

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter

September 2023 Volume 20 Number 9



*Dawn on the Guadalupe, Fall 2023
photo by Vern Crawford*



The September Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on September 25. Doors open at 6pm for socializing. The business meeting begins at 6:30 and the presentation by Brad Roeder, Ag and Natural Resource Agent at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Gillespie County will begin at 7:10. His talk will focus on managing small acreage for livestock or wildlife through a drought.

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 with information about joining the meeting and can log into Zoom at 6pm on September 25.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE....JEFF SCHWARZ

As you're reading this in late September, I hope that we've all seen some relief from the drought that is approaching two years in length. Our dry and withered plants remind us about it every time we go outside. Even my Frostweed is near death.

The animals are suffering, too. As if I needed another reminder of that besides the skinny doe eating everything, I got one in the mail from Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Kendalia (wildlife-rescue.org, 335 Old Blanco Road, Kendalia, 78006; 830-336-2725) soliciting donations to help feed and treat the hundreds of suffering animals brought to them this year. Their mission statement says it well..."To rescue, rehabilitate, and release native wildlife and to provide sanctuary, individualized care, and a voice for other animals in need", but they have a lot more mouths to feed and injuries to treat than usual.

If you have the inclination to help our friends in nature who take on the task of rescuing and rehabilitating our furry and feathered friends, reach out to Wildlife Rescue or one of these other organizations in our area (some are limited to dogs and cats, but they're people, too!):

Animal Welfare Society of Bandera County, 830-751-2595, 535 Liebold Ranch Rd., Pipe Creek, 78063.

TPWD – Wildlife Rehab in Kerr County. Contact: Katie Buck, Ingram.
830-367-7812 (5pm - 8pm) or 830-739-1363 (9am-8pm) or katiesbabies@icloud.com.
Small mammals, fawns (not deer fawns), birds, raptors, reptiles & amphibians.

Freeman-Fritts Vet Clinic & Animal Shelter, freemanfritts.com, 515 Spur Rd, Fredericksburg.

Hill Country Animal League, hcaltx.org, 830-249-2341, 924 N. Main, Boerne, 78006.

Additional local groups may be found on the internet.

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You probably are already helping out in your backyard by providing a water bowl or water guzzler or hanging another bird feeder. The hummingbirds will be passing back south soon, too, so get those sugar-water feeders cleaned and ready to go! Not to challenge you or anything, but I know one lady outside of Boerne who hangs 42 feeders!

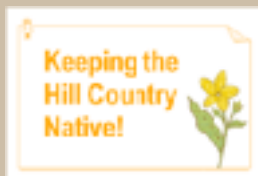
Also, this link to the Wildlife Center of Texas near Houston provides some good info on how to help birds, squirrels, racoon, armadillo, opossum, butterflies and other insects in your yard:

<https://wildlifecenteroftexas.org/helping-drought-victims/>

This Month We Honor

Recertifications

Diana Adams, Richard Adams, Lee Booker, Tom Burke, Becky Etzler, Brenda Fest, Daniel Gallagher, Catherine Gauldin, Billy Guin, Jr., Robin Hale, Karen Ozer, Barbara Pankratz, Tara Randle, Anne Ryan, John Walker, Greg Walton, Maura Windlinger



Milestones

Patricia Poore, Lorraine Popp - 500 hours

Dot Maginot, 1000 hours

Congratulations to members who received awards at the August meeting.



Kathy Loring



Mark Hults and Jane Jamison



Trudy Eberhardt

Drought & Deluge Gardening Part 1, from Nancy Huffman

What can I say? To say it's been dry is an understatement. The first year we lived here it rained for six weeks straight, every day. It flooded several times that fall, stranding us in our house in Hunt. The next spring, the headwaters were gushing. It seems so distant now. So what can we do this year as native plant enthusiasts?

We are not recommending planting new plants now. We are in Stage 4 drought in Kerrville and burn bans are in effect. We usually have a Fall Plant Sale, but like last year we, along with Riverside Nature Center and the Hill Country Master Naturalists, are having the "Every Drop Counts" event on October 21, which will focus on water issues. There will be knowledgeable speakers so please mark your calendars now. At our NPSOT table there, we will be offering seeds for donations.

In the meantime, what can be done? Watering is limited. Maybe switching to gallon water jugs with a hole in the bottom can help keep some of those newly planted ones going but all of them are suffering no matter how long they have been in the ground. Don't cut your grass short and leave clippings as more water is retained with shaded, cooler soil.

Do plant trees in the fall, watering deeply on a regular schedule for several years. Plant them among Ashe Junipers. Consider surrounding them with brush as well as mulch to help shade the soil as well as a cage to protect them from deer. Group them together like they grow in nature. Plant undercover too. Plant acorns and other seeds if you have them! All of these strategies help to conserve water resources as well as your valuable plants. It is important to grow trees for our future.

It's also time to consider reducing and replacing dying lawns with native short grasses. They don't look good now either but are much more likely to survive. Maybe it is time to plan to replace some of that lawn with native pollinator gardens when we are able to replant. Replanting with highly drought resistant plants such as Texas sage, or Cenizo, is well advised. Have you noticed that it is in bloom now everywhere around town? Replanting with plants from the Trans-Pecos is also a good idea as our climate shifts that way. Look around and see what is doing well and consider more of that.

My yard has been solarized this year, not because of anything I have done, but just having been subjected to our relentless heat and lack of rain. The seed banks of natives will grow again when the rains return. As of now, there is a lot of ground showing. I will be sowing more wildflower seeds this year! Scratching up the ground and stomping them in helps to minimize birds feasting on them. Sow your wild seeds!

Here is an excerpt from Mr. Smarty Plants (Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center website) circa 2011.

Question: Due to the extreme drought and no rain in the near future in central Texas, would it be prudent to have a wildseed planting in October?"

Answer: "Prudent?? Interesting choice of words. There are no issues with having a wildseed planting in October, in fact, that is just the right time to go ahead and distribute seed. Seeds are a dormant form of the plant and it will not harm them at all to be distributed during a time of drought. On the other hand, your question implies that you sort of expect the planted seed to grow and produce a wildflower for you to enjoy next Spring. That is not necessarily so. The seeds need the right conditions, which include good rain, warming sun and maybe even a winter freeze to break them from their dormancy. If all the conditions are right, a goodly number of the seeds germinate and we will have a lovely wildflower Spring. If the conditions are not right, the majority of the seeds remain dormant and wait for the right conditions. Then we see another weak wildflower season."

Sow your wild seeds!

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Texas Tough Plants

It's easy to be discouraged with gardening after a summer of extreme heat (we hope it's over for a while) and an ongoing drought (we hope to somehow survive). Even though some of us may have not experienced these extremes before, Texas native plants have faced them many times in the past and have come through admirably.

As you crunch through your now brown and crispy ground covers and fondly remember your gardens of just a few months ago, take the time to look around your yard and try to spot some native plants that are not only surviving but actually thriving at this time. There are quite a few and if you planted wisely in the past and took good care of your soil, you may have a fairly good number of these tough survivors.

Some native plants are really tough, but there are also ways for us to help them out.

- It's best not to leave bare ground to prevent your soil from becoming dead, unproductive dirt.
- Mulch with shredded mulch that native bees can dig through. The mulch also protects roots from the heat, helps retain moisture, and decomposes to provide nutrients.
- Remember that native seeds can lie dormant for years waiting for just the right conditions to germinate so be as patient as they are.
- Leave the leaves. Don't shred or burn them. Leaves are the best mulch as they provide nutrients to the trees they fell from. Many butterflies and moths overwinter as adults or in their cocoons in leaf litter. And birds will scratch through the leaves looking for insects to feed their young in the spring.
- Avoid heavy pruning or pulling up plants "past their prime". The roots do add nutrients to the soil as they decompose and help aerate your soil.
- Think about reducing lawn which often requires an exorbitant amount of water and provides little to our pollinators. Avoid the temptation to replace lawn with rocks which add nothing to the health of your soil.
- Many native plants go dormant in drought or drop their leaves early. Do not give up on plants until they have a chance to recover this fall or next spring.

We've put together a list of some of the TEXAS TOUGH native plants that are in our yards. These are established plants that we do little for (no extra water, no fertilizer) and yet they're out there everyday doing their thing to prove that native plants are the way to go.

Trees:

- Eve's Necklace (*Styphnolobium affine*)
- Anagua (*Ehretia anagua*)
- Anacacho Orchid (*Bauhinia lunarioides*)
- Texas Persimmon (*Diospyros texana*)
- Prickly Ash (*Zanthoxylum hirsutum*)

Large shrubs/small trees:

- Agarita (*Mahonia trifoliolata*)
- Texas Barberry (*Mahonia swaseyi*)
- Flame Leaf Sumac (*Rhus lanceolata*)
- Cenizo (*Leucophyllum frutescens*)
- Evergreen Sumac (*Rhus virens*)
- Mexican Buckeye (*Ungnadia speciosa*)
- Wafer Ash (*Ptelea trifoliata*)
- Goldenball Lead Tree (*Leucaena retusa*)
- Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*)
- Texas Kidneywood (*Eysenhardtia texana*)
- Elbowbush (*Forestiera pubescens*)
- Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*)
- Texas Mountain Laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*)
- Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*)
- White Mistflower (*Ageratina havanensis*)

Small shrubs:

- Fragrant Mimosa (*Mimosa borealis*)
- Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*)
- Barbados Cherry (in the shade) (*Malpighia glabra*)
- Lindheimer's Senna (*Senna lindheimeriana*)
- Velvet-leaf Mallow (*Allowissadula holosericea*)
- Damianita (*Chysactinia Mexicana*)
- Black and Gregg's Daleas (*Dalea* spp.)
- Texas Lantana (*Lantana urticoides*)
- Fall Aster (*Symphotrichum oblongifolium*)
- Skeleton-leaf Goldeneye (*Vigulera stenoloba*)

Flowering plants:

- Flame Acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus*)
- Clammyweed (*Polanisia dodecandra*)
- Texas Betony (*Stachys coccinea*)
- Blackfoot Daisy (*Melampodium leucanthum*)
- Hill Country Penstemon (*Penstemon triflorus*)
- Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*)

Ground cover/vines:

- Alamo Vine (*Merremia dissecta*)
- Frog Fruit (*Phyla nodiflora*)
- Pearl Milkweed (*Matelea reticulata*)

Remember that plants may perform differently in different areas. We live in diverse areas of Kerr County and agree that these plants are amazing. Maybe you have other TEXAS TOUGH plants in your landscape. Please share your findings, and maybe we can all get back to doing what we do...grow native!



Angie Torres will be the speaker at the October 3 Boerne chapter meeting. Her topic will be "Mycology 101: All Mushrooms Are Magic." Announcements at 6:45 at the Cibolo Center for Conservation Auditorium; talk to follow.

Peggy Sechrist will be the speaker at St. Joseph's Halle on September 26 for the Fredericksburg chapter meeting. Her topic will be "Get the Dirt on Soil: Learn How Your Soil Can Hold More Water." Social time at 6:30; Business Meeting at 7:00, followed by the talk.

Michael Haines will be the speaker at the October 10 Kerrville chapter meeting at Riverside Nature Center. Business meeting at 1:30; speaker at 2. His topic will be "Oak Wilt and Ball Moss: Solutions and Misconceptions."

The Friends of Lost Maples

are seeking volunteers to help out in the park this fall. Come share your knowledge at the Visitor Information Table, talking to park visitors about Lost Maples' facilities and trails, plants and animals, geology, and human history.

We need volunteers mostly on weekends from mid-October thru November.

If you're interested, contact Greg Walton at gregwalton12345@gmail.com.

OR contact the park directly at 830-966-3413.

Silent Auction!

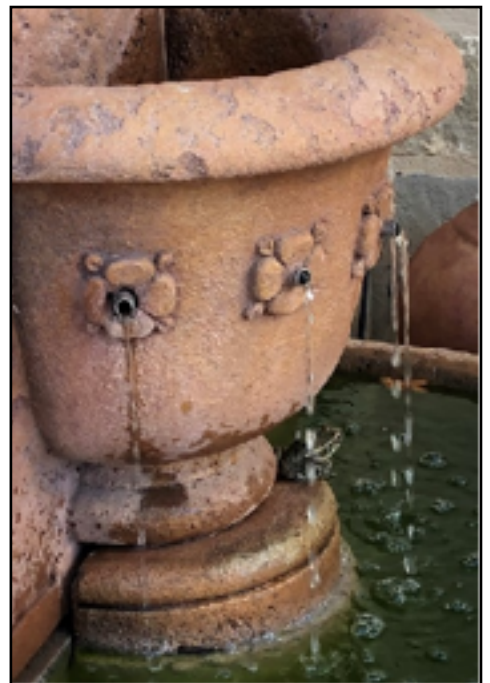
Katy Kappel, Alice King, and Carra Milikien are organizing the silent auction for this year's Member Appreciation Event on Saturday, December 9. Please consider donating items such as baked treats, hand-made items, art, native trees/plants, seeds, nature-themed clothing and jewelry, books, tickets to sports events/plays/musical events, etc. If you would like to solicit merchants for items let one of us know. We will coordinate so that we don't approach the same merchants multiple times. Please let Alice know if you have donations or have a plan to approach a merchant. Alice_king@att.net Thank you!

Pollinator Garden Recognition

On September 8, Mary Frushour and Donna Dutton visited the home of Patti and Billy Guin to verify that all the requirements for a recognized pollinator garden had been met and to present a garden plaque announcing that achievement. With well over 100 species of native trees, shrubs, grasses, perennials and annuals, the entire property provides nectar, pollen, nest sites, overwintering areas, and water for pollinators. But the crown jewel is the area at the back of the house, which was specifically designed as a pollinator garden.

The garden flanks a flagstone path and patio, which provides a view of the pasture outside the deer fence. A drip irrigation system on a timer has kept the plants green and healthy since their installation in May, despite the many triple digit days we have had. Shown in this view are Mealy Blue Sage, Salvia Greggii, Big Muhly, Texas Bluebells, Gregg's Mistflower, pink and white Gaura and Esperanza in the two large pots.

The surrounding lawn is Thunder Turf from Native American Seeds, and some space is left bare for our native ground nesting bees. Water features, including a birdbath and a fountain, provide water for birds, pollinators, and a resident leopard frog.



Wildlife Field Research – October 2023

Cibolo Center for Conservation

Wildlife Field Research is a weeklong event conducted every Spring and Fall on the Cibolo Center for Conservation's Cibolo Nature Center campus. During this research event, teams of community scientists combine their experience, knowledge, and enthusiasm to survey the Nature Center's current ecological state.

Community science engages people 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 decisions and how human behaviors impact our natural world. New participants are trained in the field by team leaders who provide instruction and guidance on how to conduct the surveys and record information.

Master Naturalists, college students, teenagers, parents with young kids, and other nature enthusiasts all participate in this weeklong event. Each person brings their own interests to the mix which creates a colorful and fun science community, where camaraderie and friendships are made that can last a lifetime.

Surveys to be held this season will look at: ants, amphibians, aquatic, butterfly, dragonfly & damselfly, prairie vegetation photo points, prairie vegetation survey, riparian woody plants, small mammal, reptiles, and water snakes.

When: Sunday, October 8 to Saturday, October 14

Address: 140 City Park Road, Boerne

Registration: https://www.givepulse.com/event/registerShifts/388326?shift_id=990720

Wildlife Field Research Bioblitz

Bioblitz is intended to fill in the gaps of species not included in our Wildlife Field Research formalized surveys. Participants are invited to submit observations of any critters or plants of interest that they find on either campus, Cibolo Nature Center or Herff Farm, at any time during the scheduled Wildlife Field Research event on October 8-14. Sign up with the project "Fall 2023 Cibolo Nature Center and Herff Farm Bioblitz" to record your observations!

This is an on-your-own type event.

Learning Through Nature Journaling

Nature Series Workshop – Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center



Nancy Huffman

Presenter: Nancy Huffman

When: Saturday, October 28, 2023
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon

Location: Tatsch House, Lady Bird
Johnson Municipal Park,
Fredericksburg, TX

**Approved for Two (2) Hours of
Texas Master Naturalist Advanced
Training Credit
AT23-064**

**Nature Journals and Pencils
Will be Provided**

Nature Journaling (or having a “nature notebook”) is a way to record what you notice in nature. It can help fine-tune your observation skills and can also be a way to practice mindfulness as well as helping you recognize things in nature that you are grateful for and enjoy observing. This unique workshop will be conducted by lifelong artist Nancy Huffman, who utilizes nature journaling as a tool for teaching and to facilitate deeper learning. From her years as an art teacher and environmental service volunteer, her personal journaling ranges from landscape sketchbooks to learning about native plants. Nancy will guide you through some simple exercises to get started so that you can jump right in and keep it a stress free and positive experience whether you are a citizen scientist, a student, or an aspiring artist. As part of the day’s activities, participants will visit the FFNC Pollinator Garden located immediately across from the Tatsch House. Nancy is a certified Texas Master Naturalist, President of the Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society, and Vice-President of the Hunt Garden Club.

The workshop will be held at the Tatsch House, located on the grounds of Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park on October 28, 2023, from 10:00 A.M. until 12:00 noon. **This facility is a small venue and has limited seating, so you will need to make your reservation early by emailing Gracie Waggener at gwaggener@flow-apps.com.**

Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center is a 501c(3) volunteer organization dedicated to education about and preservation of the natural resources of the Texas Hill Country. For more information about the organization and membership or volunteer opportunities, go to <https://fredericksburgnaturecenter.com/> or visit us on Facebook.

WELCOME

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

The View from Rusty Bend



Full Super Moonrise

Incantation to end the drought

Longing

makes a concentrate of hope, to be rescued
from this moisture-hoarding sun. I wait
in the stillness. I hold out my hand for rain,
imagine the storm, see shine on leaves,
watch the earth sponge, petrichor on the loose.

I hold deep and steadfast, vow to lose
time, to dry-hibernate, to rest as long
as it takes. To prepare a welcome for leaves,
bid farewell to the heat dome, rescue
foggy dreams. To follow a promise of rain
like firefly and vireo. They know to wait.

Drought teaches a long game of waiting,
then leaves behind a vast idea of rain—
sweet thunder loosed at last, our rescue.

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Ooof— this weather is a hard case. No rain, and such stunning heat, day after day. The only wealth we claim is the luxury of close attention. We watch with dismay, as each morning reveals a new brown tree. Are you dying? Or are you napping like the rest of us, early dormancy? Aestivation, they call it, a state of animal dormancy. Inactivity, a lower metabolic rate. Summer sleep. We can relate, our naptime gets longer and longer.

Still we wake early, take our pleasures where we can. Fill the feeders, top off the birdbaths. Check the camera to see who's coming to the little pond to drink. Deer, raccoon, and a treat—bobcat with her curving tail. One day we see a turkey wobbling in a persimmon tree. Such a weird silhouette, hanging on for dear life, eating the fruit that's been raising in the sun.

In the evening we watch for bats, listen for the squabbles on the river. The river hasn't flowed in a week. We make up nicknames, Gravel-lupe or Puddle-lupe. Gallows humor for such a sad sobering sight. The water table gently rises in my dreams.

One evening after the sun retires, we take cookies out in the pasture with visiting family. It's a tradition to sit and listen while we wait for a full moon to rise. The pasture smells like the straw it is. Only a few birds make themselves known. A big axis buck raises the hair on our necks. The females bark like a pack of dogs in the distance.

It is quiet and peaceful though. Calming as we wait. The wind stops. Native peoples called it the crack in the universe. They believed that noiseless moment to be one when the veil between us and the other world has thinned to a whisper. We imagine those that have gone before us to be close and savor the utter quiet.

Then we feel a breath of cool. The cicadas resume their clickety choir, the neighbor's sheep moan like a Greek chorus and the Canyon Wren cries his descending song. A tantalizing storm cloud hides the rising moon.



Bobcat at the pond

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 [Wingbeat Atlas — FlowerSong Press & Juventud Press](#)

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 (GBNRC) 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

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

Questions about our chapter?

Email Membership Director Dot Maginot
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.

