

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter

January 2024 Volume 21 Number 1



Winter on the Guadalupe
photo by Vern Crawford



The January Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, January 22. Doors open at 6pm for socializing. The business meeting begins at 6:30 and the presentation at 7:00. The presenters, Wade and Colleen Parsons, will focus on field archaeology for non-specialists. They have worked for federal land management agencies during their 30-year career, covering a variety of cultural regions and natural environments across 12 western states. They have recorded over 1000 sites for historic preservation, and believe that educating the public about non-renewable cultural resources is one of the most important responsibilities of their profession.

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. You can then log into Zoom starting at 6pm on January 22nd.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.... JEFF SCHWARZ

Welcome to 2024 and your chance at a fresh start on those new year Master Naturalist resolutions, such as ...finding your volunteering niche where you and the organization are both energized by your presence; reaching your 40 hours of volunteer hours by the end of March; reaching your 10 hours of Advanced Training by the end of June; leading at least one volunteer project.

What I said a year ago about a "fresh start" still applies to 2024 so I thought I'd just repeat myself, but my one year of experience as chapter president makes me want to add:

- I will log all of my volunteer hours into VMS (and not complain about it).
- I will volunteer at least 200 hours and be in the top half of the chapter by volunteer hours.
- I will have fun and seek out other chapter members with similar interests.

I found my position as chapter president gratifying in 2023, so much so that I volunteered to take on a second year as president. I'm not alone in that regard. We can also thank David Drake (Volunteer Projects), Mark Hults (Communications) and Vern Crawford (Chapter State Representative) for staying in their director roles for another year. Dot Maginot is also staying on the board for a second year but moving from Membership Director to Treasurer. Carla Stang's steady presence will also remain another year as Past President. I'm very thankful for all of the advice she gave me in 2023!

Kim Ort (Vice President), Patti Guin (Secretary), Deb Youngblood (Advanced Training), Jane Jamison and David Matthews (New Class Co-Directors) are stepping away from their 2023 board positions but will still be very active members. We owe them our thanks for their leadership in 2023.

continued on next page

Alice King is taking on the role of 2024 Vice President – she was the Chapter Secretary in 2021; Lisa Flanagan, our 2024 Secretary, is back for more as she was formerly a two-year chapter president; and Carra Milikien, our New Class Director, is back in that role; she previously was the New Class Director in 2022.

We also have new faces on the board in 2024 – Phil Roberson, Patricia Poore, and Lou Hugman. I'm looking forward to working with these new board members - two from the class of 2023, fresh off their training! I'm also very thankful for the many other members who work behind the scenes to keep the administrative wheels rolling. We couldn't run this chapter without each of them.

For those who like brevity (oh, I should have started with this. . .), the following boxes show this year's Officers and Directors. We are here to lead the chapter into the new year, one in which we expect to see continuous improvement from lessons learned from our experiences. Our hope is that we can offer camaraderie with volunteer and learning opportunities to all of our members.

2024 OFFICERS/EXEC Committee:

Chapter Advisor:	Michelle Haggerty
President:	Jeff Schwarz
Vice President:	Alice King
Treasurer:	Dot Maginot
Secretary:	Lisa Flanagan

2024 SLATE OF DIRECTORS:

(blue font indicates carry-over from 2023)

Volunteer Service Projects:	David Drake
Communication:	Mark Hults
Chapter State Rep:	Vern Crawford
Membership:	Phil Roberson
Advanced Training:	Patricia Poore
New Class Director:	Carra Milikien
New Class Rep (by 2023 class):	Lou Hugman

I'll finish the way I started, repeating my words from January 2023:

I look forward to this new year in the outside... it will be wetter, I hope. Find your own inner voice and let it guide you to new adventures in the wild! Where will you go to make that connection with people, with an organization, with a project that warms your heart or challenges your intellect? What will be your story?

This Month We Honor



Initial Certification

Chip Fly, Aimee Tennant

Recertifications

Jana Baxter, Carla Brady, Donna Dutton, Linda Fiore, Randy Fuentes,
Laura Grant, John Hornung, Becky Leal, Wendy Leonard, Carra Milikien, Darryl Pitts,
Bill Sewell, Eldon Sheffer, Felicia Zbranek-Zeitman

Milestone Award

Kevin Wessels - 250 Hours, Bronze Dragonfly

Congratulations to members who received awards at the November meeting.



Dot Maginot, Virginia de Wolf, Jeff Schwarz



Marylein Davies



Lenore Langsdorf



Clark Williams



John Benedict, Texas A&M professor (retired) will be the speaker at the February 5 meeting of the Boerne Chapter at the Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium on Feb. 6 at 6:00.

Robert Edmonson with Texas A&M Forest Service will share his expertise about native shrubs, grasses and other understory plants in our region, and why they're important to our landscapes, at the next meeting of the Fredericksburg Chapter on Tuesday, January 23 from 6:30-8 p.m. at St. Joseph's Halle.

Travis Linscomb and Matt Wilkinson will provide an update on Kerrville water at the February 13 meeting at Riverside Nature Center at 1:30.

From Katy Kappel

Bird City Kerrville Project



Audubon Texas and Texas Parks and Wildlife started this community-focused certification program in our state 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.

Where birds thrive, people prosper. Research shows that bird-friendly habitat increases property values, helps control insects, and generates tourism dollars. From urban centers to rural towns, each community can provide important habitat for birds that will also benefit people. Since 2018, ten communities across Texas have been certified.

Our Kerrville community task force must accomplish a variety of tasks before June 1, having to do with educating the public, improving habitat for birds, and mitigating threats. Master Naturalists can participate in this effort. Contact me to learn how you can help. intheseam@gmail.com or 512- 589-1498.



BIRD WALK & TALK



RESCHEDULED

NEW DATE: SATURDAY, JANUARY 27TH

9:00-10:30 AM

LIMITED SPACE--RSVP REQUIRED:

830-257-4837 OR [RIVERSIDENATURECENTER.ORG](https://riversidenaturecenter.org)



January's Bird Walk & Talk
will be lead by David Drake,
a Texas Master Naturalist &
bird enthusiast

Education Program Fee: Free

The View from Rusty Bend



Snaggle ear trots by

Rest

The autumn then is indeed a spring. ~ Henry David Thoreau

Colors tell stories.
Instead of flowers, you see

the painted leaves—
some blushed, some brindled,

some freckled, streaked or rusty.
The air unique and fragrant,

angled light identical to spring,
soft and prescient,

but the same stretched shadows
invite a different wandering—

*come
find the end
of me*

*then settle in,
quiet yourself,*

We are deep in the cold time at Rusty Bend and I am honing my skills at wintering. For I believe it is a skill that improves with practice. There are teachers all around. The grey fox comes by most evenings. Some times when the sun is out, she sits on a rock to watch the sun set. Fox on a rock. Erect, her tailwrapped around her like a cat on a windowsill. Staring, with soft focus, into the distance.

I take notes from her, wrap a scarf around myself, sit still with my own thoughts, but stay alert to goings on think not of resolutions in the new year but of a loosening. Why start with self-criticism? What can I let go of to be more present in the world?

continued on next page

Now Spotted Towhee arrives, also a teacher. I am tickled by his new fondness for the Mexican Sage bush by the window. Usually, he is off in the yard, under the trees, doing his jump-in, jump-back Hokey-pokey. Lately, he is nearby.

I see a tremble in the bush, then there he is, sipping dewdrops from the downy leaves. Now he slips and slides, regaining his footing as if the slip was purposeful. Sip again, a pearl of fresh water, fragrant with herb. Such wisdom. Take your pleasures where you can. Don't mind a missed step. I make myself a cup of tea.

The Guadalupe is flowing again, thank goodness, and my walks there are centering. I am reminded that everything changes, and though we need more rain, that dreadful dire period has eased a bit. I find myself overly thrilled by moss on the trees and rocks. All those delicious greens: asparagus, pea, broccoli, olive. Moss loves a boundary layer. Who isn't reassured with a good boundary? What do I stand for? What won't I stand for?

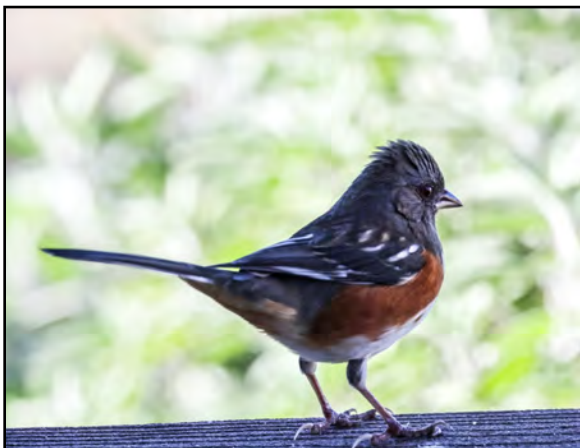
A male Red-tailed Hawk lands on a dead branch near the house. If it was the female, it would be twice the size. I set aside my list of things to do and sit to watch him. His head spins right and left to see any movement. He cleans a feather on his back, nice and slow. After a time, he shakes and reverses, in three steps, on the limb for a fresh view of life. More grooming. At last, he lifts and glides downriver. I stand and stretch, pick another window.

With the returning moisture, my beloved fogs are back, with their unique personalities. Ground fog smooths the edges of my morning view, snagging light to make it new. I ponder the idea: not ever before nor ever again. Now my coffee is cold.

Today's version of fog is a mirror of yesterday's sky, as if high cirrus lost its grip to drape the valley in palest silk, sheer as my mama's slip. I get lost in it a while, as if in a magic land.

After this prolonged drought, I try to remember, did it ever rain all day? I welcome each drop and even the dreary light, the gutters singing, puddles winking, spend a time watching the leaves of the spice bush fill then spill, like an hourglass of rain. I may need to learn to knit.

I revel in this quiet that is growing in me, and I wonder—is it a beginning or an end?



Spotted Towhee bounces on the porch

Poem, images and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2024

*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 ordered 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) Building 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 2024

President.....Jeff Schwarz
Vice President.....Alice King
Secretary.....Lisa Flanagan
TreasurerDot Maginot
Advanced Training DirectorPatricia Poore
Class Training Director.....Carra Milikien
Communications Director.....Mark Hults
Membership Director.....Phil Roberson
Volunteer Service Director.....David Drake
Class Representative.....Lou Hugman
Past PresidentCarla Stang
Chapter State Representative...Vern Crawford

Chapter Advisor: Michelle Hagerty



The Texas Star is a monthly publication of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. News, essays, comments, and ideas are welcome. Please email them to [Lenore Langsdorf, Editor](mailto:Lenore.Langsdorf@hillcountrytmn.org).

Questions about our chapter?

Email Membership Director Phil Roberson
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.

