noon

Where: AgriLife Extension Office
38 Business Court – Fredericksburg, TX
AT23-065 – 2 hours

In this workshop, learn about our Native Bees, their preferred habitat, and their importance as pollinators in a healthy ecosystem. You will also gain information on how to promote healthy Native Bee populations in your backyard and even build your own bee house.

Seating is limited for this free program (donations are accepted), so please pre-register as soon as possible by contacting Gracie Waggener at gwaggener@flow-apps.com.

About Our Speaker



Molly Keck is an Integrated Pest Management Program Specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Bexar County, Texas (San Antonio). Molly is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Entomology and is a Board Certified Entomologist and hobbyist beekeeper.

Molly has been working for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service since 2005 and specializes in urban and structural entomology, providing pest management and identification programs to Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, the general public, school-age students, and pest management professionals.

From Tom Collins

Hill Country Butterfly Counts

During June and July each year the North American Butterfly Association holds its annual butterfly counts. The count is done over a 15-mile diameter circle (same as Christmas Bird Count) and conducted during one day. The Love Creek count has been a top count in the nation over the past few years. You do not need to be a butterfly expert to participate. We need people to help us find butterflies; when found, you get a chance to start learning them. Below are the upcoming counts and the compilers you can contact to participate. There is usually a small fee to participate, but many of the counts have their costs covered.

June 1 San Antonio, NW Patty Pasztor agarita@me.com

June 6 San Antonio, Patty Pasztor agarita@me.com

June 15 Love Creek, Rebecca Neill rebecca.neill@TNC.ORG Tom Collins towhee@hctc.net

June 20 Guadalupe SP, Craig Hensley Craig.Hensley@tpwd.texas.gov

June 25 Boerne, Kenneth Butler kenbbutler67@gmail.com

July 12 Kerrville, Tom Collins towhee@hctc.net

HCMN can use code CC-O8-B NABA Butterfly Counts for volunteer hours.

From Katy Kappel

The Bird City Project

The Riverside Nature Center, Schreiner University, TPWD, and the City of Kerrville are working together to enhance our bird population and become Bird City Kerrville. The Bird City Kerrville project is a community-focused certification program that was created to help people protect birds and their habitats where we live, work, and recreate. The criteria required to attain certification are designed to be impactful and efficient against habitat loss and other harmful factors impacting birds.

Research shows that bird-friendly habitat increases property values, helps control insects, and generates tourism dollars. Where birds thrive, people prosper. From urban centers to rural towns, each community can provide important habitat for birds, and certified communities will receive recognition and community benefits as a result of these efforts.

For more more information, go to [Bird City Texas — Texas Parks & Wildlife Department](#).

If you are interested in working on this Hill Country Master Naturalist project, contact me at katykappel@yahoo.com.



BIRD WALK & TALK

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2023
9:00 – 10:30AM
MEETING LOCATION:
**KERRVILLE RIVER TRAIL
G STREET PARKING LOT**

Join Paul and Deloris Sellin for a morning bird walk along the Guadalupe River Trail. You will learn life histories of our avian residents and migratory feathered friends. All ages and levels of experience are welcome.

EVERY 3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH | EDUCATION PROGRAM FEE: FREE
RSVP YOUR PARTICIPATION AT 830-257-4837



1 on 1 with a Naturalist

Every 1st & 4th Friday | 10am – 12pm

A Certified Texas Master Naturalist will be available to meet 1-on-1 to answer questions, discuss various topics, or listen to ideas about how to advance the stewardship and conservation of our environment.

RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER ASSOCIATION
riversidenaturecenter.org | (830) 257-4837

UGRA 20TH ANNUAL **River Clean Up** **VOLUNTEERS WANTED!**

**When: Saturday, July 22nd
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

Where: Flat Rock Park



Volunteers are encouraged to register before July 7th or they can arrive at Flat Rock Park at 8:00 AM for registration and instructions

**Refreshments, Prizes, and Activities!
T-shirts For First 300 Volunteers!**

**For more info and to register, visit:
www.ugra.org (scan QR code above)
Or call (830) 896-5445**



Let's Keep OUR River Clean!



The Fredericksburg chapter monthly meeting will be at 6:30 at St. Joseph's Halle (212 W. San Antonio St.). Social time will begin at 6:30 on May 23. The speaker, Robert Edmonson, of the Texas A&M Forest Service, will share his expertise about choosing trees, how to plant and take care of them, and "what not to do" so you don't kill the trees you already have. He will also provide recommendations for native plants for our region.

Save the Date: Texas Master Naturalist 2023 Annual Meeting

The Texas Master Naturalist 2023 Annual Meeting will be held Thursday, October 12 through Sunday, October 15 this year at the southernmost point of Texas' South Plains ecoregion, surrounded by mesquite and prickly pear brush country in McAllen, Texas.

The View from Rusty Bend



The Ash Queen

Today my father should be

marking the calendar to herald the arrival of the Painted Buntings,
dressed in their ridiculous colors. He should begin
the day with his ritual half a banana and All- Bran.

Today he should remark on the bumper crop of agarita berries,
hint heavily for a jar of jelly. Today my father would speculate
at length on the end of this durn drought. Today he would
decry the butchery of trees beside the power lines.

Shameful, he would say. Today my father should be reading
all of J.F. Dobie's works, again. Today he should take
a Miller High Life to my garden, sit on the glider,
recount shelling peas as a boy, into a blue-patterned bowl.

Today my father should watch the news, appalled, and
make a heartfelt tribute to the Rule of Law.

Today he ought to wander the pasture, with loppers
over his shoulder should a pruning opportunity arise.

Today my father might walk with me on his "wildflower trail"
to see that his forty-year-old salvia greggii still thrives—
"blooming right fine."

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April is my father's birthday month and perhaps when I miss him the most. April at Rusty Bend unfurls a chain of holy moments that would mean so much to him. Andy and I wake early to watch it make a morning, to sit with our palms around a warm cup of coffee and see what falls from the sky. Spring migration liberates a fountain of feathered surprises. The statistics alone are breathtaking. More than five million birds flew over us last night.

We search the top edges of trees. The Indigo Buntings are first, flashing cobalt. Then, Summer Tanager with his characteristic *pit-a-tuck-tuck*. There's a Lark Sparrow with his fancy mask. Yellow-breasted Chat is bold and bright. Warblers at the birdbath—Yellow-throated, Black and White, Kentucky, the Myrtle Yellow-rumped. Each day drops a new colorful gift.

My father would love our first sighting ever of the Black-capped Vireo, so rare. The vireo looks so dapper in his olive suit, with a black and white head, as if dressed for the masked ball. Shiny as patent leather. Perhaps our cowbird control plan is paying off.

We hear the turkeys gobble as they come off the roost on the river. They seem exuberant to start the day. The hen we call the Ash Queen comes up to the turkey feeder several times daily. She entertains us on “spa day” when she sits in a pile of ashes and fluffs for many minutes, then unleashes a smoke bomb as she wanders off.

One day she went to the edge of the cliff and stood statue-still for a half an hour, as if in meditation, gazing at the river below. Today we watched her hunt for doodle bugs in the yard; then hop on the top railing of the fence to preen the drizzle from her feathers one by one. That girl likes a view. I can relate.

Andy is monitoring more than fifty nest boxes and weekly regales me with nest box tales. The Ash-throated Flycatcher is a caution; she nests with fur from dead animals so fragrant, you can smell it from afar. My favorite stories tell of the tiny titmouse mamas. They refuse to leave the nest when he's trying to count the eggs. The tiger moms of the bird world, they rare back, open wide and hiss at him like six feet of rattlesnake.

We need more rain for sure, but the scant amount we are getting is enough for a few butterflies to return. If my dad could return, we would watch them together. We would wait patiently, side by side, to see the next wonder fall from the sky.



Fritillary on Perfume Daisy

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

Comments welcome at 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.

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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 Lenore Langsdorf, Editor.

Questions about our chapter?

Email Membership Director Dot Maginot
membership@hillcountrytmn.org

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