

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter

November 2023 Volume 20 Number 11



photo by Vern Crawford



The November Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, November 27. Doors open at 6pm for socializing. The business meeting begins at 6:30 and the presentation by Erin Davis, a Certified Arborist and Forester with the Texas A&M Forest Service, will begin at 7:00. She is based in Kerrville, covers a 12-county region, and primarily assists landowners and communities with oak wilt, land management, and tree care and health. The title of her talk will be "Common Tree Issues In The Hill Country."

Prior registration is required for attending the meeting/AT session. 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 November 27.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.... JEFF SCHWARZ

We're coming to a close of the year for the chapter; time for the process of filling the chapter board officer and director positions for 2024. The slate of officers listed below will be presented to the chapter for its approval at this month's chapter meeting. We will first take any other nominations from the floor; then will either vote or pass the slate of officers submitted by the nominating committee.

The slate of chapter officers submitted by the nominating committee:

President: Jeff Schwarz (I have volunteered for a second year)

Vice President: Alice King

Secretary: Lisa Flanagan

Treasurer: Dot Maginot (2023 Membership Director; interim Treasurer since 10/23)

The Director positions are appointed by the 2024 Chapter President. There are a few directors who are willing to stay over for a second year. I'm excited to see this as it ensures a smoother transition of the board with over half of the 2023 board members staying on for a second year. Plus we have some unfinished business from our 2023 priorities.

The gap that is yet to fill is the Membership Director. If you are interested in the position or in helping with the Membership duties (it would be best to have one or two assistants helping the director), please reach out to me at president@hillcountrytmn.org. Primary duties of the Membership Director are recruitment and rewards, but the official list looks more like this:

- Maintain a roster of all chapter members with pertinent contact information

- Manage the chapter's use of the TMN Volunteer Management System (VMS) for reporting Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours

- Supervise the VMS administrator's process for reviewing and approving hours logged by members

- Ensure all members are trained in the use of the VMS

- Ensure all member VMS profiles are up to date

- Publish names of members achieving certification and milestone awards

- Present awards at chapter meetings

continued on next page

Coordinate with training class director to manage training class application process
Coordinate with communication director and training class director to develop recruiting materials
Coordinate with communication director and officers to manage electronic communications to all chapter members (such as an email list like Google Groups)
Manage the chapter's mentor program in coordination with the training class director
Ensure that rosters with member contact information are not shared on public sites such as the chapter website or social media platform

Finally, here's my regular plug for posting your hours on VMS. We are ahead in the number of active members over 2022 and our hours are on track to be about the same as 2022. The last couple of months of the year have a tendency to slow down in Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours because of the holidays, however, so my plea is to enjoy the mild hill country winter in some volunteer activities and book those hours! Thanks in advance for answering the call!

From Mary Pearl Meuth, Texas Master Naturalist Program Assistant State Coordinator

Dear Texas Master Naturalists,

Welcome to a Season of Thanks! The Texas Master Naturalist Program is wrapping up its 25th anniversary year and to celebrate, we're launching our "Season of Thanks." Over the next months, we'll be highlighting TMN volunteer projects, service and accomplishments to close out 2023. We're inviting you to interact with our social media posts and share with us what you are most thankful for!

To get us started - we are thankful for you and the sense of service our Master Naturalists have! The TMN Program has become an active conservation force across Texas for 25 years, thanks to its passionate corps of members. Some impressive numbers from the past 25 years:

- To date, the Texas Master Naturalists have improved or stewarded **3,010 miles of trails** in their ecoregion and community.
- Master Naturalists have given over **6,787,000 service hours** in natural resource conservation, education, or stewardship since the program's inception.
- Over **6,628,000 Texans** have interacted with the conservation mission of the Texas Master Naturalist members, chapters and mission.

Share with us what you're thankful for by watching our social media channels for our Season of Thanks posts starting this month!

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistProgram>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/texasmasternaturalist/>

Or share your thoughts, reflections, and hopes for the 25th Anniversary of the Texas Master Naturalist Program through our Survey; see link below. These will be collected and shared in April of next year as part of our National Volunteer Month celebration in 2024!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/tmn25thanniversary>

We are thankful!

Michelle Haggerty and Mary Pearl Meuth

This Month We Honor

Recertifications

Jean Bodine, Jim Jones, Bridget Langdale, Lenore Langsdorf, Lorraine Popp,
Laurel Rhodes, Patricia Scoggins, Francine Wilson

Milestones

Bernard Warren - 250 hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Marylein Davies, Rachel Thompson - 1000 hours, Gold Dragonfly

Clark Williams - 2500 hours, Polished Silver Dragonfly

Virginia de Wolf - 4000 hours, U.S. Presidential Volunteer Service Award



Congratulations to members who received awards at the October meeting.



Lisa Marler



Patricia Higgins



Kathy Webster

Annual Membership Appreciation Event

Mark your calendar for **Saturday, December 9 from Noon to 3:00 p.m.**
The party is being held at the Texas A&M Agrilife Center in Fredericksburg.
The party is free. Hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Silent Auction: The committee (Carra Milikien, Katy Kappel, Alice King) has some very nice items so far such as Spurs tickets, books, art, and gift baskets. We are looking for contributions large and small of anything that a TMNist would enjoy such as native trees/plants, seeds, nature-themed clothing and jewelry, baked goods, and tickets to sports events/plays/musical events. If you plan to approach a merchant, please notify Alice (Alice_king@att.net). We will coordinate so that we don't approach the same merchants multiple times.

Raffle: The committee has a Nikon COOLPIX P1000 with camera bag to raffle at our party. This camera was purchased about three years ago by a member's spouse and has been used only a few times. Looks like it would sell for over \$700 on eBay. Tickets will be \$1 or 6 tickets for \$5; you must be present at the party to win.

The Class of 2023



The Class held their first meeting on August 16 and their commencement on November 11. Six members of the class also received their initial certifications at the commencement celebration.



Dennis Thiele, Denise Thiele, Barbara Romano, Rae Raiford, Mark Moldrawski, Gordon Downey

Reflections on Being a Member of The Class of 2023

by Susan Liljestrand

The Master Naturalist class has been like a flash flood of information in a short period of time! But even in that flood, I'm finding that important pieces of knowledge and wisdom are percolating through my brain to create a reservoir, so to speak.

When I began this journey, I came as one who has great concern about the viability of our natural resources. My whole life I've seen how we have caused tremendous damage to the environment because we've seen it as something "other" than us — something to be conquered or used — instead of seeing it as something we are part of — something valuable and precious.

I have also worried, in more recent years, that in our attempt to "fix" the damage we have done, we will unintentionally do more damage. The questions that I continue to ask myself are: When do we intervene and manage the environment, and when do we allow the earth to heal itself? If we are to be stewards or caretakers of the ecosystems we live in, how do we find a balance?

Our field trip experiences and the wonderful teachers we've had along the way have given me great insights into our changing climate, the need for biodiversity, and managing water, land, and wildlife resources, but I have a feeling I may never have all the answers to my questions. And maybe that's the point. As Master Naturalists, we remain engaged, we keep asking questions, we continue to seek balance, and we share with others our knowledge and wisdom about this precious world we are part of.

So glad I'm on this journey with you all.



The Boerne Chapter will host a Christmas Dinner at 6pm on Tuesday, December 5, in lieu of the speaker program.

Everyone is welcome to to enjoy this evening at Cibolo Nature Center with fellow "native plant and pollinator loving" friends. Just bring your favorite side-dish or dessert to share.

The Fredericksburg Chapter will resume regular meetings at St. Joseph's Halle on January 23, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. Visit the chapter's website, <https://npsot.org/chapters/fredericksburg>, for information about upcoming meetings and events.

The Kerrville Chapter will meet Tuesday, December 12 at Riverside Nature Center. Social time at 1; Elizabeth Tidwell will present "Predators and How They Are Beneficial To An Ecosystem" at 2.

Hill Country Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend and contribute to Board of Directors meetings.

The board meets at the Riverside Nature Center at 2:00 on the Monday of the chapter's monthly meeting.



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 throughout November.

**If you're interested, contact Greg Walton at Gregwalton12345@gmail.com
OR contact the park directly at 830-966-3413.**

From Deb Youngblood, Advanced Training Director

I have been a Master Naturalist since 2019. Lots of folks have talked about how great the Annual Meeting is and I thought about going a few times but did not make it until this year. It was not as awesome as everyone said it would be. It was better. Way better.

The rapid fire training sessions, back to back, were incredible. The speakers were people I had heard about but not had the privilege of hearing until then. Having dinner every night with fellow Master Naturalists from our own chapter as well as others was more than fun. We laughed a lot. There was also a big cavernous room where all sorts of displays were set up. Yes, I bought two more books. No, I did not need them. Scratch that. Of course, I needed them!

Laura King and I snuck away to go to the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. Oh, my. So beautiful! It has boardwalks that extend out over the estuary. We saw all sorts of birds but our hands down favorite were the Roseate Spoonbills. A group of about a dozen pinks were grooming and lazing in an area that was protected from wind and warmed gently by the morning sun. I think it would be safe to say that was fav for both of us.

There were lots of field trips that took us out to different locations in the Valley and up along the coast to the El Sauz Ranch. There is just no substitute for being out of doors with other Master Naturalists. It is so wonderful to be entrenched in curiosity and wonder; to marvel with others at the sites we saw. The eclipse was cool, but the birds, insects, and parks were even better.

I had an inkling that the Valley would be full of life, especially along the River and coast, but nothing compares to what is actually there. I am convinced you could go back there and spend months going from place to place. The folks from the local chapters were pretty darn great, too. They welcomed us with open arms and their excitement and pride at showing us around was evident.

So. If someone asks you next year, "Are you going to Annual Meeting?" I hope you will answer, "You betcha!"

The View from Rusty Bend



Cenizo, our barometer for rain

From ashes

You were a spry 55, Papa,
hauling water to the outmost edge
of a goat-nibbled field to pour

a solid start for little Cenizo
in this dry caliche soil. Now I know
why you picked this spot at the foot of a draw

Now I know you dreamt of
gathering extra rain so this
feathery silver-toned bush might survive

through droughts that
lasted years,
freezes that made trees explode.

Because now, from the ashes of neglect
your barometer bush rises—
no longer silver but a plum phoenix,

ten feet tall, hanging heavy
with a flock of purple blossoms
pungent with scent,

each bell-shaped bloom
clangorous with bees.
Now a 55-year-old bush—
pulsing with your dream.

continued on next page

October at Rusty Bend and I am tangled in feelings. Sorting out how to deal with all the trouble in the world, then grateful for the change in seasons and its delights, yet fervently weary of this drought.

The few rains have been welcome and released some fresh smells and morning songs. Spots of green soothe the spirit. Rain lilies detonate like fireworks. The trees and shrubs that dropped their leaves in early dormancy seem confused.

One morning we had a show of bats sipping dew from the roof just before dawn, their arabesques careful and deliberate. I stood amongst them quietly as they drank. They felt like a message.

I try to dip deeply into the feeling of fall's tentative arrival. A Lithuanian word, *rudenaja*, comes to mind. It means taking notice of the weather as autumn arrives. This is a time of signs, like when the sun has lost its bite, the way the shadows lengthen across the fields, the tawny color of the deer.

Rudenaja means seeing the bittersweet orange glow at the center of each cypress branch, a harbinger of fireside time to come. The stacks of firewood and a crock of kindling make me smile. Then I notice flame-leaf sumac exploding with color along the roadsides, the crunch underfoot, that wet-leaf smell, the rat-a-tat of acorns on the roof.

I love knowing that the deciduous trees feel the fading daylight and prepare for wintering. They quit the miracle of making life from the air and turn off the green engine of chlorophyll. The red, yellow, and orange pigments—right there but invisible before—come alive. I ponder this and can't help but see a path for me. Isn't every tree a metaphor? Each loss exposes what we are made of; beauty emerges from collapse.

So I work to welcome all the feelings during this tumultuous time. Perhaps I will braid them, over and under in this fine October light. Drought fatigue, *rudenaja* with its daily joys, compassion for those displaced and frightened, over and under, over and under, waiting for rain, for winter, searching for beauty in the breakdown.



Harvest moon, colors of fall

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 6:00 PM for socializing. Business Meeting begins at 6:30 PM. Advanced Training session is 7:00-8:10 PM.

Board of Directors 2023

President.....Jeff Schwarz
Vice President.....Kim Ort
Secretary.....Patti Guin
TreasurerRon Scoggins
Advanced Training DirectorDeb Youngblood
Class Training Director.....David Matthews
Communications Director.....Mark Hults
Membership Director.....Dot Maginot
Volunteer Service Director.....David Drake
Past Class RepresentativeJane Jamison
Past PresidentCarla Stang
Chapter State Representative...Vern Crawford
Chapter Advisor: Michelle Haggerty



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.

