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The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter



SPECIAL ISSUE

A faint, artistic illustration of a yellow flower with five petals and several green leaves, serving as a background for the main text.

FEATURING
THE CLASS OF
2024

INTRODUCING THE NEW CLASS COMMITTEE

VOLUNTEERING TOGETHER FOR THE CLASS OF 2024!



Left to right: Mark Hults, Mildred Dworsky, Carra Milikien, Randee Thompson, Aimee Tennant, Julie Lewis, Selina Keeton, Sheryl Pender, Vicki Andrews.

Not pictured: Laurie Fondren, Phil Roberson, Fletcher Thorne-Thomsen

BY RANDEE THOMPSON

Planning for the new class training began in March, and culminated with the Orientation/Welcome reception on August 14th. Thirty students joined the training class and were counting on us to make the time spent in training educational, inspirational, and enjoyable.

The committee planning began with the New Class Director, Carra Milikien, explaining her vision of what this year's training would provide. In addition to Carra, the committee was populated by thirteen individuals who were tasked with creating the curriculum, planning the locations for the class meetings and field trips. Once those items were in place, the team divided the work of contacting sites and speakers, and ensuring that all the state mandated topics would be presented by knowledgeable and, (fingers-crossed), entertaining lecturers.

The team members discussed and identified a number of topics that are were not included in the state guidelines, but that the committee felt were of great importance to anyone seeking understanding of the Texas Hill Country, its challenges, and its glories. The job of confirming locations on the needed dates came first, followed by many hours of email time communicating with our selected speakers and venues. This task was undertaken by Laurie Fondren, Julie Lewis, and Randee Thompson, led and augmented by Carra Milikien. Thank goodness for the sweets provided at our meetings. We all needed the energy!

One of the biggest jobs for the new class committee was undertaken by Mildred Dworsky and Selina Keeton in preparing not only the hard-copy binders for each student but also an e-drive containing more than 1,100 pages of documents. These included, among many other topics, bios and photos of each class member and committee member, as well as the presenters, some of their course outlines, PowerPoint slides, the schedule, maps, directions, and information on the Hill Country Chapter.

Documenting the minutes of the meetings was Aimee Tennant, and they were necessary to keep us all on track. And, of course, Frank Garcia for setting up Zoom meetings for those committee members attending remotely.

Also present on the committee were Advisors Jane Jamison and Sheryl Pender who offered valuable guidance on previous training classes and committees. Finishing out the volunteers with insight, wisdom, and much needed support were Vicki Andrews, Lou Hugman (Class of 2023 Representative), Phil Roberson (Membership Director), Mark Hults (Communications Director), and Fletcher Thorne-Thomsen with his computer skills compiling the bios and photos.

The Class of 2024 has now begun and the committee can watch their efforts take shape in creating the TMNs of the future. On behalf of our committee we wish you all an informational, inspirational and enjoyable three months as you begin your journey of discovery as a Hill Country Texas Master Naturalist.

Happy Hiking!

CLASS HIGHLIGHTS



**HOW MANY
ARE TAKING
THE CLASS?**

**30 MEMBERS-IN-TRAINING
3 TRANSFERS**

**WHEN
ARE THE
CLASSES HELD?**

**AUGUST 21 -
NOVEMBER 13**

**SO MUCH
TO
LEARN!**

**31 SPEAKERS!
33 TOPICS!**

**7
FIELD
TRIPS!**

- **CANYON LAKE GORGE**
- **CIBOLO CENTER FOR CONSERVATION**
- **FREDERICKSBURG NATURE CENTER**
- **KERR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**
- **RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER**
- **RIVER TRAIL-KERRVILLE**
- **SELAH BAMBERGER RANCH**

WELCOME CLASS OF 2024

NORMA ANDERSON. I was born in Austin, where I lived until I graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. I became interested in trees, wildflowers, rocks, hiking, and camping at an early age. My favorite magazine in my elementary school library was “Boys Life”. I moved to the North Carolina Piedmont area for graduate school then to New England for 23 years. Hiking and camping continued to be important in my life, as did learning more about birds and wildlife. After medical school in the Midwest, I returned to Texas where I have lived in the Hill Country (Kendall and Bandera counties) for the past 26 years. My interest in hiking and camping has continued (though the camping is now likely to be in my RV), with increasing interest in birding and water issues. I recently had a water catchment tank installed at my home. Depending solely on my well makes me nervous. I participated in the Adopt-a-Highway Program for 17 years in honor of the memory of my parents, who taught me to revere nature and care for it. I look forward to learning as much possible about Hill Country natural science and sharing that knowledge with others where possible. I have widely varied work experience, including teaching and speaking. I retired in 2021.



MAYA CHRISTESON. I mostly grew up in central Florida, where some of my fondest memories are of planting flower seeds every spring with my dad and watching them grow and bloom. Wherever we lived, even if it was a rental, we always planted trees in the yard. He instilled a love of flowers and plants in me, and for the last year, I have maintained a large wildflower garden in my backyard. I had many pets over the years from lizards, hamsters, tropical fish, and cats, and I learned a lot about caretaking and empathy. We moved our family to Kerrville in 2012. Here, I have taken herbalism classes and joined and volunteered as Treasurer for the Native Plant Society—Kerrville Chapter, and volunteered as Secretary for The Big Fix here in Kerrville. For the last year, I have been working as an Administrative Assistant at Riverside Nature Center, where I am learning about stewardship of land, beneficial insects, pollinators, and native plants. I am eager to further my knowledge through the Master Naturalist program and look forward to giving back and gaining experience through volunteering with this vital program.



KATHY CRAWFORD. I am Illinois born, raised, and retired from a career in Special Education in the Chicago suburbs where I served as a teacher, coordinator of special services, and school principal. My childhood neighbor taught me the joy of flower beds. With my first home came a neighbor who taught me how to grow strawberries. My adult life is enriched because my hands have been in the dirt with landscaping, veggie gardens, and pulling weeds. A traveler at heart and in love with the Southwest from childhood, I recently found my forever home/property on top of a hill just Northwest of Kerrville proper. Here, I look forward to life without a lawn mower while nurturing a native landscape with a dedicated pollinator garden and an enclosed grassy “jungle” where my kitties can hunt and hide. My goal as a soon-to-be Master Naturalist is to get it right for my small piece of land and to give back where I can. I am excited about getting to know you ... my new like-minded neighbors, with whom I’ll learn and share.

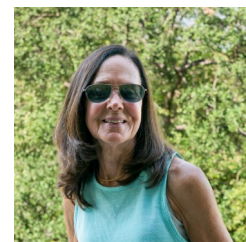


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MARC DAVIS. I grew up in Houston and graduated from UT Austin with an undergraduate degree in Accounting. I camped out often at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area and Pedernales Falls State Park while in college and developed a love for the Texas Hill Country. My wife and I moved full time to Boerne in 2020 during COVID restrictions but thrived because of the many state parks in the area. We feel privileged to live in the Hill Country with the opportunity to observe many local birds, plants, and animals. I am very excited to be able to participate in the development of the new Albert and Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area and use the skills that I will learn from the Texas Master Naturalist program.



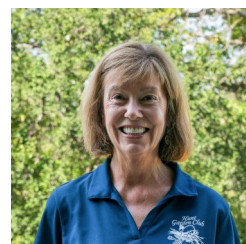
VALERIE DAVIS. I was born and raised in Venezuela, as my dad was in the oil industry. I graduated from TCU with an undergraduate degree in business management. After raising my three children in Houston, my 20-year professional career was in administration. During this time, I became an avid hiker with a coworker of mine. We visited many of the national parks in the western United States. My love for the outdoors grew, and upon retiring from the petroleum industry, the Hill Country came calling. My husband, Marc, and I chose the Boerne area where we now reside. The draw was the beauty of the hills and, of course, family! My son, daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren live on 60 acres in the Boerne area. We enjoy watching them manage and conserve their property. I look forward to gaining knowledge of the natural resources of the Hill Country that the TMN program will provide. I live six miles from the Albert and Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area and hope to utilize these skills in the development of this natural area, which will protect a very special piece of the Hill Country. Volunteers are needed for plant and animal surveys, maintenance, outreach, and more. I look forward to volunteering and helping in this endeavor. I'll be able to see wildlife in natural settings, hear coyotes in the distance, view stars to the northwest, and go hike some more!



DEAN DEKERLEGAND. I am grateful to live in scenic Hunt, Texas, and love the outdoor opportunities along the Guadalupe River. My wife Diane and I moved here after I retired. I practiced for 35 years as a General Dentist in Clear Lake. I was privileged to serve as the dentist for the NASA Astronaut Corp. I volunteer to clear and maintain the hiking trails as part of our neighborhood's Firewise team. I also pick up highway trash monthly with a group. I work on creating stone walls on our property to retain water and prevent soil erosion, as we live on top of a canyon. I completed the NPSOT class "Level 1- Introduction to Native Landscapes." I used what I learned to begin reworking our property to replace non-native plants with native plants. My goal for TMN training is to positively impact our environment. I look forward to learning about the local ecosystem, including water conservation, and sharing this information with others.



DIANE DEKERLEGAND. I fell in love with the beauty of the Hill Country during many years of our boys' summer camp pick-up weekends. My husband Dean and I realized we wanted to retire in the area. We bought a second home in Hunt and spent weekends commuting to and from Pearland for years. I retired from a 36-year career as a research scientist in the Nutritional Biochemistry Laboratory at NASA-Johnson Space Center. I have volunteered with several Hunt Garden Club events and help to care for landscaping as part of my neighborhood Grounds Committee. I have completed the "Level 1: Introduction to Native Landscapes" and "Landscaping for Birds" classes with NPSOT. My aim for TMN training is to gain knowledge of the local environment and skills to educate others about natural resources. I look forward to networking and learning from TMN environmental leaders.



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GREG FALDYN. My name is Greg Faldyn, and I am a 3rd generation Houstonian, but I finally escaped the concrete jungle. My wife Cynthia and I have lived in Ingram since July 2022. Two-year anniversary is right around the corner! We have three grandchildren who live around San Antonio. We love the Hill Country – although I must say – the restaurant scene could use some new competition. (I guess I was a little spoiled by the options in Houston). I am a proud graduate of Texas A&M – class of '88 –majored in Economics/Finance. I have been in the employee benefits insurance industry for 35 years and counting. I love gardening – I say it is my golf. Gardening provides me the combination of mental clarity and some good old-fashioned hard work! There is nothing like seeing the fruits of your labor –that’s the real sweat equity. One of my biggest challenges is to learn how to successfully grow in an area that receives little rain and has poor soil. When you go from 50” to 13” a year, you must rethink the entire approach to gardening. I am excited about the opportunity to participate in the Texas Master Naturalist program because I want to learn how to utilize the best resources available in the Texas Hill Country, and ultimately, I want to be able to share and educate so others can learn to be a successful Naturalist in our beautiful area.



SUZY FLOYD. I was born in the small town of Italy, Texas. Growing up, my family always planted a large garden in the beautiful black dirt of north Texas. I continued the tradition with my three children. Five years ago, I married my husband, Jeff, and moved to the Hill Country. We have a small ranch outside of Comfort where we raise chickens, Kunekune pigs, and honeybees. We grow vegetables for ourselves as well as the animals. My pollinator garden is chaotically sprawling into a large portion of our yard. Watching our bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and songbirds on the front porch is our favorite way to spend a cool morning or evening. Last year, I became a Hill Country Master Gardener. That experience inspired me to dive deeper into a more natural approach. I inherited many invasive plants on our property. My goal is to remove those and replace them with beneficial natives.



JUSTIN FYFFE. My connections with nature run deep. Growing up as a kid, “outside” was the only place in the world where I felt at home and could freely be my true self, Wild and Weird. Summers were full of endless hours wandering around on a bike in search of open fields or wooded areas. The further removed from manmade structures, the better. I spent endless hours exploring the creeks for the perfect swimming hole or investigating all the different plants, animals, and bugs in grandma’s garden. All those moments of wonder and the memories of the “wild spaces” from childhood have always stuck with me. I’ve always known I loved nature and have always been so amazed by the natural systems found in the plant world. I feel I share a unique connection and understanding of the importance of such places but I never had the vocabulary or credentials to feel comfortable enough to call myself an “expert” on the subject. It wasn’t until I took a Permaculture Design Course in 2013 that I realized I wanted to know more in depth and become this type of “expert.” Listening to classmates spit out the names of every plant, bug, or animal we came across really left me wanting to know more! I began memorizing plant names, finding beauty in the wild and wooly unknowns of the natural world and engaging and developing my (power of observation) or P.O.O skills. Pausing and taking moments to check in with nature every day and learn something new in each of these seasons over these years. I began falling in love with nature like a kid again. This was very addictive. My attention to details of the natural world began to grow, and over the past 11 years, I have acquired a bank of knowledge that I owe to my own mentors. Through taking this course, I am seeking to expand my knowledge even more so I may begin my journey into the mentorship phase of life and share and pass on my love and connections with nature to the next generation of wild and weird.

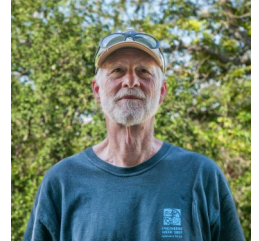


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KARA GRANT. I grew up in Houston. Like many '80s kids, my brothers and I spent summers at camps in the Hill Country for many years. My family fell in love with the area. I switched to full-time small-town living in 2005 and have never looked back. I have a bachelor's degree in psychology. I have worked in the hospitality industry with pets at a vet clinic and the Humane Society, and I have been self-employed. Since COVID, I've been in the microgreen, worm, egg business. I love working from home and moving toward a more self-sufficient, sustainable lifestyle. I am passionate about caring for our planet and all of its creatures. I have been a Master Gardener since 2013 and love the opportunities I have to serve our community. I'm excited to learn more information that I can use and share with others.



STEVEN GRIFFITH. I enjoy the outdoors and would like to learn more about the natural wonders around us. I have a technical background working in the mechanical engineering world in aerospace. My interests are walking, hiking, fishing, traveling, and visiting state and national parks. I like to piddle in my shop with machines, wood, and other projects. I have a strong desire to gain as much information about the environment as possible to be a better steward of our planet and possibly help teach others. I am particularly interested in this chapter's area of the Hill Country. I want to support the efforts of this volunteer program.



DEVIN HAYES. I'm a 5th generation Texan born in Austin and raised in Fredericksburg. I received my undergraduate degree in cultural anthropology from Texas State University in San Marcos. After college, I worked in plant nurseries and spent a couple of years traveling around Central America, Nepal, India, and Eastern Europe. When I landed back home, I started a business that I still run in Austin. Right before Covid, I bought 20 acres in Kendall County and have been obsessively working to restore the land to some semblance of what it was before Europeans arrived. My intent with the TMN program is to further my skill set and knowledge to this end and to help with current projects around the area.



KAREN HURST. Growing up in Louisiana, my family spent vacations at state and national parks. I loved the naturalist programs at those parks so much that it was the only job I could picture myself in, so I headed to Texas A&M for a degree in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism sciences. But I ended up in the Houston suburbs for 30 years, raising kids, volunteering at schools and churches and wishing I could live somewhere with better access to nature. Recently, my husband and I were able to relocate to the Hill Country and are having a ball exploring and learning about the flora, fauna, geology, and all the other elements of this beautiful environment. I'm so excited for the opportunity to learn more through the TMN program and then working to help preserve and protect natural resources and help others learn to do the same.



SUZANNE JACOBSON. I have been fortunate to live in beautiful places my whole life, most recently the Idaho panhandle, where I had 10 acres of forest and 27 raised beds. I moved here in the fall of 2022 and am very pleased with my decision. I just finished Master Gardener training, and I'm absolutely in love with native plants. I joined NPSOT and am working on my pollinator garden. I also have a long history of clearing invasives, which I'm passionate about. The other thing I hope to gain from TMN is more of a love for creepy-crawlies. I believe I learned to go "eek" at an early age, but I'm confident that can change with all of your help. I've held many interesting positions, but the thread that flows throughout is that they all involve coordination. I was Treasurer and/or Secretary in several small non-profits. Now that I'm retired, I am strongly moving away from all that and need hands-on experiences in nature to balance out my "portfolio"—ha ha.



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LISA KOLAJA. I was born and raised in Houston, where my son and grandchildren still reside. We bought property by Stonewall in 2009 and, after years of spending time here working and observing our property, we moved here permanently in late spring/early summer of 2023. I was not fortunate enough to be able to attend a university and, other than a few classes and lots of insurance industry-related classes, my knowledge has been obtained through experience. I spent my entire career on the sales side of the insurance industry. During my down time, we enjoyed taking our children camping, hiking, and spending a lot of time outdoors. I turned my acre yard in Cypress into a pollinator’s paradise. I enjoyed many hours watching the birds, butterflies, and bees enjoying the fruit of my labor. My intent for TMN training is to increase my knowledge of the natural resources in the Texas Hill Country and use that knowledge to share with others. I am most interested in land management and water conservation. I am hoping to build and foster friendships with my fellow TMN classmates as well as others in the community.



MARIA LOZANO. I have a love for Nature which started in my childhood where I spent a lot of time enjoying my grandfather’s weekend ranch, however, I was never academically educated in any of the sciences associated with nature. My background is an associate degree in medical lab, a couple of years in engineering and CPA degree from my home country, Mexico. I am married to a Texan and mother of three children. We moved to Boerne in 2021 with the purpose of living within nature. On Earth Day in 2023, I was lucky to meet NPSOT at Herff Farm and my journey to get educated inNature started. Every time when I walk through my garden it’s an experience [discovering a new plant, a new bug, a new something. My most recent personal accomplishment is bringing to our new bird bath the beautiful painted bunting (which I just learned about it in one of our Boerne NPSOT conferences early this year). It was so exciting looking at him just chilling on the rocks of the bird bath. The more I learn the more I realize how little most people know about the act of taking care of nature. My goal is to bring awareness on how we all can help to preserve nature, sometimes it is just a little adjustment here and there.



FLORA MCCLUNG. I was born overseas to an American GI (Texan) and a Basque mother. I traveled throughout the US and abroad cultivating a love for the great outdoors and everything in nature, finally settling in Texas. I moved to Kerrville six years ago from Lakeway, after becoming homeless (house sold same day- ugh). My husband and I have always been fond of the Hill country, it was our weekend playground for almost 30 years. I am currently working for a manufacturer that develops furniture for the educational marketplace. I design and train clients on how to sell STEM, STEAM and CTE applications to schools, universities, and technical training facilities. I teach them the “How, Why and What” of teamwork to solve problems and optimize resources through the proper design of their environment. I find it to be fitting that I have always been drawn to nature and its surroundings with a name like “Flora” – the Roman Greek Goddess of spring and flowering plants, nature, especially wildflowers, it just seems fitting to volunteer for an organization in which I can help preserve and learn about our natural resources.



DENISE MOZINGO. I grew up in Gainesville, Texas but spent time in the summer and holidays on my grandparents’ ranch outside of Kerrville. My father was an outdoorsman, so as a family, we traveled and camped all over the United States, participating in hiking, fishing, and enjoying the beauty creation. I graduated from Baylor University with a Bachelor of Science. My career of 28 years was spent in educating students Pre-K-5th grades; both as an educator and librarian. I recently I sold my house in Georgetown, and moved onto the ranch in Kerrville. I enjoy working with the Harper Library and taking care of the family property. I look forward to learning about Hill Country flora and fauna and educating others.



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DAVE OELRICH. I grew up in Central Texas in a family that valued being outside. We participated heavily in sports and Boy Scouts, the latter of which taught me to love the outdoors. Service projects, camping, and hiking were an “every weekend” thing, occasionally interspersed with game nights. I lost interest in baseball, but nature is still a passion. After a starter career in hospitality, I attended the University of Texas and St. Edwards’s University and worked as a corporate HR executive, mostly in biotech and medical devices/services. While that career put food on the table for my small family, and paid for college for my daughter, it took me out of nature except for the occasional vacation or volunteer opportunity. I am excited to get back to it! We moved to the Hill Country a couple of years ago, and I love being here full-time. I believe that we are all stewards of our environment. We have an obligation to preserve and protect it, teach others about it, and to make sure that it is used in sustainable ways to the benefit of all (including the critters). The natural world of Texas needs us more than ever, and I want to do my part.



SURRENA RUB. *Certified TMN who is auditing the class.* I was a member of the 2009 class of the Tierra Grande Texas Master Naturalists while living in Alpine, Texas, for what turned out to be 16 years. The volunteer projects in which I participated included: “Science Days” for elementary students at the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI), trail maintenance at CDRI, annual Horned Lizard counts in the Davis Mountains, TMN booths at local festivals, Dark Sky research, organizing staff of the McDonald Observatory pollinator garden, and upkeep at the Alpine Railroad Depot. When the pandemic led to social isolation, I shifted to doing volunteer work with a local non-profit doing Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) with community cats in Alpine and Fort Davis. I moved to Kerrville in 2022 to be closer to family in Austin and Houston. I am looking forward to having the opportunity to participate learn and volunteer with the Hill Country Master Naturalists.



CODY SCHOENFELD. Hello. My name is Cody Schoenfeld. I am a Texas Hill Country native growing up in Austin in my earlier childhood, and then Mason for my later childhood. After graduating from high school, I attended Angelo State University, majoring in Animal Science. I then worked as a Veterinary Technician for several years and decided to change my career path. I decided to go into finance, for which I have been a Licensed Financial Advisor and certified Risk Management Professional for the last 25 years. Due to an illness in the family, I have moved back to the family ranch in Mason County. While I found a thriving ecosystem on the Llano River, the ranch has become overgrown with invasive species of trees and plants. The once hay field and pastures of grassland are now covered in Mesquite, Agarita, Tasajillo, Cat Claw Acacia, Bee Brush, Prickly Pear, and Eagle Claws. My intent for TMN training is to increase my knowledge of the Texas natural resources and use that knowledge to develop the ranch resources for farming, ranching, and recreational use.



HEATHER SCHOENFELD. I am from a military family and moved around frequently during my childhood, but I have spent most of my life in Texas. I completed my undergraduate degree at Angelo State University and began my professional career in the financial industry. After earning my Master's in Education from the University of Phoenix, I transitioned into the field of education. For the past 18 years, I have been dedicated to teaching, and I am currently a high school Mathematics teacher at Llano ISD. I live in Mason with my husband, Cody, who is originally from here. I am beginning to explore the local plants and wildlife of the Hill Country and am eager to learn more. Gardening has recently become a new passion of mine. My goal for the Texas Master Naturalist training is to deepen my knowledge and leverage my educational experience to share and inspire others. Thank you and I look forward to our classes together.



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CARL SCHUPP. Growing up on Lake Austin and a graduate of The University of Texas, I'm a proud Austinite but a grateful transplant to the beautiful Texas Hill Country. Growing up, I spent time in the Hill Country for a couple of summer camps and church retreats at Mo Ranch. I enjoyed my time in a fraternity at UT, tolerated enlistment in the US Army Light Infantry, and ultimately earned a BS in Advertising. It didn't take long for me to realize that raising a family was not my only passion, but working with my hands, rather than behind a desk, was how I would prefer to support them. An entrepreneur at heart, I've owned businesses including a remodeling company. Most importantly, I know I need to spend much of my time outdoors and take a hands-on approach to things. My commitment to my family's ranch, the community where I volunteer in various capacities including as a Hunt Volunteer Firefighter, and the planet drives me to continue to increase my knowledge, skill set, and understanding of Earth's preservation, sustainability, and enhancement.



PATSY SHERMAN. I grew up in Houston, Texas, and lived most of my young adult life in Huffman, on Lake Houston, which is northeast of Houston. I loved living on the lake where I could fish, water-ski, or just sit on the dock for hours soaking in the day. I enjoy camping on weekends and holidays. After my divorce, I made camping my yearly vacation while raising my three daughters. Hiking was my favorite so I could be quiet with nature and how it made me feel. In my late 30's, I remarried and moved to California. I had a chance to go to college and decided on a degree in Environmental Science. I loved the field trips to volcanic craters, ancient seabed, rock formations, and identifying land erosion. After experiencing a terrifying earthquake, I moved back to Texas, relocating to Kerrville, but discovered I could not continue my education in environmental science since it was not offered. I did not stop studying nature. I visited state parks, collected rocks and fossils, and watched wildlife when I could. When I retired, I moved to Hunt on three acres with a log cabin nestled next to a large, wooded area. I have a front and back porch where I can sit and watch wildlife throughout the day. I enjoy seeing all the birds, butterflies, bees, and wild animals and how they all behave. I feel it is my obligation to keep my property as a place where nature can thrive. Dead trees and brush for nesting, feeders for birdlife, water sources for drinking and bathing, wildflowers for the birds and bees and grasses for wildlife grazing. My goal in becoming a Master Naturalist is to gain further understanding of nature and its beauty. I hope to possibly educate others on the importance of nature, to bring awareness of human's careless destruction of the environment, to open eyes to its beauty, and to help motivate preservation of the environment.



PHIL & REBECCA STAPLETON. *Certified TMNs who are auditing the class.* We both completed our initial training and certification in 2017 with the Mid Coast TMN chapter. The Mid Coast Chapter includes eight counties from Matagorda to San Patricio. Rebecca is an artist/nature journalist and I am a photographer. Our primary interests as Master Naturalists were volunteering with the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge as Roving Interpretive Guides and assisting Field Biologists with data collection. We also collected field data for the International Crane Foundation. Rebecca taught Nature Journaling for both the South Texas and Mid Coast initial training classes. We were training Ambassadors for the initial training field day at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. We were also actively involved with our chapter outreach efforts. We moved to Hunt last December and transferred our membership to the Hill Country Chapter in March of this year.



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SARAH BISRAM STEWART. I am originally from Wisconsin. My mom is a horticulturist, so I grew up learning about plants. My dad is from the Caribbean and is really into the outdoors. I attended Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee and the University of Washington in Seattle. I worked at UW for many years, in the hospital and payroll departments. Elsewhere, I did bookkeeping, editing, publishing, and recruiting. I was an Allstar personal shopper at Nordstrom, too. In 2018, my hubby and I purchased the former "Scofield School for Girls" in Kerrville, and I met Ginny deWolf. Ginny recruited me to her Monarch Monitoring Project. I'm also the project lead at Kerrville-Schreiner Park Pollinator Garden. I'm fascinated by ecology and nature. I've always been involved in gardening and related clubs, so the Master Naturalist Program is a good fit. I value both the social and the "giving-back-to-the-community" aspects of it.



CLARK TERRELL. I've lived in Boerne with my wife for over 32 years, where we raised our children. Recently I transitioned from working in my office over 50 hours weekly to semiretired status, now working 10-15 hours weekly from home. Prior to this transition, I crammed natural activities into weekends and holidays. Now I have sufficient time to expand my knowledge and experiences with nature. I have participated in many citizen science activities for decades, involving primarily bird and plant surveys, in various natural areas in Kendall and Bexar counties. My back yard and small greenhouse are filled with efforts to germinate and grow native plants. I enjoy leading tours for birds and plants in protected areas, educating others about the wonders found in our spectacular Hill Country. I serve as a trustee for the Cibolo Preserve in Kendall County, dedicated to protecting natural resources through research. I look forward to engagement with the Hill Country TMN chapter, gaining extensive knowledge, meeting other dedicated folks, and expanding opportunities for volunteer service.



CONNOR TRAVIS. Greetings! My name is Connor Travis, and I am excited to meet everyone and to be a part of this upcoming TMN class! Having grown up in Boerne, I have always harbored a love for the Hill Country and its people. I'm grateful for this opportunity to become a better steward of Roberts Ranch - where I work - and become a more active member of the conservation community through the trainings, volunteerism, and relationships formed on this TMN journey.



MEREDITH TURNBOUGH. I've always had a love of the natural world. I grew up watching Marlin Perkins (and Jim), Jacque Cousteau, and David Attenborough on public television. My studies took me to a degree in Biology/Chemistry (and later Molecular Biology), but I always jumped at the chance to take every field class I could fit into my schedule. Fast forward a lot of years, and I'm fortunate enough to live in the beautiful Texas Hill Country where I have been able to put some of that knowledge to use managing our place for wildlife (whitetail deer, turkey, golden cheeked warblers, and so much more). What I've realized is that I still have so much to learn about the natural world and my environment - "Is this a good grass or a bad grass?", "How do I protect my trees from Oak wilt?", "What can I do to help preserve the unique ecology of the region?". It is this last question I am hoping to learn more about in the TMN program. I look forward to it!



(Continued on page 12)

JOANNE WILLIAMS. I was fortunate to grow up in “American Paradise” on the island of St. Thomas, in US Virgin Islands. I attended and graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a BA in Psychology. Following a couple of years in the Chicago area, I moved to Houston where I worked and lived for almost 20 years. I am a “retired” fundraising professional and built my career in Advancement raising money for a variety of non-profit organizations in the arenas of children and family services, healthcare, and education. I married my childhood sweetheart and moved from the big city life of Houston to the quiet, coastal town of South Padre Island where we lived for several years. Knowing that we ultimately wanted to retire in the Hill Country, we made Boerne our home in 2017. We love the Texas Hill Country and appreciate the opportunity to be outdoors in nature in such a beautiful space. I think for me, growing up in the islands surrounded by nature, inspired a real passion and curiosity about the environment. I’m an avid volunteer and have been involved with the Cibolo Center for Conservation for the past seven years. I view the TMN program as a real opportunity to learn more about our Texas Hill Country—her land, trees, flora, fauna, water, and other natural resources. I hope to have meaningful volunteer experiences and contribute to further the mission of TMN.



TY YOUNG. I grew up in Kress, Texas where we farmed and raised cattle. I graduated with a degree in Accounting and Finance, and an MBA from Texas Tech. I moved to Dallas after college, spent a couple of years in San Antonio, and have lived in Boerne the the past 30 years. My professional career started in Public Accounting and moved on to Real Estate companies. After moving to San Antonio, I had a couple of Chief Financial Officer positions and then bought a company in Monterey, Mexico building wooden birdfeeders. I bought a handful of other companies over the next 25 years. I’ve been on the board of the Cibolo Center for Conservation for 10 years and I’m currently their Interim Chief Operations Officer. I have a wife and two boys, both Eagle Scouts and Aggies. All three love the outdoors. I look forward to being a part of TMN and increasing my knowledge of natural resources and being an advocate of our planet.



THE LEGACY OF THE TEXAS STAR FLOWER SEEDS

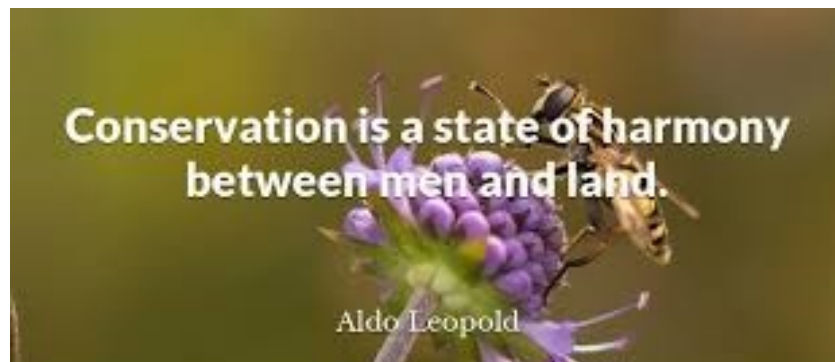
BY GRACIE WAGGENER

In 2008, I was a new student in a Hill Country Texas Master Naturalist class. Phyllis Muska was the Past President and she gifted me with a 4-inch pot that contained a Texas Star (*Lindheimeria texana*) that she had grown. I successfully grew the plant, collected the seeds and planted them at the butterfly garden at Kerrville-Schreiner Park. The following year, those seeds were planted at Riverside Nature Center. The plant grew and the new seeds were planted at the Fredericksburg Nature Center Pollinator Garden. And finally, the seeds from those flowers were planted at the Greater Basin Natural Resource Center garden. The seeds from these plants are now collected and gifted to every new student coming into the chapter. This one plant, and its new seeds, transformed a host of gardens in the course of many years.



As each Texas Master Naturalist joins our chapter, the circle begins, the same as the Texas Star flower seed. The members are trained and nurtured until they, too, grow and produce seeds that are planted and scattered, not just in the TMN chapter but in their own lives.

In seed planting, the first thing to do to guarantee healthy plants is to choose a good seed. It is choosing the things you love and the things that spark your light. That's your good seed.



ACTING OUT IN CLASS

THE SUBJECT: EARLY NATURALISTS



THE ACTORS

(left to right)

BILLY GUIN, AS FERDINAND JACOB LINDHEIMER

PATTI GUIN, AS MARY SOFIE YOUNG

LAURA KING, AS ROSALIE BARROW EDGE

CARLA STANG, AS LADY BIRD JOHNSON



LAURA KING AS ROSALIE BARROW EDGE



BILLY GUIN AS FERDINAND JACOB LINDHEIMER



CARLA STANG AS LADY BIRD JOHNSON



PATTI GUIN AS MARY SOFIE YOUNG

AUGUST 24, 2024
RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER

WHAT IS A “MASTER” NATURALIST?

MARCH 2009, PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE, BY JOHN HUECKSTEADT

I recently had a conversation with an “ex-Master Naturalist.” “Ex” because this person, although still very involved in volunteering and stewardship, was no longer active in the chapter partly due to discomfort with our name “master naturalist.” This caught me short. It has never occurred to me that using that title might be presumptuous.

While trying to resolve my feelings about this challenge, I began thinking about all the people who call themselves “master” - those with master’s degrees, Masters Tournament golfers, Zen masters, Master Gardeners, master chefs, or Master Carpenter Norm Abrams. “Wow,” I thought, “Maybe we *are* overstating ourselves, I have never felt that my learning about nature compares to any of these.” My sense of unease continued.

Then I stumbled upon an article on an unrelated subject. It suggested that too often we *take* our identity and sense of value from our titles rather than *giving* value to those titles. It is not what we take from the name “master naturalist;” it is what we bring to that name. I began to feel a little better. Desperate for resolution I resorted to Merriam Webster. I found little solace until reaching, at the very bottom, the etymology of the word “master.” The root meaning is from the Latin *magister*... teacher. The dilemma evaporated.

Never shrink from calling yourself a Master Naturalist, but do so with a sense of giving to the name, as a teacher, with humility and a profound sense of gratitude.

John Huecksteadt, Class of 2006, Hill Country Chapter President, 2009-2010
(1943-2023)

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MENTOR

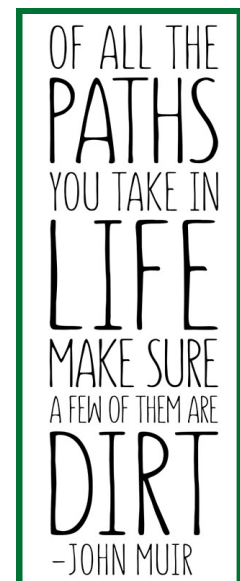
How is a mentor defined? A mentor is someone who shares knowledge, skills and experience with another person to help them progress.

As the new class begins its 4th week as a TMN Member-in-Training, the role of the mentor is already in place.

The Texas Master Naturalist program is very proud of its mentoring program. Every mentor is a certified TMN and has at least one year of experience in the program. Each mentor has volunteered for this role and is enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge with new Members-in-Training.

Mentors will answer questions such as:

- ◆ “Where do I find a volunteer project?”
- ◆ “I’m still stuck on how to input my entries in VMS. Can you help?”
- ◆ “There’s so much information. What if I can’t retain all of it?”
- ◆ “How do I find a make-up class?”
- ◆ Any other question you might have.
- ◆ ... or if you just want to talk.



About the Class

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION:

New Class Director:
Carra Milikien

newclassdirector@hillcountrytmn.org

OR

Ask your mentor.
They are here to help you!

THE CLASS SCHEDULE:

[HTTPS://TXMN.ORG/
HILLCOUNTRY/FILES/2024/08/
FINAL-SCHEDULE-2024.PDF](https://txmn.org/hillcountry/files/2024/08/final-schedule-2024.pdf)
OR CLICK [HERE](#)

HELPFUL LINKS

MAKE UP CLASSES: <https://txmn.org/hillcountry/2024-missed-class-or-field-trip-information/> OR Click [HERE](#)

ENTERING HOURS: [https://tpwd.samaritan.com/recruiter/index.php?
class=VolunteerNavigation&recruiterID=1450&act=CONTROL:LOGIN_LINK](https://tpwd.samaritan.com/recruiter/index.php?class=VolunteerNavigation&recruiterID=1450&act=CONTROL:LOGIN_LINK) OR Click [HERE](#)

To learn more about our chapter,
please check out our website:

txmn.org/hillcountry

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T E X A S



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PARKS &
WILDLIFE

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION