

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter
May 2024 Volume 21 Number 5



photos by Dr. Chris Distel



The May Hill Country Chapter meeting will be a hybrid meeting on Monday, May 20. Doors will open at 6:00 for socializing. The business meeting will begin at 6:30 and the presentation at 7:00. The presenter, Dr. Chris Distel, is a Professor of Biology and a Field Station Director at Schreiner University. This talk is for lizard lovers, turtle types, and anyone who is just curious about reptiles. Dr. Distel and team will provide a refresher on basic reptile biology, and then explore the diversity of our beautiful and fascinating Hill Country reptiles. The talk will also cover environmental threats faced by reptiles in the Hill Country and some steps needed to protect them from further harm.

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 log into Zoom starting at 6pm on May 20.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...JEFF SCHWARZ

Being that May is Mental Health Awareness Month, I'm writing this month about the intersection of good mental health and the Master Naturalist program. Did you know you're improving the mental health of yourself and others by following our mission, providing EDUCATION, OUTREACH, and SERVICE dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

Volunteering is the reason for existence of our TMN program. Helping others boosts feelings of purpose and connection, combating loneliness and depression. Volunteering also provides structure and social interaction, reducing stress and anxiety, improving mental well-being, and fostering a sense of community. The act of giving back can build self-esteem and confidence, leading to a more positive self-image.

Nature provides us with fresh air, clean water, and endless beauty. Volunteering your time to conservation efforts is a fantastic way to give back. There are opportunities for all skill levels and interests offered by our Chapter!

Love getting your hands dirty? Help with tasks like planting trees, restoring wildlife habitat, or cleaning up trails. These activities directly improve the environment and provide a great workout.

For the citizen scientist, there are opportunities to collect data on plants and animals, monitor water quality, or participate in species surveys. Your contributions help researchers understand and protect ecosystems.

If education is your passion, consider teaching environmental programs or leading nature walks. Sharing your love of nature inspires others to appreciate and protect it.

Many organizations need help with administrative tasks or fundraising events. Your skills in writing, social media, or event planning can be invaluable to understaffed conservation groups.

Volunteering outdoors offers more than just helping the environment. So lace up your boots, grab your friends, and make a difference in the world, one seed, one trail mile, or one rescued critter at a time.

This Month We Honor



Initial Certification- Class of 2023

Deirdre Duchene, Kirk Marchell, Carl Thorne-Thomsen

Special Recertification - Class of 2023

Dennis Thiele

Recertifications

Dale Bransford, Tom Collins, John Davis, Lois Gaines, Lou Hugman, Travis Linscomb, Diane McMahon, Mark Moldrawski, Jack Ort, Kim Ort, Sheryl Pender

Milestone Awards

Diana Adams, Daniel Gallagher - 250 Hours, Bronze Dragonfly
Travis Linscomb, Katherine Peake - 500 Hours, Brushed Silver Dragonfly

Congratulations to members who received awards at the April meeting.



Randee Thompson



Nancy Huffman, Alice King, Aimee Tennant

Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend and contribute to Board of Directors meetings. The board meets at the Riverside Nature Center from 2-4pm on the Monday of the chapter's monthly meeting.

From Hannah Ferguson, Texas Master Naturalist Program Support Specialist

On the second Tuesday of each month at 12:00pm the TMN State Office offers an hour-long virtual advanced training. We also have a special pop-up webinar this month.

Title: Handheld Videographer: Capturing Quality Videos with Your Phone to Promote Your Chapter

Date: May 21, 2024, from 12:00 - 1:00pm CT

Speaker: Lee Smith, Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist, TPWD

Description: Lee Smith is soliciting TMN Chapters around the state to shoot video of their members in action, in the field, volunteering their time and knowledge. Lee will provide a training session with guidelines on how to use your cell phone to capture video clips that can be used in future videos to promote TMN. The training will include what settings to use on your phone, along with tips on composition and technique. The videos captured will provide needed visuals to promote TMN at a state and local chapter level.

Register here: [Handheld Videographer](#).

From Matthew Wilkinson, Natural Resources Specialist, UGRA

UGRA Volunteer Summer Study Program

The Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) is looking for participants for our 2024 Volunteer Summer Study program!

Each summer, UGRA tests E. coli levels at water crossings and popular swimming holes throughout Kerr County. The results of this Swimability Study are compared to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) standards for contact recreation.

In 2004, UGRA began the Volunteer Summer Study program to supplement data collected during the Swimability Study and to include interested members of the community in water quality testing. The information collected by the volunteers also helps identify areas in need of further investigation.

UGRA invites you to participate in this year's summer program. Volunteers will collect water samples on a weekly basis from a site either on the Guadalupe River or one of its tributaries in Kerr County. Samples will be brought to UGRA for bacteria analysis Monday – Friday (8 AM – 4 PM). The program will run from June 3 through August 30. Volunteers can submit samples no more than once a week and you can choose how many weeks you would like to participate (minimum of five weeks). UGRA will summarize the findings and present the results to the volunteers in the fall.

On Friday, May 24th, from 8 AM – 5 PM, UGRA will be hosting an open house for registered volunteers to pick up their sampling materials and, if needed, receive training on proper sampling techniques. For more information and to register, visit ugra.org or contact Matt Wilkinson 830-896-5456 ext. 235 or mwilkinson@ugra.org.



Shannon Brown will present "Ecosystem Regeneration Starts With You" at the monthly meeting of the Fredericksburg chapter on Tuesday, May 28 from 6:30 - 8 pm at St. Joseph's Halle.

The View from Rusty Bend



Breakfast on the wing

Welcome, Shadow

When totality arrives—
this eclipse robed in rarity,
what will you feel?
The coins will align,

light maker/light taker,
in their perfect balance.
Can you let the hurry go?
Some kindle a kinship

with the universe during
those magic minutes
of dark in the day.
Other sense a wrongness,

feeling the world fallen.
What will you do?
Can you quiet at last,
let the animal

in you come alert?
What will you see? The sunset surround?
Will your skin remember the cooling?
Will your ears gather songs of darkness mid-
day?

Be a little humble
as you wrap yourself in shadow.
For this is my wish:
that you pause to keep company

with the ancestors, touching both
their terror and awe.

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The eclipse stole the show at Rusty Bend in April. Despite the clouds, our small group got glimpses of all the phases as we sat on the cliff above the river. When totality began, the darkness like a sigh, I felt a first-ness to it as if the earth was whispering a secret.

The birds quieted, the hundreds of bees in the Mexican Sage hushed their hum. Then a tree frog began downriver, then another closer, then another as if they were triggered by the approaching dark. The wind quieted. Red edges bloomed around the horizon. One bat flew by.

The clouds parted just long enough to see the corona, so much bigger than I expected, wild swirls of glowing silver. I breathed an involuntary “thank you.” The temperature dropped minute by minute, chills rose on my arms. I heard the lines from Shiny Ribs: We are all kin. For the first time, I felt the sun a part of me, as the lips that speak these words are part of me.

The light returned with a gentle grace, tree frogs went back to sleep, birds resumed their courting songs, the sage bush bees recommenced their sacred symphony. I was changed.

I’ve tried to carry the magic ever since, aided perhaps by our avian visitors. Canyon Wrens are raising a tiny family outside my bedroom in a nest of cotton and alpaca. Painted Buntings are back to thrill us with their colors and their plan to distract us from months of summer heat. Warblers and tanagers sing on the river. A pair of Zone Tail hawks have begun their nesting negotiations.

Yet I hold that eclipse experience close. I will always remember—each of us nestled in our separate excitement, gathering awe, alone, together, a tonic for tough times.

GALAGOG

n. the state of being simultaneously entranced and unsettled by the vastness of the cosmos, which makes your deepest concerns feel laughably quaint, yet vanishingly rare.

From galaxy, a gravitationally bound system of millions of stars + agog, awestruck. Pronounced “gal-uh-gawg.”



Welcome back to Rusty Bend, Yellow-throated Warbler

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 preordered from www.flowersongpress.com

Comments welcome at lucy@lucygriffithwriter.com.

Texas Master Naturalist mission:

To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.



Chapter meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month (except in December). Members and the public are welcome to attend in person or virtually. There is no cost to attend.
We meet in the auditorium at the Guadalupe Basin Natural Resources Center (GBNRC) Building at 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville. Doors open at 6PM for socializing. Business Meeting begins at 6:30. Advanced Training session begins at 7:00.

Board of Directors 2024

- President.....Jeff Schwarz
 - Vice President.....Alice King
 - Secretary.....Lisa Flanagan
 - TreasurerDot Maginot
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 - Class Training DirectorCarra Milikien
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 - Volunteer Service Director.....David Drake
 - Past Class RepresentativeLou 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.

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.

