

# The Texas Star

Newsletter of the  
Texas Master Naturalist  
Hill Country Chapter  
July 2023 Volume 20 Number 7



Photograph credit: TPWD



The July Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, July 24. Doors open at 6pm for socializing. The business meeting begins at 6:30 and the presentation by Mark Mitchell, TPWD Wildlife Biologist based at Mason Mountain WMA, will begin at 7:10. His title is Reintroduction Efforts of Black Tailed Prairie Dogs and Why This is Good.

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 July 24.

## From David Drake, Volunteer Service Director

Here is a direct link to our chapter's [Volunteer Opportunities Calendar](#) located on our website, and a direct link to all of our current [Chapter Approved Projects](#).

Click on the [News](#) page tab on the [Hill Country Master Naturalist](#) chapter website for [Volunteer Opportunities and Current Events](#). Organizations with immediate volunteer needs may be found on this page.

Please drop me a [note](#) if you find the information and notifications helpful.

If you have a new project in mind that needs to be approved, please submit the form in this link: [Propose a New Volunteer Project](#).

If you are a Project Coordinator and need assistance getting volunteers for projects, please send me a note to [VolunteerProjects@HillCountryTMN.Org](mailto:VolunteerProjects@HillCountryTMN.Org). Or, feel free to call me at 903-357-0828.

If you would like to place volunteer events on our calendar, please email our Communications Director, Mark Hults, at [Communications@HillCountryTMN.Org](mailto:Communications@HillCountryTMN.Org).

Thank you for your time and efforts!

## This Month We Honor



### Initial Certification

Chris Walton

### Recertifications

Diana Armbrust, Janis Arterbury, Rheda Boardman, Ron Childers, Koy Coffey, Lois Gaines, Sharon Hixson, Lorri Kendrick, Nancy Kerr, Carol Knutson, Bob Lodowski, Susan Longacre, Anna Orsak, Kim Ort, Sheryl Pender, Vicki Schmidt, Charles Smith, Bob Wiedenfeld, Amy Zesch, Hal Zesch

### Milestones

Koy Coffey, 1000 Hours, Gold Dragonfly  
Frank Garcia, 2500 Hours, Polished Silver Dragonfly

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



Lonnie Phillips



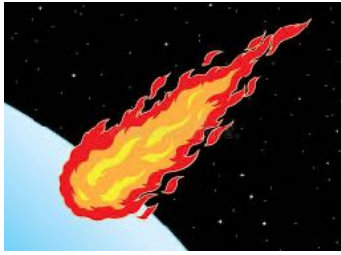
State Director Michelle Haggerty presents 10,000 award to Tom Collins.



John Hornung & Patricia Higgins



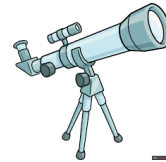
Jeff Schwarz presenting awards to Alice King, Mackenzie Brown, Tyra Kane, Ann Dietert, Robin May, and Charleen Moore



## Maples and Meteors



### Night Sky Fest



**6-10 pm, Saturday night, August 12**

**At Lost Maples State Natural Area, Vanderpool**

**Celebrate all things night sky-related at our night sky fest and stay after for a star party! There will be booths, games and a star party conducted by the San Antonio Astronomy Club. For more information go to the *Lost Maples State Natural Area Events Page*.**

**In order to volunteer to help with this event contact Greg Walton at [gregwalton12345@gmail.com](mailto:gregwalton12345@gmail.com)**

**WELCOME**

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.



From Mike Mecke

### Guadalupe River System Dams = Evaporation Ponds

The continued approval of building small dams on our Guadalupe River or a tributary contributes to the slow death of our river, our groundwater, our fisheries and other aquatic life — not to mention the loss of precious riparian habitat to all sorts of life. To keep our beautiful Hill Country rivers healthy, a sustained natural flow of water is needed.

The high evaporation rate here and across Texas destroys any real or perceived benefits of these dams other than a false sense of human satisfaction at seeing the new pond or lake. Just looking at the many small dams on my nearby Town Creek from the river up to the head of Town Creek is staggering! The loss of evaporated water is huge — water professionals call them “vanity ponds,” as that is their main purpose: beauty. When planning and constructing new ranch ponds for livestock needs, when I was in the NRCS, USDA, we required a minimum depth of 12 ft. as in Central Texas the average evaporation rate was set at about 9-10 ft. per year. And soil type, geology, and size of the watershed had to qualify as well.

In retirement here, I spent nine recent years on the Guadalupe River Basin & Bays Committee and served on a Water Committee for our 2050 Plan. Over and over, I heard comments like “Why don’t we just build some more dams?” Where? There are few to none good dam sites left in Texas and with our high evaporation rate, extended major droughts, and a climate that is worsening, those lakes would be of no real value to water supply or to our Texas rivers and Gulf for sure. Our bays and estuaries depend upon ample fresh water flows to avoid high salinity, which hurts fish, shrimp, and shellfish production, which is a multi-million dollar industry for Texas.

The early Aquifer Storage & Recovery (ASR) we have was by far a better water storage plan. We need to tackle serious water conservation and wise, well-planned growth if we are to be a sustainable community and county. The Hill Country is very blessed, but not with an excess of water.

Mike Mecke  
Natural Resources Mgr. and Water Specialist-Retired

Letter to Editor, Kerrville Daily Times, June 22, 2023  
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From Patricia Poore, PGARP volunteer

It is a delightful experience to walk through a pocket prairie in an urban setting on a sunny June day!!!

Anna Neal, Josephine Street in Kerrville, has created an eye-appealing beautiful spot for pollinators. Her corner lot gives neighbors and those driving by an eyeful of Hill Country native plants at their peak.

On June 15 a Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program team recognized Anna as our newest Pollinator Champion!

Anna and her husband moved to Kerrville from Seguin four years ago. As an experienced vegetable gardener, she has transferred that green thumb to understanding native plants and particularly mixing them with wildflowers.

Her philosophy about native plants is “if“it grows here, I want it.” She not only plants her plants with TLC, she learns about them as they become a part of her backyard habitat, her pocket prairie, or the existing landscape beds surrounding their 1940s home.

We thank Anna for demonstrating once again that yard-by-yard, garden-by-garden, our native plants can become habitats for pollinators, revitalize our land, and present beauty to the eye of the beholder.



The Fredericksburg chapter monthly meeting on July 25 will be at St. Joseph's Halle (212 San Antonio St.). Social time begins at 6:30 and the meeting starts at 7:00. The public is invited to attend in person and via Zoom. Deedy Wright will speak on reestablishing the native Texas ecosystem.

More information can be found online at <https://npsot.org/chapters/fredericksburg/>.

# UGRA 20TH ANNUAL

# River Cleanup

## 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](http://www.ugra.org) (scan QR code above)  
Or call (830) 896-5445**



*Let's Keep OUR River Clean!*



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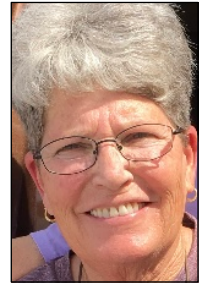
# TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER CLASS OF 2023

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**August 16, 2023 – November 11, 2023**

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**VICKI ANDREWS.** I have spent the last 40+ years living in and around the San Antonio area, and now live in Spring Branch. I grew up in NW Pennsylvania and spent most of my time basically living in the woods and taking afternoon naps high up in the trees! I guess it would just be normal that my greatest loves are the outdoors and nature. I can't wait to be able to study and learn so much more by taking this class.



**NANCY COLE.** We moved to the beautiful Hill Country in 2019 after 32 years in Cypress, TX. I've been married for 35 years and have three grown boys, a dog Charlie, and a new daughter-in-law. We love to camp and have been camping and boating in the Texas Hill Country for decades. I graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in Finance and worked for 10 years in banking before we had children, when I moved to part-time accounting for a family law firm and raised our boys. I enjoy reading, hiking, cooking, pickleball, tennis, kayaking and boating. We spend a great deal of time outdoors in nature and I want to know all I can about the native environment which we love! I'm looking forward to all I will learn in TMN about the native environment of this beautiful area, as well as connecting with people who are passionate about it.



**KATIE COLLINS.** My name is Katie Collins, and I am a land steward at ROAM Ranch, a multispecies regenerative ranch located in Fredericksburg where we raise bison, turkeys, ducks, geese, and honeybees in a holistic setting that mimics the intricate relationships found in nature. We have been working with this land for six years now and have loved every minute of it. As a family we do a ton of exploring, arrowhead and chert hunting, hiking, trail running, and biking. I love all things health and wellness - especially as it relates to food. When not working on the ranch or interacting with nature, my husband and I work on our regenerative meat company called Force of Nature.

**TAYLOR COLLINS.** I am super excited to be a part of the 2023 TMN Hill Country Cohort! I am a land steward on a multispecies regenerative ranch located in Fredericksburg TX. At ROAM Ranch, we raise bison, turkeys, ducks, geese, honeybees in a holistic setting that mimics the intricate relationships found in nature. My family moved out to this area from Austin around six years ago and we enjoy hiking, exploring, and trail running. When not working on the ranch or interacting with nature, my wife and I work on our regenerative meat company called Force of Nature.



**GORDON DOWNEY.** Born in Germany to American military parents, my early years were spent in Kansas and Virginia. Moved to San Antonio at age nine. B.S. in Biology from Trinity University. Medical school in Dallas on a military scholarship. Married my wife of 51 years. OB / Gyn residency in Hawaii. Military medical career of 21 years with assignments in Hawaii, Germany, San Antonio, fellowship in Gynecologic Oncology in Minnesota, with retirement from the Army in Washington state. Established a 25-year practice in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There, I trained residents and medical students in Gyn cancer care. Second retirement in 2017 and moved back to a family ranch west of Blanco. Interested in travel and wine. We continue to explore our Texas environment.

*Class of 2023 continued next page*



**DIERDRE DUCHENE.** I was born in Anchorage, AK but grew up in South, East and Central Texas. I resided in Dallas for 30 years, working at Trammell Crow Company, prior to forming a hospitality interior design firm. After selling my company, we moved to Colorado for my husband's work, learning just how short the Rocky Mountain growing season is, not to mention those insatiably hungry giant mule deer and pesky elk. It was time to retire to Texas. I always loved the Hill Country and with my dream to own raw land and restore it to its natural and best use, we bought land north of Fredericksburg in 2015. We placed the property under a wildlife plan allowing recovery from years of overgrazing. We erected fences, put in infrastructure, a rainwater system, and built our home, moving in two years ago. We have planted trees and a pollinator garden, learning the true meaning of "deer resistant" plants. We recently completed high fencing a garden plot and a fenced orchard. I look forward to learning more about sustainable land management and I am excited to be a part of the 2023 TMN class!

**CHIP FLY.** I grew up in Uvalde, and attended many family reunions at Utopia, where D'nese and I now live since my retirement in 2018 from EOG Resources in New Mexico. I graduated from UT Austin with undergraduate degrees in Biology and Geology, and a Master's in Geology. The majority of my professional career was in petroleum geology, but there were also intervals that included environmental geology, groundwater management, cattle ranching and retail store ownership. We are privileged to enjoy living in the Hill Country, which provides the opportunity to observe and study the many local birds, trees, grasses, sedges, and other plants and animals, and of course, the topography and geology. We also have some property near Lost Maples State Natural Area, so I have participated in numerous volunteer events there. My intent for TMN training is to increase and share my knowledge of the natural resources and wonders of the Hill Country.



**MARY ALICE HENDRICKS.** I have lived in Lakehills with my husband and son since June 2022. I grew up in Portland, Oregon. I have a BA in German Literature and a minor in music, and an MPA in International Economics from the Monterey Institute of International Studies. My work has included proofreading and editing for an electric utility, providing program support and site visits for grant recipients in Kenya and other developing countries, and grant and contract compliance for Indian tribes in Washington state. I was the executive director of a youth orchestra and a private cello teacher for many years. For the previous 20 years, I have been in San Diego working as a freelance cellist for the symphony,

weddings, parties, churches, mariachi gigs, and even a few rock concerts. We have 12 acres here in Lakehills with such interesting variation, and I am so excited to learn how to help our land be a sustainable home to all the native flora and fauna it can support. I am also really looking forward to working on so many of the TMN projects and to being a knowledgeable, encouraging resource for children and adults, to help them see how important it is that we work together with nature to help our planet thrive.

**LUCY CRUZ HUDSON.** I live in Boerne and have lived in many different parts of the US. My husband and I fell in love with the Hill Country and, upon retirement, moved here from South Texas. I love volunteering, learning, and giving back to my community. Volunteerism was instilled in me at a very young age. I spent many trips with my grandparents, traveling, spending time with, and providing goods to families and orphaned children. I have been a volunteer firefighter with the Bergheim VFD for over three yrs. I am an Engineer and currently the Public Information Officer. I continue being involved with Parks Youth Ranch in Richmond, whose mission is to provide emergency shelter, counseling, and life-changing service to abused and neglected youth. I am incredibly proud to be a part of these two service organizations. I am excited to begin learning and becoming a Texas Master Naturalist. I look forward to being a part of the Texas Master Naturalist program and its vital role in preserving the ecological integrity of Texas. I'm attracted to this program's dedicated volunteers, armed with knowledge, passion, and a deep love for nature, as guardians of Texas's natural heritage.



*Class of 2023 continued next page*





**LOU HUGMAN.** I was born in Indiana and moved to several states, ending back in Indiana for high school. I graduated from Trinity University with a biology degree. After working in cancer research at MDAnderson, I received my Master's degree in biomedical research at UTHSC and met my future husband who was a medical student at Baylor College of Medicine. We moved to Nacogdoches after his Family Medicine residency. For 29 years I was his office manager and was involved in Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and coaching youth soccer. When my son and daughter moved onto college, I was on the Friends of the Visual Arts board at SFASU. I have enjoyed backpacking, hiking, canoeing in the boundary waters of Minnesota, and sailing in the BVI. I am a big fan of ESPN. I also loved my azaleas, gardenias, and tall trees in Nacogdoches. My husband passed away unexpectedly in 2015. I moved to Boerne in 2021. My son and his family live in San Antonio. My daughter lives in DC. I had the good fortune to move across the street from Kathy Webster, the Native Plant Lady. I am excited to meet everyone and start this new adventure.

**ALLEN JEHL.** I currently live in Bandera with my wife Randi, our dog Butter, a red footed tortoise, chickens, and turkeys. I was born and raised in Houston where I was a Boy Scout, went camping all the time, and received my Eagle Scout. I met my Randi in Dallas (after I went to school at UT Dallas) and we moved to Bandera to be closer to family, who through sheer coincidence, live in Bandera and outside San Antonio. Randi joined the TMN Program last year and loved it, but my schedule didn't work out. Now I've got time to join and I'm excited. I love taking wildlife photos, specifically birds, and I'm especially interested in understanding how to undo the damage done by invasive species and animals.



**SELINA KEETON.** I have a love of places and things outdoors and am an advocate for life-long learning. Although my parents are Texas natives of San Antonio, I did not grow up in Texas. I do, no less, consider myself an Austin refugee, having escaped last summer. Originally, I'm from the Pacific Northwest and came to Kerrville by way of Austin. I have a Bachelor's in Marine Environments/Water Quality which led to 15-or-so years' work on boats/ships in Alaskan fisheries, with a brief period in the Gulf of Mexico oil fields – biologist/deckhand/cook. A bit of travel provoked me to shift gears and taught for 18-or-so years. Teaching English as a foreign language and/or adult education, I've lived and worked in South Korea, Thailand, Equatorial New Guinea, Qatar, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and the U.S. Now I'm working in the receiving department of a hardware store. I look forward to this naturalist class. Hope to be better informed and more familiar with the ecology, the flora and fauna of the place where I live, Central Texas.

**SANDI KENNEDY.** I live in the hills north of Kerrville. I am a native of the Hill Country; both my paternal and maternal grandparents were ranchers. I have always had a relationship with the land and plants, having grown up on a ranch, and now that I am retired from a career in telephony I spend time introducing native plants into my landscape and encouraging everyone to "go native." One of my greatest accomplishments is successfully growing some of the more uncommon trees and plants such as Texas Madrone, Rusty Blackhaw, and Sycamore-Leaf Snow Bell. I am a member of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the Kerrville chapter of the NPSOT, and past vice president of the Fredericksburg chapter. I am currently volunteering with PGARP. There is always something new to learn. I like to RV and spend part of my time in the Big Bend area in Marathon and the mountains in Cloudcroft. I completed the Master Naturalist training with the Alamo Chapter in San Antonio and recently transferred to the Hill Country Chapter. I am looking forward to auditing the classes and meeting new members with like interests.





**LAURA LEVY.** Little did I know that a single bird walk at Lost Maples would be life changing. Initially, the challenge was to capture birds in my \$20 binoculars. As I stalked the birds, their diverse colors, behaviors and personalities captured my heart. Then I started photographing the birds so I could identify them long after they had flown. On 'slow' bird days, butterflies, dragonflies, and plants filled in the gaps. Every walk is a treasure hunt where the more I look, the more I find. I now lead those walks at Lost Maples and love sharing one of my favorite places on Earth with others. Life is just a walk in the park – often with homework. Learning more about my discoveries is part of the fun. TMN will give me the bigger picture. I have a wide range of interests, followed a non-traditional career path, and moved around some but most of my years, and all my heart, is in Texas.

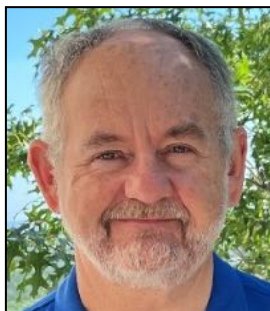
**JULIE LEWIS.** I have been married to Tom Lewis for 41 years! We moved to Kerrville in 2016 from Houston where we lived and raised our two daughters, Hillary and Emily. They attended summer camp in Hunt, so Kerrville has been a special place for our family since 1994. Tom and I are so happy to finally call Kerrville “Home!” Since moving here; I have volunteered with a variety of local organizations. From 2017-2020; I volunteered as an ESL instructor with Families & Literacy. I enjoy helping out at the Kerrville Convention and Visitors Bureau and participate in various community events sponsored by Sisters in Service Kerrville. I am a certified Hill Country Master Gardener; having completed the training course in 2022. Now I am enjoying the benefit of growing native plants at my own home and am in the process of planting a pollinator garden in my backyard. When I'm not gardening; Tom and I enjoy road trips with our dog, Millie. Santa Fe has become an annual trip; we recently added Marfa and Fort Davis. I enjoy being outdoors so I am eager to explore new areas during this TMN training class.



**SUSAN LILJESTRAND.** I have been a lover of nature my entire life. My favorite classes in school were Earth Sciences and Biology. I graduated from college with a BA degree in biology. I loved learning about animal behavior and how different species relate and interact with one another within their ecosystems, but I discovered during graduate school that research biology was not for me. My life took another path career-wise, but I have never lost my love of the natural world and am trying to discover the best ways that we humans can be a part of the ecosystem without compromising or destroying it. I have lived in the Texas Hill Country for the past 22 years, and in Kerrville for almost nine of those. I'm excited to be part of the next class of Hill Country Master Naturalists!

**KARLA MARCHELL.** I grew up in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where I met Kirk, a fellow geological engineering student at the University of North Dakota. After graduation we married and moved to Houston to work in the oil industry and spent our entire careers there. I worked as a reservoir engineer for Exxon and, later, for smaller companies. I also took some years off to focus on our three children and volunteer as a Girl Scout troop leader. I play cello and served for 22 years as treasurer for Symphony North, a Houston-area community orchestra. In 2015, Kirk and I purchased 30 acres of unimproved ranch land near Boerne. Early on, we took a TPWD course in wildlife management that inspired us to wander the property looking for native plants and setting up cameras, water guzzlers, and bird feeders to monitor wildlife. Our Boerne home was completed in fall 2022 and we both retired and made the big move. We have been taking NPSOT's native landscaping courses and enjoyed putting that knowledge to use in our recent landscaping. I'm looking forward to starting the TMN program and meeting other people who also enjoy learning about nature.





**KIRK MARCHELL.** My wife Karla and I live on a 30-acre ranch north of Boerne that we purchased in 2015. I retired in 2017 after 35 years working as a petroleum engineer for ExxonMobil. We just finished our retirement home at the end of last year and are enjoying life in the Hill Country after almost 41 years in the Houston area. Our ranch was a severely over-grazed “moonscape” when we purchased it and we have been working to restore it by planting native grasses and wildflowers, removing cedar from under the drip line of other trees, thinning re-growth cedar, and putting enclosures around trees and shrubs subject to deer browse. We are happy with the progress that has been made but realize we still have a long way to go. Now that we are living on the property, we hope to do additional plantings to increase the diversity of plant life on the property. We will also be adding bird boxes and more brush piles to improve the habitat for the birds and other indigenous wildlife that we enjoy watching. We are both looking forward to meeting other people with similar interests and applying all the knowledge gained in the Master Naturalist program on our property and to help others.

**SUSIE McCALLA.** I was born and raised in Texas, but moved a lot within the state and even lived in Chicago. I went to the University of Texas at Austin, graduating with a commission as a Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps and with a BA in History. I hold MAs in both Psychology, Guidance and Counseling and English. I spent 26 years on active and reserve duty in the Marine Corps and had an overlapping career as a high school teacher and counselor that spanned a bit over 20 years. My husband and I have three children and four grandchildren. I have always had an interest in the natural world and have been reading and studying environmental science since I was in my 20s, just on my own.



My husband and I love to camp and hike. We have completed the 500+ miles walking on the Camino Frances of the Camino de Santiago in Spain in 2019 and 2021. We have lived on 11 acres of land east of Kerrville for 30 years. I am interested in the Master Naturalist program both because I want to volunteer to help others, and because I want to learn more about taking good care of our land.



**MICHAEL McCREA .** I've lived in three Texas cities, but have spent the majority of my time living in or near the country. My earliest memories of the outdoors are in west and far-west Texas, with its unique flora and fauna. I did some hunting and rafting, but mostly hiking—being urged by my father to touch and smell (and sometimes taste), what I was seeing and hearing. By the time of high school, I was spending a lot of time in the Utopia/Vanderpool/Medina area; ultimately deciding (after business school, law school and several careers) to live in Fredericksburg for quick and easy access to my favorite part of Texas. In 2022, I purchased land near Lost Maples State Natural Area that has unique flora (and too many of the wrong kinds of fauna!). There is, perhaps, a whole lot more to the story of my life, including as it relates to this special part of Texas I want to help preserve, but I'll save that for another time. I am thankful for the TMN program and sure hope I can contribute in some small way.

**MARK MOLDRAWSKI.** I grew up in the Chicago area and attended two Indiana Universities, achieving degrees in Biology and Chemistry. My early career involved projects at university research laboratories. Later I obtained a license in Medical Technology and relocated to Texas to be where I belonged. My later career was in hospital laboratories until I recently retired to the Hill Country. A vocation spent indoors caused me to seek out nature via camping, hiking, canoeing, caving, mountaineering, stargazing, etc. My wife and I own a home on a few acres in Gillespie county. This master naturalist class will help me to steward our land and give something back to Texas.







**RAE RAIFORD.** I was born and raised in the military and I lived up and down the east coast (from Canada to Cuba - my dad was a Marine). I have a BS in Education from Southwest Texas State University. When I married my husband over 30 years ago, I moved into my grandmother's house in Center Point I have four grown children. I am a retired science teacher/coach and taught for 30 years, most of my time at the in the middle school level. I taught chemistry, physics, earth, life, and space sciences. I became a Hill County Master Gardener in 2021 and certified in advanced training for TX Superstar plants and Vegetable Gardening this year. I volunteer time at several gardens in Kerrville and serve on the education, mentoring, and executive committees in the HCMG program.

**PHIL ROBERSON.** Following five years of service as an Infantry officer during the Viet Nam era, I began a career of service to children, families, and communities. Examples are ownership of an early care and education program in Oklahoma, establishment of a community-based family resource center in Nebraska, leadership of an innovative campus-based early childhood laboratory school at a Utah university, service to and leadership of a state-level teacher education program in Tennessee, service on two national teacher education boards, and establishment of a public school-based literacy tutoring program for struggling readers in Laredo. As an entrepreneur initially, and as a university professor thereafter, I sought to model high professional standards and service to the community. I hold a doctorate from Oklahoma State University. I have three children, seven grandchildren, and two stepdaughters, who live much too far away in Dallas, Nashville, Santa Fe, Miami, and Portland. Since retiring to Kerrville in 2019, my wife and I have focused our energies on our three-acre property, adding scores of trees, vines, and pollinators. Hopeful for rain, we have recently added a rainwater harvesting system. Having completed the Master Gardener program, I look forward to participation in the Texas Master Naturalist program.



**BARBARA ROMANO.** I was born in Fredericksburg and grew up in San Antonio. As active duty Air Force and later in civil service, I have lived in several states and countries. Now, I am happily retired from both military and civil service and am grateful to finally settle in one place. My husband and I currently reside on 20 acres that I inherited from my parents. A few years ago, we invited the LMAP team to survey our property, and that experience ignited a fascination with our diverse native Texas wildlife. I am eagerly looking forward to expanding my knowledge about our wonderful state and sharing it with others.

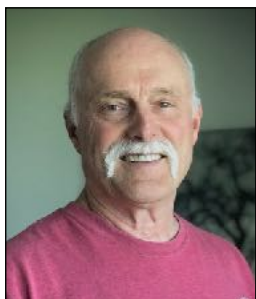


**AIMEE TENNANT.** After spending my childhood traveling around the country with my military family, I ended up in Austin when it was time for me to go to college. So, I enrolled at the University of Texas, graduated with a degree in Biology, and spent my next 40+ years in Austin. I spent these years getting married, raising children, and exploring the central Texas area. After the kids were grown and gone, I returned to school, earned an advanced degree, and dabbled in the academic life, teaching at both Texas State University in San Marcos and Huston-Tillotson University in Austin. In 2020, my husband and I moved to Ingram, joining my mother, sister, and brother and their families who were already settled here. Last year, I went through the Master Gardener training and am currently spending time learning how to grow things in my deer-infested neighborhood. I am also enjoying hiking and camping in the many state parks in the area. I am eagerly anticipating the Master Naturalist training and look forward to learning more about this beautiful area.

**DENISE & DENNIS THIELE.** Dennis grew up in this area, worked for 30 years and retired, then moved back to the area. Denise grew up in the Houston area, retired, and now we live in tis area. We are taking the class to be good stewards to the acreage we maintain.



*Class of 2023 continued next page*



**GRANT THOMPSON.** I grew up in a military family and have lived in many areas of this country. Most of my adult life was spent in Southern California. I spent much of my leisure time exploring the mountains and deserts of the southwest. It was my interest in mountain climbing and landscape photography that drew me to these environments. Now retired, I landed in the Hill Country, which is home to generations of my ancestors and current extended family. Although I've had a fairly intimate knowledge of the desert Southwest, I have much to learn about my current home, and Texas in general. The Master Naturalist class is a great place to start, and I'm looking forward to it.

**RANDEE THOMPSON.** I remember as a child that running felt like flying. I remember walking in the rain, turning my face to the sky, and not caring if I got wet. During the summer, the soles of my feet would become like leather from running around barefoot. My mother always had to call me twice because there was one more leaf/rock/bug to see before coming in. Outside was where I wanted to be. I still feel that way about nature, but now I walk more than run, and there are insoles in my shoes. There is a hat on my head and SPF60 on my face. Long sleeves protect my vintage arms from giving away how many years they've been around. My husband and I begin and end most days on our back porch, in our rocking chairs greeting the sun, the trees and the birds. We end most days in the same place. I'm excited to be taking the Master Naturalist class and learning all I can about what I see, smell, touch, and enjoy about the land, the creatures, the plants, and trees and around us. I look forward to volunteering at natural areas in the Hill Country, and to sharing information I've learned with others in the hope that I can pass along my knowledge and my joy.



**CARL THORNE-THOMSEN.** I was fortunate to be able to experience the wilderness growing up – at least once every month – as part of the Boy Scouts, camping on different troop member's ranches across Texas. My dream was someday to have a ranch I could call my own, and in 2019 my parents (father, Fletcher, also in this 2023 new member class) and I purchased a rugged wilderness ranch near Leakey. With time out on the land, and through learning about the plants, trees, wildlife, and watershed, I grew a deeper love for how it all works together, and decided I wanted to learn how to be the best land steward I could be. In the last few years I've read as many books as I could on land stewardship in the Hill Country, and knew I had to join TMN after learning about the

organization from an incredibly helpful LMAP site visit in 2021. (Thanks to Billy, Sharon and Ron for your guidance!) I'm excited to learn from and collaborate with everyone in the organization, and for the chance to volunteer out in the field.

**FLETCHER THORNE-THOMSEN.** I believe that there are only two places to live, the center of a big city and in a wilderness. My wife, son (who is also in this Texas Master Naturalist class), daughter, and I bought a ranch in Real County. And we bought a real wilderness. It had no man-made structures except a small lean-to and two deer blinds. Except for a place to stay we have made no other "improvements" other than several miles of simple hiking trails. Lately we discovered what we think is part of an old growth cedar forest with Golden Cheek Warblers! Since buying the property I have become concerned about King Ranch grass (Known by some as K R Bluestem which is a terrible name for a terrible grass) and have a goal of replacing this grass with native grass. We became interested in the Texas Master Naturalist program when we learned about the Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP). Four truly exceptional land stewards came to our property and gave us an evaluation, an extensive education, and an exceptional report that we use frequently. One of the reasons I want to be a TMN is so that I can "pay it forward."





**DAVID TOUCHON.** Howdy! My name is David Touchon and I am somewhat “new” to the Hill Country although I had family that lived in the Boerne area for quite some time. I was raised in Dallas and attended Stephen F. Austin State University (Axe’m) in Nacogdoches. After graduation, I began my career in East Texas with the Houston ISD near Trinity. For the next six years I traveled the Midwest and East Coast gaining Outdoor Education experience, then returned to Possum Kingdom Lake to share my experience and kick start the Outdoor Education Program for 132 schools from the Dallas/Fort Worth area and beyond! I enjoy fishing, hunting, leaf collecting and gardening. I work with the Cibolo

Center for Conservation as the Land Steward which allows me to work closely with the land and I am constantly pushing for more human interaction within the growing Urban interface. My wife and I live in Boerne with my stepdaughter. I am looking forward to the upcoming Master Naturalist class and have known about the Master Naturalist program for a long time. I would like to expand my knowledge base of the natural world and meet some great people.



Lost Maples State Natural Area in Vanderpool is hosting a Night Sky Fest, including a star party, on Saturday evening, August 12. ***Volunteers are needed.*** Come help us hand out Dark Sky information to park visitors, assist with informational booths and children’s activities, and help with the set up for the star party. The San Antonio Astronomy Club will be setting up telescopes for viewing three Perseid meteor showers after dark.

Volunteers are generally needed from about 5 pm to about 10 pm, As always, ***park admission for volunteers is free.*** For more information or to sign up, contact Greg Walton of the Friends of Lost Maples at [gregwalton12345@gmail.com](mailto:gregwalton12345@gmail.com), or simply show up to help the evening of August 12<sup>th</sup>. Please note: the park has no cell service, and the nearest gas is in Vanderpool and Hunt. See you here!





## The View from Rusty Bend



*Fire above, firewheel below*

### Lineage

After Marjorie Saiser

If I carry my father  
I hope it's more than  
the grey-green of my eyes.

or the vein-rich map of galaxies  
on the back of my hands.  
If I carry him, I hope it shows in patience—

teaching a child to fish with a cane pole,  
threading a writhing worm.  
If I carry my father, I wish for his stamina

to learn and keep learning,  
his bounteous curiosity about the world.  
May his hand guide mine to coax

more tomatoes from the garden, to throw  
more prairie grass seeds  
if we ever get a wet year.

If I carry him, may it remind me  
to own my mistakes,  
apologize in a way that sticks.

If he lives in me, may I study those breakfasts  
at the café, young men strutting opinion  
around him, much coffee. May I listen as he did.

If I carry my father, let it show  
in turning a conversation toward tolerance,  
that way he could correct without a sting.

*continued on next page*

My father would appreciate this June at Rusty Bend as a study in bird behavior. We can hardly pry ourselves away from the window, there is so much to see. As nesting and courtship continue, the males get fancy with their protective skills. The male Painted Bunting stands guard while his mate inhales the white millet seed. He looks back and forth, back and forth scanning the sky for danger. He doesn't eat until she's done and tucked in the bushes.

The fledglings are learning how to be "big" birds. Lots of failed attempts to land with a bit of grace, to decipher how to bathe, sharpen their beaks, find food. We watch them testing then jumping back. A wasp that stings, a moth that tastes bad, a worm too hairy. Is this edible? Am I?

We see five young Scissortail Fly-catchers balance on a fence wire, rocking, tipping, their blunt tails as awkward as a baby's first steps. They lose their grip, and spin like a game of foosball.

The young ravens are noisy. We call them the Ravenettes. Craw, craw, craw they persevere, begging to be fed like when they were in the nest. The adults perch nearby to keep an eye on these rowdy ones, but turn their heads away. It goes on for hours. Feed me, feed me.

The immature Summer Tanager is a designers dream— sporting saffron and gold and crimson feathers. He is practicing his pit-ta-tuk song. Tanagers come in at 5PM each day for a bath.

We hear Yellow-billed Cuckoos down in the river making their rain-crow sound kowp-kowp-kowp. Then, as if answering another cuckoo, from the pasture we hear the roadrunner singing his sad puppy whine, a down-slurred coo-coo-coo-coooooo.

As I listen to roadrunner, I remember my father sharing his favorite story. It deserves an entire chapter in our bird behavior book. It's a hot summer day in the Texas Hill Country. Flap, splash, flap. What's that racket? Peering over the edge of a deep limestone cistern, he finds a roadrunner sodden, drowning. More splashing, the bird is weakening. Quick, my dad grabs a 2X6, a long one. He leans a ramp for the wet bird to climb. Which he does, waddling drunkenly up, trailing wet Xs on the board.

At the top, eye to eye with his rescuer, roadrunner manages a massive shake. My father stands still as stone. Slow, slow, keeping a careful, colorful eye on this human, the roadrunner strips each feather, one by one, skin to end. Squeezes every drop till dry. For 40 minutes a "thank you" hangs in the air. My father barely breathes. He follows every move. Memorizes this odd communion. Bird and man, countrymen, paisanos.



Paisano, roadrunner

Image credit: Andy Robinson

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 (GBNRC) at 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Doors open at 6:00 PM for socializing. Business Meeting begins at 6:30 PM. Advanced Training session is 7:10-8:10 PM.

### ***Board of Directors 2023***

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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  
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The opinions expressed are those of the authors and editor.

