

The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter



T E X A S



July Chapter Meeting

The July Hill Country Chapter meeting will be held on Monday, July 22. Doors will open at 6:00 pm for light refreshments and socializing. The business meeting will begin at 6:30 and the presentation at 7:00.

Our speaker will be Chapter member, Deb Youngblood. Her topic is Texas Waters Specialist. For more information on this topic, please see Alice King's article on page 3.

Zoom attendance: Prior registration is required for attending the meeting/ Advanced Training 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 6:00 pm on July 22.

In person at Guadalupe Basin Natural Resource Center (GBNRC)
125 Lehman Dr. Kerrville

In this ISSUE

1	Chapter Meeting Info
	President's Message
2	Awards
3	Texas Waters Specialist
4	Master Naturalists in the News
	Bee Machine
5	Two Wins for Water
	Scam Alert!
6	Pollinator Champion
7	Snakes Alive!
8	Bird City Kerrville Progress Report
9	Bat Acoustic Monitoring
	Chapter Meeting Door Prizes
10-11	The View from Rusty Bend
12	About Us

President's Message ... Jeff Schwarz

I hope your summer finds you in good health, buckets of rain and satisfaction in the volunteer and training opportunities put forth by your Texas Master Naturalist chapter!

I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude to Lenore Langsdorf for her exceptional dedication and hard work over the past twelve years as our chapter newsletter editor. Her commitment to excellence has been truly remarkable and has greatly contributed to the success of our organization.

Throughout her tenure, she has consistently delivered newsletters that inform, engage, and inspire our readers. Her keen editorial eye and meticulous attention to detail have ensured that each issue is not only informative but also polished to perfection.



Lenore Langsdorf

Lenore's contributions have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated by the chapter and the statewide organization which has recognized her newsletters as best in class.

Please join me in saying thank you to Lenore for her years of service as newsletter editor! The June, 2024 newsletter was the last newsletter issued by Lenore as she has handed the role of newsletter editor to Dot Maginot.



This Month We Honor:

Initial Certifications—Class of 2023

Katie Collins, Julie Lewis, Susan Liljestrand, Michael McCrea, Grant Thompson

Recertifications

Anne Dietert, Gary Fest, Billy Guin, Jr., Sharron Jay, Jim Jones, Laura King, Carl Luckenbach, Susan McKinley, Suanne Pyle, Phil Roberson, Vicki Schmidt, Bill Sewell, Carla Stang, Mary Thomas, Van Turner, Kathy Ward, Debbie Windham, Amy Zesch

Milestones:

250 Hours: Laura Levy, Phil Roberson

500 Hours: Kathy Webster

Congratulations to members who received awards at the June chapter meeting:



INITIAL CERTIFICATIONS:

Susie McCalla, Karla Marchell, Deirdre Duchene



RECERTIFICATIONS:

Kathy Loring, Terry Lashley, Pam Leinhard, Jeff Schwarz, Sherry Wilson, Rande Thompson



500-HOUR MILESTONE:

Alice King, Suanne Pyle



1000-HOUR MILESTONE

Billy Guin, Jr.
(with Membership Director, Phil Roberson)

Texas Waters Specialist

By Alice King and Deb Youngblood

Are you concerned for our Hill Country waters and looking for a way to help? Do you have a passion for a river, lake, or stream? Then you may be a fantastic candidate for the Texas Waters Specialist program. This program, sponsored by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, trains volunteers who want to contribute to the beneficial management of aquatic resources & aquatic habitats within our Texas communities.

The curriculum covers aquatic habitats, karst geology, stream dynamics, and water conservation and is intended to support citizen science, water advocacy, and related volunteer activities. Deb Youngblood will explain how to get involved with the program, the training, and the various ways the Texas Waters Specialists are involved in water conservation and preservation efforts.

I encourage you to share this invitation with your non-TMN friends. There is no prerequisite for the program - a person need **not** have completed any Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, or other program. Any member of the public is welcome to take the training as a way to meet like-minded people and launch their volunteer work for Texas waters. Individuals who have completed a Master Naturalist or Master Gardener training program will find that the curriculum enriches their teaching and learning experiences.



Deb Youngblood

About Our Speaker: Deb Youngblood is a long-time volunteer with the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists. Deb shares, *"I have always been interested in nature and learning. I share these interests with my grandchildren and others. I have found that TMN is a good fit for me because I can continue to learn and share what I learn. I enjoy photography, working with native plants, and learning how to identify butterflies, birds, and bugs. I love water and my goal each year on my birthday is to swim in a spring-fed pool. I am a Texas Waters Specialist because I hope to contribute to the preservation of Texas rivers."*

Master Naturalists in the News

The Kerrville
DAILY TIMES

GROWING THE FLOWER BEDS

County OKs expansion of courthouse garden project

Staff report Jun 24, 2024

Flower beds on the courthouse grounds will be expanded and renewed after Kerr County Commissioners on Monday gave the go-ahead to the Hill Country chapters of Texas Master Naturalists and the Texas Native Plant Society of Texas. The volunteer gardeners have been adding native plants to the grounds since 2021.

Project leader Pam Lienhard, a member of both groups, presented a plan to add native plants and improve the beds at the west entrance to the courthouse.

Volunteers will dress-up the east entrance by reclaiming an overgrown bed filled with weeds, black plastic and decomposed granite.

In moving to support the effort, Precinct 3 Commissioner Jonathan Letz said the west entrance was much used and "that area needs a lot of help."



Volunteer gardeners from the Kerr County chapters of the Texas Master Naturalists and Native Plant Society of Texas will reclaim and replant flower beds on the west side of the Kerr County Courthouse. Project leader Pam Lienhard, center, is pictured with Robin Hale and Alice King.

Wanda Garner Cas

bee

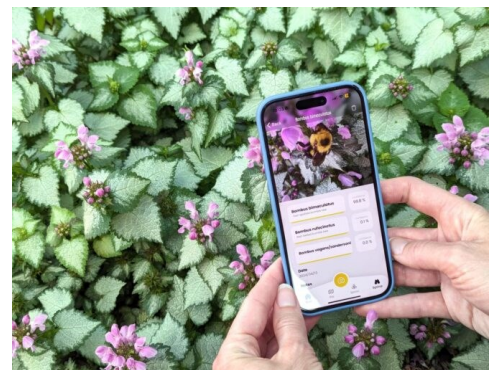


machine

Information shared by Craig Hensley about a new resource being developed:

A former TMN friend of mine shared this article about a new app that has been designed and is available for bee identification. While still a work in progress, this is likely a game changer for those interested in photographing and identifying bees. The article link is: <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/state-region/2024/jul/11/to-save-the-bees-a-kansas-scientist-is-building-an-app-to-identify-thousands-of-species/>

The app is called Bee Machine – I have tried it and it is awesome!



TWO WINS FOR WATER

Water Quality.

Today March 28th, the TCEQ ruled on the City of Liberty Hill's wastewater discharge permit conditions – wastewater discharge that has caused miles long algal blooms in the San Gabriel River, blooms due to too much phosphorus in the wastewater. The TCEQ Commissioners heard the Administrative Law Judge's recommendation that treated wastewater effluent of 0.015 mg/L would be 'protective' of the environment. The Commissioners ruled that they will restrict the City of Liberty Hill's phosphorus concentration in their treated wastewater effluent to 0.020 mg/L (far lower than TCEQ's previously recommended permit allowing concentrations of 0.500 mg/L). Pristine streams have native phosphorus concentrations of 0.010 or lower. **This decision by TCEQ is a significant WIN for Pristine Streams!** This ruling sets a precedent. Stricter wastewater permit regulations for discharge into these few remaining clear bottom streams are now more likely to occur; this ruling increases the incentive for Municipalities and Developers to beneficially reuse treated wastewater effluent by land application, rather than direct discharge into the last remaining pristine streams in Texas. We will continue to report progress on the issue.

Water Quantity.

The Lower Trinity Monitor Well has been drilled. We are awaiting getting the station on line with USGS. This dedicated monitor well will provide better information on the health of our aquifers that we do depend on.

I want to thank all of you for your support – support in being engaged, reading and thinking about our water problems, participating in meetings, writing TCEQ regarding permits, as well as your financial support. Our collective small community efforts helped make these Wins a reality!

Sincerely,
Margo Denke Griffin
Secretary/Treasurer
Friends of Hondo Canyon
(830) 450-1523

SCAM ALERT!

By Jeff Schwarz

This message is inspired by recent email phishing attempts coming from someone impersonating our chapter president email account, asking for help in paying a vendor.

In our interconnected digital world, the threat of phishing scams looms large, targeting unsuspecting individuals and organizations alike. These deceptive tactics aim to trick users into divulging sensitive information such as passwords, credit card details, personal data, or even asking for money or a favor. However, armed with awareness and practical measures, we can significantly mitigate these risks.

First, vigilance is paramount. Always scrutinize emails, texts, or messages carefully, especially those requesting urgent action or offering enticing deals. Phishing attempts often use fear or urgency to manipulate recipients into clicking malicious links or revealing confidential information. Trust your instincts and verify the sender's authenticity before responding or clicking on any links.

Second, pay attention to the details. Check email addresses and URLs for subtle discrepancies or slight misspellings that may indicate a phishing attempt. Legitimate organizations typically use official domains, so be cautious of unfamiliar or suspicious addresses. Hover over links (without clicking) to preview the URL destination and ensure it matches the purported sender or company.

Furthermore, be wary of unsolicited requests for personal information. Reputable institutions rarely ask for sensitive data via email or text. Be cautious of requests for passwords, Social Security numbers, or financial information. If in doubt, contact the organization directly through verified communication channels to confirm the legitimacy of the request.

Fortunately, our wise board members didn't fall for this phishing trick. It was very realistic in its presentation, even citing several board members who would have been involved with payments to a vendor to validate its authenticity. Stay vigilant, my friends!

DINAH ZIKE OF COMFORT BECOMES A POLLINATOR CHAMPION!

By Catherine Gauldin

On Friday July 12, 2024 Sheryl Pender, Catherine Gauldin, Patricia Poore and Sandi Kennedy, all volunteers for the Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program (PGARP) were pleased to present a Pollinator Champions plaque to Dinah Zike of Comfort, Texas. The plaque was presented by Sheryl Pender, the Kerrville coordinator. The PGARP program is a joint project involving both Texas Master Naturalist and Native Plant Society (NPSOT) volunteers who "educate local homeowners, groups, institutions and organizations about the importance of native plants and habitats in our Hill Country environment." <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/pgarp/>

Dinah is a true Renaissance woman, and in addition to being an inventor, gardener and educator, she also writes science and mathematics textbooks for McGraw Hill. Her pollinator garden is magnificent and although several plots of differing purposes are interconnected, the largest one begins at Simply Comfort, a shop located on High Street in Comfort. They are used as a training ground for teachers, parents and tourists who visit the community. Dinah and her architect husband moved to Comfort thirty years ago and over the years her garden has grown because she is constantly in the process of adding native plants, signage, native bee habitats and more. She truly deserved to be recognized as a Pollinator Champion.



Pictured (l-r) Catherine Gauldin, Patricia Poore, Kerrville Coordinator Sheryl Pender, Dinah Zike, Sandi Kennedy



Sheryl Pender presents the plaque to Dinah Zike.



Native Texas Plants need Native Texas Pollinators to thrive

SNAKES ALIVE!

Another Great Workshop Brought to You By: Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center



Kory Perlichek

Kory Perlichek, Veteran Wildlife Biologist of 19 years for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and well-known speaker on snakes, will be the guest speaker at a Summer Nature Series Workshop sponsored by the Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center. The program, titled ***Snakes Alive!***, will take place on Friday, July 19, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Gillespie County AgriLife Extension Office located at 38 Business Court in Fredericksburg. Perlichek's talk will focus on snake safety and identification and is geared towards adults and children eight years of age and older. As part of his presentation, Perlichek will be demonstrating various species of live snakes and plans to invite members of the audience to participate and handle the non-venomous ones, if they so desire. Immediately following Perlichek's presentation, young people in attendance (or young at heart) will be able to make their own snake to take home.

Register for the event by emailing Gracie at gwaggener@flow-apps.com. This workshop is approved for 1.5 hours of Texas Master Naturalist advanced training credit.

BIRD CITY KERRVILLE – PROGRESS REPORT

By Katy Kappel

For the last 18 months, a coalition of local nature groups have been working on achieving certification in the Bird City program. Texas Parks and Wildlife has partnered with Texas Audubon to promote better habitat and community awareness of the needs of birds. “Where birds thrive, people prosper.” Please visit www.birdcity.org/texas for more information.

Our application was submitted June 1. When we are certified, activities will continue for the next two years. Our members completed 24 activities designed to improve habitat for birds and contribute to Kerr County as a birding tourism destination.

1. Worked together as a collaborative body and recruited partners. Coalition members to date include Hill Country Master Naturalists, Riverside Nature Center, UGRA, Native Plant Society of Kerrville, Wild Birds Unlimited, Schreiner University, The Ridge Café and Garden, Kerr County, Kerrville Parks & Recreation Department, Kerrville Master Gardeners, Kerrville Pets Alive, Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky, Center for Fitness, Peter Lewis Architects & Associates, and Habitat for Humanity.
2. Our members promoted native plants and developed a recommended plant list, which is available on the Riverside Nature Center website ([Recommended Native Plants for Kerrville–Riverside Nature Center](#)). Native plants were made available for purchase April 20. The next sale will be October 5, 2024.
3. Educated the public regarding invasive species and removed *Arundo donax*.
4. Promoted the Cats Indoors Program of the American Bird Conservancy and distributed information to every veterinarian and animal rescue group in Kerrville.
5. Documented the removal of invasive animals in Kerr County (14,000 hogs to date).
6. Developed informational brochures to educate homeowners and builders on bird-friendly designs and low light options.
7. Supported the “Lights Out Texas” program.
8. Celebrated World Migratory Bird Day on May 11 at the Ridge Café and Garden
9. Provided numerous workshops on environmental issues, conservation, and birds.
10. Developed a web presence for birding opportunities in Kerrville, Bird City Texas-Kerrville Community (kerrvilletexascvb.com)
11. Maintained eight pollinator and native plant demonstration gardens.
12. Participated in multiple bird surveys.
13. Constructed a new bird blind on Schreiner University campus. Kerrville Bird Observatory Network. Texan By Nature envisions up to fifteen blinds.

These activities and others are continuing. A meeting of the coalition to consider future efforts is scheduled for August 19 at 5:00 pm at the Riverside Nature Center. This is a Master Naturalist project and volunteer hours are available for help with activities such as building bird blinds, a fall community-wide native planting event, improving habitat in our parks, and more.



Baby cardinal nest at the home of Katy Kappel

Bat Acoustic Monitoring Project

By Dot Maginot

On April 29th, the Hill Country Chapter joined the Texas Nature Trackers (TNT) on their quest to learn the species of bats in locations throughout the State of Texas. This is the first year of a 5-year project with 39 chapters participating; including our own.

Some of the data that we captured was from the following conditions:

- Height of monitor
- Distance the monitor was placed from “clutter”
- Distance from water
- Weather conditions



Acoustics were recorded in .wav files from ½ hour before sunset on Monday and ended ½ hour after sunrise on Friday. Our chapter placed the monitor in Rocksprings, Utopia, Vanderpool, Kerrville, Fredericksburg, Hunt, and Boerne.

The next step in the process is for the data to be analyzed in a program called Kaleidoscope. While it would take an enormous amount of time to analyze every bat sound, we are hoping to have a broad estimate of the species of bats in each area. Partial results should be available at the Annual Meeting in October with the final numbers by the end of the year.

Mark Hults is the project lead for our chapter. There are 11 team members that have been involved in the training activities. The effort this year has actually been minimal since everyone is learning and testing out the program.

The Texas Nature Trackers and the Texas Master Naturalists are invested in learning which bat species frequent which locations. If you are interested in participating in this project or wish to have a monitor placed on your property in 2025, please contact Mark Hults at hultsmark@aol.com.

For more information, please visit TMN Tuesdays, February 2024. Mini-Series, TMN Acoustic Monitoring of Texas Bats: A Community Service Project for TMNs, January 23, 2024. <https://txmn.tamu.edu/tmntuesdays/#february>

Did Someone Say “Door Prizes” ???

By Alice King

YES! You heard correctly! For a limited time, we have door prizes at the chapter meetings! All you have to do is come to the meetings, pick up your raffle tickets and wait for your number to be called.

We are giving away books that once belonged to Fritz Snyder, who was a student in the 2022 Class. Sadly, Fritz passed away before he could finish the class. His wife, Rebecca (also in the 2022 Class), has generously donated the books that he so loved for other members and visitors to enjoy.



From Lucy Griffith

The View from Rusty Bend



Lady Guadalupe showing off her foggy side

Aromata

The rounded and curved horizon, yes,
cooler air, the quiet of the night skies, yes.
But it's the smells of these karst hills that

dog the steps of my poems,
as if our caves and sinkholes
still breathe the distillate

of an ancient sea. The vanilla bomb
of Agarita blossoms in April,
wet limestone, an essence of flint and chert,

the sweet rot of leaves by each stream.
Step on Dutchman's Breeches,
wallow in a bowl of zested limes.

After any decent rain,
petrichor laced with a snap of cedar sap.
Even hot days release a signature smell,

like your grandpa's barn of old hay.
Kidneywood blossoms smell like cookies baking.
Threadvine's rare scent as sweet as a baby's neck.

A smell to run your fingers through.
I don't expect these smells to save me—
but they might.

June is a time we pay careful attention to the daily changes at Rusty Bend. The garden is pushing out tomatoes and squash and cucumbers and glowing jars of pickles and relish are shining in the pantry. We canopied with a shade cloth for the first time, to give the plants (and the gardeners) a break from the heat.

The birds are fledging and learning the ropes of survival. The fawns are dropping and darting around madly. Frogs and tadpoles have returned to the pond, so welcome. Who knows what wildflowers might emerge after these unexpected rains.

We watch the creatures in our little world and imagine their stories but most times we just get a slice of the tale. The rest must be imagined. Why does that doe only have three legs? Born that way? Caught in a fence or a snare like the fox we call Tripod? What killed the dead fox on the river?

The nestboxes that Andy checks are also full of mysteries. Missing eggs. Missing chicks. Wasp takeover. Predator du jour: snake, raccoon, hawk, owl. How did they outwit the predator guard?

Uncertainty is part of nature's world as much as the wider world. We can be curious. We can pay attention. We can follow that smell to its source, but only sometimes. We can invent a tale, knowing nonetheless that most will be hidden from us. The view from the porch alone is a lesson in change.

We watch it all go by. The clouds, the ground fogs, raptor flybys, raven juveniles hollering for food.

For all the robust appeal of the hill country, I am reminded that it is a fragile biome. The soil is thin above these limestone hills and easily erodes. Overgrazing turns lush pastures into parking lots of white dust. The river has had a few rises finally, but the water is dense with mud and silt. More precious soil headed for the Gulf of Mexico. Another story we can only guess at. I take faith from the thought that nature renews itself. Like us, she was made to heal.

I've made a list for the next time, as the poet said, when "the world is too much with me." When I feel lost and confused, I'll pull out my list of curative places to sit, little walks to wander, and of course, scents to seek, to find their secret stories.



Rose moon ghostly rises

Poem, images and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2024

Lucy Griffith, PhD co-manages Rusty Bend 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 new collection celebrating the brush country is forthcoming from FlowerSong Press and can be pre-ordered from this link:

[The Place the Spiders Waved by Lucy Griffith \(Coming in the Fall of 2024\)](#)
— FlowerSong Press & Juventud Press

Comments welcome at lucygriffithwriter@gmail.com

About us

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2024

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 Chapter State Representative.....Vern Crawford
 Chapter Advisor.....Michelle Haggerty

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 6:00 pm for socializing. Business Meeting begins at 6:30 pm. Advanced Training session begins at 7:00 pm.

Learn more on our website:

txmn.org/hillcountry

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:

newsletter@hillcountrytmn.org.

QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CHAPTER?

E-mail 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.

Keeping THE
 HILL COUNTRY
 NATIVE 

