

January 2025

Vol 22

Number 1



The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter

T E X A S



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January Chapter Meeting

The January Hill Country Chapter meeting will be held on Monday, January 27th. Doors will open at 6:00 pm for light refreshments. The business meeting will begin at 6:30 and the presentation at 7:00.

Our speaker will be Peggy Sechrist, who will speak about Regenerative Ranching and the Water Cycle. For more information, please see Phil Youngblood'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 January 27th.

If you are attending in person, the location is at Guadalupe Basin Natural Resource Center (GBNRC). 125 Lehman Dr. Kerrville. There is no need to pre-register.

President's Message ... Sheryl Pender

Happy New Year!

I am excited to be your new President and am also excited to join an experienced group of Board members, most of whom are continuing another year as board members. It is also a pleasure to Welcome Aimee Tennant as our 2025 Membership Director. She is replacing Phil Roberson who did a superb job and left big shoes to fill. I am confident that she can fill them. Also, Kathy Crawford, will become the 2024 Class Representative. She is replacing Lou Hugman who was the 2023 Class Representative. Once again, big shoes, but her replacement is a great addition to the Board and to the job.

Our Executive Committee has tapped several talented newcomers: Phil Youngblood, Diane DeKerlegand, and Maria Lozano. I would like to thank them for joining the Executive Committee and would also like to give many thanks to retiring officers Alice King, Lisa Flanagan and Dot Maginot who paved wide roads for us to follow.

Note: The listing of the new Board of Directors may be found on [page 21](#) of this newsletter.

See **President** page 2



President

Continued from page 1

Finally, I want to acknowledge Jeff Schwarz for his two years of service as President and his mentoring of all of us as new officers. Jeff will continue in the Past President role as we build and grow from his commitment to our active volunteerism. You all saw his capable management and the significant improvements and work he did for our organization!

Please check out the Hill Country TMN Annual Report 2024 in this Texas Star newsletter. The numbers shown in the report are measures of our effectiveness. We are a large TMN chapter with a lot happening. Numbers tell us only a small part of our story. You, our members, are what makes us great. I am excited about working with each of you as we work together to make Hill Country even better!

“Baby, It is Cold Outside”, so join us at the hot chocolate and hot cider bar with salty and sweet snacks at our first meeting of 2025 on January 27th. Doors will open at 6:00pm and you will have a chance to meet members of the Hill Country TMN Class of 2024, who will serve as greeters. Please wear your name badge, get your door prize ticket and visit with each other. Also, welcome the visitors and show them what an exceptional organization we are. Please browse the merchandise table as Gracie Waggener has a lot of great things for sale, and she really does a wonderful job helping us raise the visibility of our organization.

At the meeting, be on the lookout for “Ask me about” name tags identifying people who will be delighted to talk about their pet projects.

After the social time, at 6:30pm, we will start the Chapter Meeting in the Auditorium. and remember to record that half hour as volunteer service. Typically, a great deal of information is relayed during the Chapter Meeting, including chapter news, recognition of important contributions by our members and information that has impact on our outreach, education and service.

Our 2025 kick-off Advanced Training will occur after the chapter meeting and should not be missed. You will learn from Peggy Sechrist’s presentation of the critical importance of building soil and retaining water in degraded landscapes. Advanced Training counts for an hour of AT credit.

I can’t wait to see you all at this first meeting of 2025!

Sheryl Pender

REGENERATIVE RANCHING AND THE WATER CYCLE

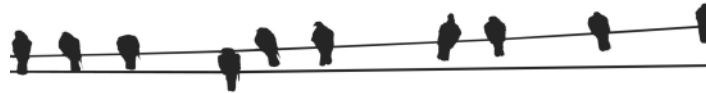
Speaker: Peggy Sechrist

BY PHIL YOUNGBLOOD—VICE PRESIDENT OF OUR CHAPTER



Description: Water and soil are critical natural resources in the Texas Hill County, something ranchers are even more acutely aware of. This month we welcome Peggy Sechrist, an expert in the practice of regenerative ranching, who will speak about grazing management and its relationship to the water cycle.

About Our Speaker(s): Peggy Sechrist has over 35 years of experience with regenerative agriculture and ranching practices. A professionally certified educator in holistic management and former advisor to the national Soil for Water Initiative, her natural approach has helped to improve degraded landscapes through restoration of native species and careful management of available water.



April
25-28
2025

SAVE THE DATE

Join us for a fun, competitive way to see which worldwide city can make the most observations of local flora and fauna during the **City Nature Challenge, April 25-28, 2025.**



CONGRATULATIONS to everyone who helped earn the iNaturalist City Nature Challenge National Champion title in 2024. Let's do it again!

Do you want to help defend our crown? Download the iNaturalist app, join one of our training sessions or practice walks between now and April and then snap photos or record sounds of nature between April 25-28, and upload your observations to iNaturalist by May 4. That's it!

Watch for the dates for upcoming events and join the fun! For more information contact Suanne Pyle at spyle64@hotmail.com or text 361 563 6059.

www.inaturalist.org

NOVEMBER AWARDS:

INITIAL CERTIFICATIONS (CLASS OF 2024):

Marc Davis, Valerie Davis, Lisa Kolaja

RECERTIFICATIONS

Tom Burke, Dierdre Duchene, Lorri Kendrick, Laura Levy, Karla Marchell, Barbara Marquer, Susie McCalla, Nancy Roberts, Nellwyn Sadler, Louisa Stone, Clark Terrell, Carl Thorne-Thomsen, Fletcher Thorne-Thomsen

MILESTONES

250 Hours: Lou Hugman, Barbara Pankratz
500 Hours: Linda Miller
1000 Hours: Carra Milikien
2500 Hours: Pam Lienhard
5000 Hours: Brenda Fest

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



Recertifications:

Susie McCalla, Phil Stapleton, Mary Frushour,
Carra Milikien, Richard Adams, Paula Harley



1000 Hours:

Mark Hults

DECEMBER AWARDS

DECEMBER INITIAL CERTIFICATIONS (CLASS OF 2024):

Maya Christeson, Kathy Crawford, Cody Schoenfeld,
Heather Schoenfeld, Joanne Williams

SPECIAL CERTIFICATION:

Diane DeKerlegand

RECERTIFICATIONS

Jana Baxter, Randy Fuentes, Sandra Haldeman, Bridget Langdale,
Wendi Leonard, Dennis Thiele, Kevin Wessels

MILESTONES

250 Hours: Lucy Cruz Hudson
1000 Hours: Wendi Leonard
4000 Hours: Sheryl Pender

POLLINATOR GARDEN AND RECOGNITION PROGRAM (PGARP) - BOERNE RESIDENT VISIT

BY KATHY WEBSTER

TMNs Maria Lozano, Felicia Zbranek, Veronica Hawk, Kathy Webster (not shown), and Janis Arterbury conducted a PGARP site visit at the home of Jeannette MacDougall (at center) on Nov. 19. Jeannette was surprised to learn that she can have a pollinator garden despite the over-population of deer in her area. With the team's help, Jeannette has already begun adding a variety of native plants to her landscape, all of them rated "high" for deer resistance.



Native Texas Plants need Native Texas Pollinators to thrive

<https://txmn.org/hillcountry/pgarp/>

POLLINATOR GARDEN ASSISTANCE AND RECOGNITION PROGRAM (PGARP)

OF BOERNE

BY KATHY WEBSTER

Of the 55 Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program (PGARP) requests that Mary Frushour (project lead, PGARP) reported for 2024, 20 of them were in the two counties that the Boerne PGARP volunteers serve: Kendall and Bandera. Seventeen of those were at private residences, one was at a senior Assisted Living facility, one was at the office of a private non-profit, and one was at Fabra Elementary school in Boerne Independent School District. The Fabra project was a collaborative effort with two Boerne Rotary Clubs to design and install a native plant pollinator garden in the courtyard area of the school.

In March of 2024, eighty-four native plants representing ten different species were installed by volunteers of the Rotary Club, the Hill Country Texas Master Naturalist program and the Native Plant Society of Texas and the a number of children were eager participants in the whole process! The TMN and NPSOT volunteers provided physical labor as well as education to the students about the importance of native plants. The Rotary Clubs provided the funding to purchase the plants. The children and Naomi Jendrusch, their sponsor-teacher, have continued to maintain their new pollinator garden and consult with the PGARP team as needed. The Pollinator Champion sign was awarded to Fabra Elementary and three other requesters in 2024 with more of the 2024 PGARP clients expected to earn their sign in 2025.

The attached photos are from the Fabra project .



<https://txmn.org/hillcountry/pgarp/>



KERRVILLE HAS BEEN CERTIFIED AS BIRD CITY KERRVILLE!

BY KATY KAPPEL — PROJECT LEADER, BIRD CITY KERRVILLE

A project of the Hill Country Master Naturalists, that began 18 months ago was certified as a Bird City in December 2024. We are certified because a coalition of 25 organizations in our city and county have excelled in educating residents, visitors and their children about the wonders of our wildlife, river and parks. Members and volunteers completed 19 recommended activities.

Riverside Nature Center, Native Plant Society of Kerrville, Upper Guadalupe River Authority, Wild Birds Unlimited and the Café and Garden at the Ridge provided environmental education to families. Birders have always visited Kerrville because we are on the migratory bird flyway. This certification will enhance our visibility as a birding destination.

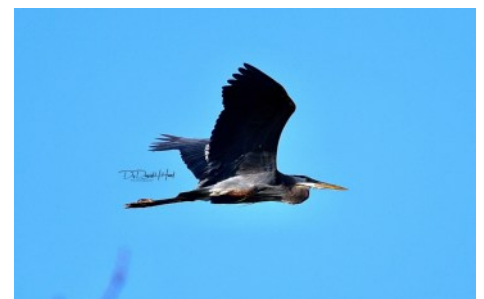
These are just a few of the Master Naturalists and organizations who played a role in helping us to receive this important certification:

- Alice King developed informational brochures for builders about bird friendly designs and low light options.
- Kathy Loring developed a new illustrated list of native plants recommended for Kerrville, which will be included in the revised 2050 plan.
- Kathy and Mark Loring are working with the city Parks and Recreation Department to construct a bird blind in Kerrville-Schreiner Park.
- Carla Stang and Bob Binney are pursuing trail building and birding improvements at the Los Rincones Preserve.
- Debbie Thompson volunteers for Lights Out Texas.
- Kathy Crawford distributes brochures for keeping cats indoors.
- Leslie Jones has developed a Bird City Kerrville website to inform residents and visitors. Bird City Texas - Kerrville Community
- Riverside Nature Center and Wild Birds Unlimited are sponsoring guided bird walks several times each month.
- Schreiner University's Dr. Chris Distel has constructed the first of several bird blinds on campus.
- The Café at the Ridge held a World Migratory Bird Day celebration May 11.
- Hill Country Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners and birders participated on Communitywide (native) Planting Day November 2.
- Upper Guadalupe River Authority continues to eradicate *Arundo donax* and pay a bounty on feral hog tails.
- Community foundations and individual donors have contributed over \$15,000 to date toward this project.
- Our area has eight native plant demonstration gardens and two native plant sales each year.

These are just some of our efforts. For 2025, we need volunteers to continue our activities, including surveying Kerrville Parks, planting native plants and creating a Wildlife Management plan. Additionally, we would like to reach out to new homeowners about planting natives and avoiding fertilizers and insecticides.

For more information, please email birdcitykerrville@gmail.com

“Better for Birds, Better for People”



Potting Mix Available To plant sale volunteers NO CHARGE!



BY ALICE KING

The Plant Sale Committee is pleased to announce that potting mix is available at no charge for volunteers who plan to donate plants to the bi-annual plant sale. The mix is suitable for growing plants from seeds or cuttings or for transplanting native plants that come up in unwelcome places or numbers on the volunteer's property.

Please contact Alice King at alice_king@att.net or 210-602-1119 if you are interested. The mix is available in 1.5 cubic foot bags from Plant Haus in Kerrville. Check with Alice before going there so that she can authorize the pick-up with Plant Haus and work with you if the quantity offered is too much or too little for you. Quantities are somewhat limited so it's a good idea to reach out to Alice as soon as possible if you are interested in donating plants for the April or October plant sales. We can also connect you with volunteers who have extra seedling trays and pots if needed.

The mix is available to everyone, skilled plant persons and beginners. Please don't be shy about jumping in if you are new to this. We would love to help you get started with advice and training. The only requirement is that you have a plan to deal with freezes and that you use good faith efforts to generate plant donations to the bi-annual sale. You are not required to show a particular success rate. The Plant Sale Committee hopes this program will result in donations of plants that are not the easy-to-grow varieties that are already available from commercial growers. A certain failure rate is expected. We hope to hear from you soon! Let's get growing!

The Plant Sale Committee is a joint effort of the Kerrville Chapter of NPSOT, the Hill Country Chapter of TMN and the Riverside Nature Center. Linda Fiore leads the Committee which organizes two sales per year – one on the third Saturday in April and one on the first Saturday in October.

Kerr County Courthouse Pollinator Garden to Receive \$2,000 grant from Pollinators for Texas

BY PAM LIENHARD—PROJECT LEADER

The Kerr County Pollinator Garden team has received word that a grant request from the Pollinators for Texas program was approved for \$2,000.00. The funds will be used to expand the existing pollinator garden to several new areas, including a high-visibility public entrance.

The Courthouse pollinator garden was inspired by the 2015 “Monarch Highway” initiative, which aimed to create a multi-state partnership to enhance Monarch habitat along Interstate-35. A few newly certified Hill Country Master Naturalists spoke about the need to encourage more Monarch habitat on private and public properties. The idea was quickly accepted as a Hill Country Master Naturalist approved project. The team wrote up a presentation with the assistance of one of the commissioners. In February 2016, the full Commissioners’ Court approved a pollinator garden on two small plots on the east side of the courthouse building.

With the help of a group of Master Naturalists, local Boy Scout Troop 111, business and personal donations and an initial monetary donation from the Hill Country Chapter Master Naturalists, the initial installation was finished in late Spring 2017.

The team secured Commissioners’ Court approval in the summer of 2021 to further expand the garden along the east side and east corner of the building, choosing a landscaping scheme of red, white and blue blossoms to showcase a more “Texas” design. The Native Plant Society of Texas has been a supporter of this extension.

The garden has been very successful. Hundreds of people can pass by in a day. If we are there during regular garden maintenance, many people thank us and tell us how much they enjoy the garden. We try to engage them in conversation about the benefits of native pollinator-friendly plants. Plants are identified with permanent signs, and we installed a small kiosk with changeable signs to add to the educational experience when we’re not present..

In June 2024, the team once again secured approval from the Commissioners to further expand. This 2024 effort was the subject of their grant request to the Pollinators of Texas program. Much hard and dirty work has already been completed, thanks to the efforts of TMN volunteers who jumped in to help tackle invasive Nandina, remove plastic landscaping barrier, and relocate large rocks. The funding from the Pollinators for Texas program will be used to purchase soil to help these long-abused areas recover and then to establish native pollinator plants, to include flowering trees. The team also plans to feature native grasses and more milkweed; important plants underutilized in much landscaping. The funds will also be used to improve plant

See [Pollinator](#) page 10

Pollinator

Continued from page 9

identification signs, build a second kiosk, and establish sitting areas for people to relax, decompress and enjoy the bees, butterflies, birds and other creatures in attendance.

The Pollinators for Texas project is a collaborative effort with H-E-B and the Texas Master Naturalist Program focused on enhancing native pollinator conservation across the state by promoting awareness, conservation efforts, and creating sustainable environments for vital species like bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. The initiative aims to engage communities in supporting pollinator-friendly practices through the funding of chapter-led educational programs, habitat restoration, and partnerships with local organizations. H-E-B provided the Texas Master Naturalist Program with a \$50,000 donation that is allocated to chapter pollinator projects across Texas in the form of a monetary project award. Pollination is a critical ecosystem service that helps to maintain the ecological integrity of native plant communities. Native pollinators—bees, butterflies, moths, bats, birds, and more—play a critical role in sustaining ecosystems and provide essential services to American agriculture (estimated at as much as \$9 billion annually). Interest in the conservation of native pollinators has grown rapidly over the last few years as several species have experienced dramatic population declines.



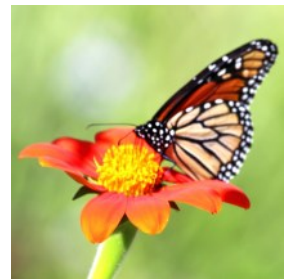
MONARCH BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION THROUGH CITIZEN SCIENCE

BY GRACIE WAGGENER

The iconic monarch butterfly is recognized, revered and celebrated by adults and children from Canada to Mexico, yet has carried the secrets of their life cycle and migration for many years. Imagine a tiny bug being able to navigate from the northern United States and Canada to the interior of Mexico in a matter of weeks, having never been there with no maps or GPS to direct them. They were discovered overwintering by the millions in the fir tree forests of the central Mexico mountains only in 1975, with the work of Citizen Science volunteers.

However, despite their success, the monarch and its migration are facing a threatened status due to loss of habitat from development, drought, pesticide use on crops, and habitat loss in the overwintering area from logging.

The Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center invites the public to attend their first workshop for 2025, “Monarch Conservation through Citizen Science” to learn about the life cycle and habitat needs of the butterfly. Presenters for this workshop will be Sarah Hilburn, Barbara Jansen and Carla Stang, and guest speaker Cathy Downs, all certified Texas Master Naturalists with years of experience in the field with hands on monitoring, tagging and research. Several other monitoring project members will be on hand, including Gracie Waggener and Maura Windlinger to help with the training and questions.



The workshop is designed to inform the attendees how they can help sustain and increase the population numbers with monarch larva monitoring, data entry, habitat requirements and improvements, and other Citizen Science projects. Participants will leave with the materials and information to be able to join an established monitoring project, or create one on their own property. All the materials for the workshop will be supplied. Attendees should bring a lunch. The workshop will count as four hours of Texas Master Naturalist advanced training.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2025 at the Texas AgriLife Extension building, 38 Business Court in Fredericksburg. The hours will be from 9:00am to 1:30pm with a short, on-site lunch break.

Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center is a 501c3 volunteer organization that works to promote public nature education for adults and children with multiple workshops and programs throughout the year. Please visit their webpage, fredericksburgnaturecenter.com, and please join the volunteer workdays on Tuesday mornings at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park for additional learning opportunities.

The program is free and open to the public. There is a suggested donation of \$10.00 to help cover the costs of the workshop materials. Please RSVP to Gracie Waggener, gwaggener@flow-apps.com to insure that we have sufficient materials for everyone.

Please also see flyer on page 12



Monarch Butterfly Conservation Through Citizen Science

**February 8, 2025
9:00 am - 1:30 pm
Texas Agrilife Building
38 Business Court
Fredericksburg, TX**



The Hill Country provides critical habitat on the primary migration pathway of Monarchs to and from their wintering grounds in Mexico. Host plants and habitat have declined. Learn how you can help in the effort to create and restore Monarch habitat on your property and public lands.

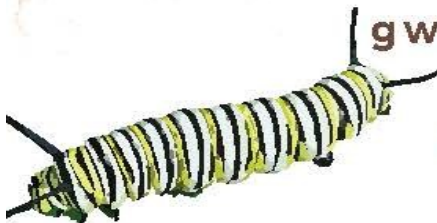
Presenters: TX Master Naturalists Carla Stang, Sarah Hilburn, and Barb Jansen, with guest speaker Cathy Downs.

Topics include:

- Monarch anatomy, biology, and life cycle
- Identifying host and nectar plants
- Monitoring larva and reporting data
- Additional resources

**RSVP to Gracie Waggener at
gwaggener@flow-apps.com**

4 AT hours #AT25-012



Local State Parks are Great Places to Go, Even in Winter

After the recent passing of one of our founding members, Jim Stanley, of the Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter, The Texas Star was given permission to publish a series of essays written by Jim Stanley. Following is the first, of hopefully many, that will continue his legacy of providing information about his love and respect for the Texas Hill Country.

An excerpt from “*Hill Country Ecology: Essays on Plants, Animals, Water and Land Management*”

BY JIM STANLEY

I have urged everyone, especially those with kids, to spend more time outdoors enjoying and learning about Nature. But recently, someone said to me, “But there is nothing to do in the winter.” I beg to differ. There are 18 State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas in the Hill Country.

Some may think things are not as “pretty” when everything is not green, and the rivers that run through many of these places are too cold for swimming or tubing, but Mother Nature is still there. The trails are open, the rivers are flowing, the birds are singing. There are things to do and things to see in all of them. And best yet, they are not nearly as crowded as in the summer.

Most of these places have hiking trails, some moderately strenuous, most fairly easy. The sights and sounds and smells are different in the winter, but no less interesting. You can sometimes see more in the winter without the leaves. For bird watchers, both serious and casual, there are opportunities to see species that are not here year round. For photographers, there are always interesting things to photograph.

Best of all, you get to experience and learn from Mother Nature. Here are some of my favorite places:

South Llano River State Park just south of Junction is a great place to watch birds from any of the several blinds the park has built. There is a large “pecan bottoms” area filled with huge pecan trees and a long expanse of the South Llano River. Adjacent to the park is the Walter Buck State Wildlife Management Area with 18 miles of hiking trails.

Garner State Park, 10 miles south of Leakey on the Frio River has about 7 miles of hiking trails and a long stretch of the river, and they have both cabins and campgrounds.

Lost Maples State Natural Area on the Sabinal River 4 miles north of Vanderpool is justifiably famous for the fall color of its Bigtooth Maples, but it is a great place to visit anytime. There are over 10 miles of hiking trails, some short and easy, some more strenuous, but with beautiful views. There is a campground and some primitive camping sites.

Hill Country State Natural Area about 10 miles outside of Bandera is well known to folks that like to go horseback riding, but most trails area also open to hikers. It is a really beautiful, undeveloped expanse of hill and woodlands.

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, 14 miles north of Fredericksburg on RR 965 is one of my favorite Hill Country places. While famous for the granite dome which rises 450 feet above the valley floor and affords a

See Stanley page 14

striking view of the surrounding countryside, there is also a great 4 mile trail around the domes and shorter trails along the beautiful Sandy Creek.

Pedernales Falls State Park, 9 miles east of Johnson City contains numerous hiking trails, a great stretch of the river over interesting rock formations, and is an excellent birding location.

Other Hill Country State Parks and Natural Areas are Lyndon B. Johnson, Devil's Sinkhole, Kickapoo Cavern, Colorado Bend, Inks Lake, Longhorn Caverns, Blanco, McKinney Falls, Guadalupe River/Honey Creek and Government Canyon, all very much worth a trip.

Two of the local Wildlife Management Areas are also recommended. Kerr Wildlife Management Area is open to the public and is a favorite with seasoned birdwatchers. It is about 13 miles west of Hunt on Rt. 1340. Then in the spring through fall when the bats are present, everyone should experience the bats exit the tunnel for their nightly flights at Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area between Comfort and Fredericksburg.

Texas has a smaller percentage of public land than any of the other states in the west, so all of the 115 State Parks and Historic Sites are playing a critical role in maintaining and protecting Texas' native habitat. So take advantage of these places, enjoy your visits and become better acquainted with our native ecosystems.

For more information, phone numbers and directions, visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife website at www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Book Club—Kerrville Chapter 2025



- February 19: Sacred Nature by Karen Armstrong
- March 19: The Well-Gardened Mind by Sue Stuart-Smith
- April 16: The Power of Trees by Peter Wohlleben
- May 21: Requiem for a Lawnmower by Sally and Andy Wasowski
- June 18: The Heat will Kill You First by Jeff Goodell
- July 16: We are the Ark by Mary Reynolds

The club meets from 12:00-1:00
Butt-Holdsworth Memorial Library
505 Water Street, Kerrville

No preregistration required. Attendance is free.

Book Review

BY MARK HULTS—COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Braiding Sweetgrass

Robin Wall Kimmerer

Milkweed Editions, 2013

390 pages

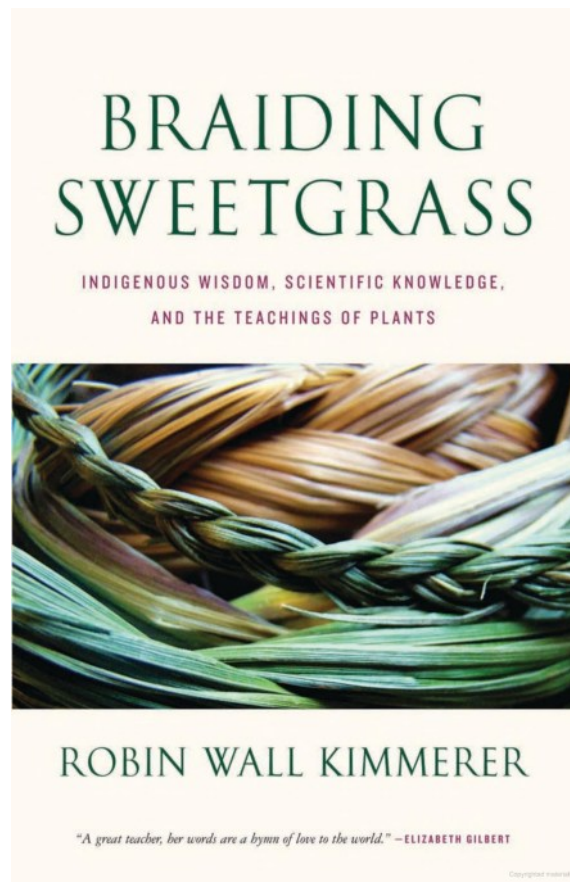
This book is of interest to all who care about nature. I found it, like *A Sand County Almanac*, filled with native spirituality and knowledge. Then add in the knowledge and experience of a Botanist. Tie this all together by telling personal stories and you have the framework of this book.

I learned that trees know it is time to bud in the Spring from the following: “For shoots that are only one millimeter long to become full-fledged leaves, they need food. So when the buds sense spring, they send a hormonal signal down the trunk to the roots, a wake-up call, telegraphed from the light world to the underworld.” This gives you a good idea of the gems you will discover in this wonderful book.

I found this to be an easy and worthwhile read. Although the setting is mostly in the Northeast; it still offers interesting facts and stories that apply to our Hill Country. The author’s first book is on my reading list.

Available on [Amazon](#) in Hardcover, Paperback, and Kindle.

Editor’s Note: What are you reading? Send your book review to the [Newsletter](#).



HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

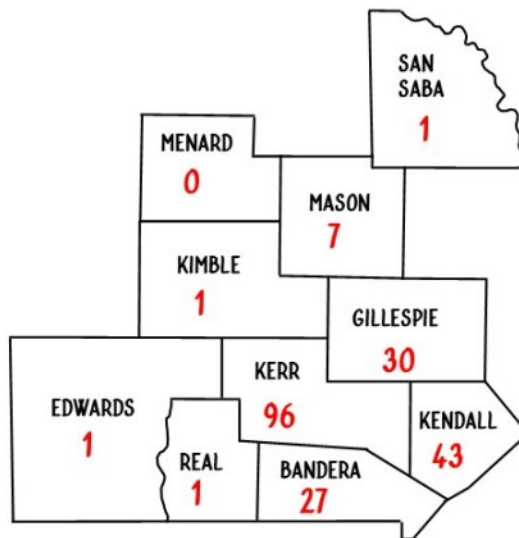
MEMBERSHIP	Total number of active members:	237																								
VOLUNTEERING	Total number of volunteer service projects:	151																								
	Total number of volunteer service hours:	30,567																								
TRAINING	Total Advanced Training events per month:	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Jan</td><td>43</td><td>Feb</td><td>67</td><td>Mar</td><td>61</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Apr</td><td>62</td><td>May</td><td>50</td><td>Jun</td><td>43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul</td><td>32</td><td>Aug</td><td>41</td><td>Sep</td><td>59</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct</td><td>110</td><td>Nov</td><td>29</td><td>Dec</td><td>21</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Jan	43	Feb	67	Mar	61	Apr	62	May	50	Jun	43	Jul	32	Aug	41	Sep	59	Oct	110	Nov	29	Dec	21
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	Jul	32	Aug	41	Sep	59																				
Oct	110	Nov	29	Dec	21																					
Average Advanced Training attendance at monthly chapter meetings:	<table> <tbody> <tr> <td>In person:</td><td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Zoom:</td><td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total:</td><td>91</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	In person:	50	Zoom:	41	Total:	91																			
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Total:	91																									
Class of 2024:	<table> <tbody> <tr> <td>Certified:</td><td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>In-Training:</td><td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total:</td><td>30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Certified:	15	In-Training:	15	Total:	30																			
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PUBLIC RELATIONS	Number of Social Media hits:	<table> <tbody> <tr> <td>Facebook:</td><td>1,451</td> </tr> <tr> <td>YouTube:</td><td>49,946</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Facebook:	1,451	YouTube:	49,946																				
	Facebook:	1,451																								
YouTube:	49,946																									
Number of Public Service Announcements distributed:	116																									

See 2024 Annual Report on page 17

OUTREACH SERVICES	Number of Speaker Bureau presentations available on website:	26
	Number of YouTube videos available on website:	27
	LMAP	Total visits: 20 Total acres: 1,175 Largest visit: 160 acres Average: 60 acres
	PGARP	Total requests: 60 Out of area: 5 Total HC requests: 55
FINANCIAL INFORMATION	Total Income	\$17,589.40
	Total Expenses	\$13,970.05

MEMBERSHIP

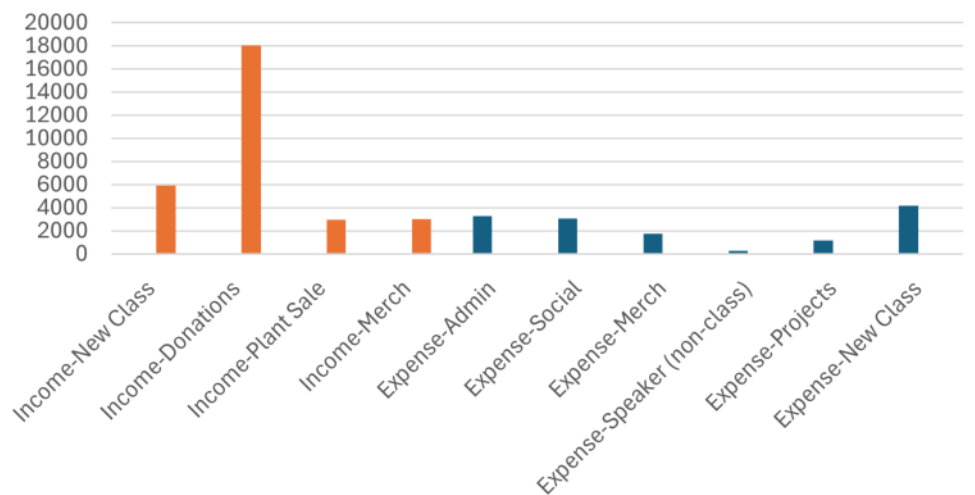
TOTAL MEMBERS BY COUNTY



TOTAL IN ALL HILL COUNTRY COUNTIES: 207
 ALL OTHER COUNTIES: 30
 TOTAL MEMBERS: 237

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Income & Expenses



The View from Rusty Bend



Carolina Wren at the ready

The smallest next right thing

The world is violent and mercurial and will have its way with you. We are saved only by love..
~ Tennessee Williams

Feel the sun rub your back
on this golden autumn day. Smell
the snap of cedar sap rising, imagine
the crisp promise of cooler air.
Walk the grassy edges, stroke the
little bluestem, neither small
nor blue, in its rusty glory.
Fill your palms with feathery seed.
Find the bare spots, tickle the
spores across them.

Notice the birds still sing on the river,
the wrens will still be true.
Now find cowpen daisies,
crumble their dry, brown heads.
Watch a thousand possibles fly,
broadcast by the wind.
Hope waits inside.
When you're ready
the right dose will kiss you
with both hands.
Hold your people close.
This gleaning,
this scattering
of the spent,
a beginning,
reverent.

December arrived at Rusty Bend and though the leaves are gone, there is still much to see and hear and touch and taste. At the first twist of wind from the north, I watch the delicate circus performance of spiders migrating. Ballooning, it's called, when they cast their silk aloft and drift at the mercy of the breeze. Pale threads float south, hypnotize me with their fragility. What a way to travel.

The cypress needles are all down and soften the edges of the river with their rusty hues. They smell of balsam like an old growth forest. The few cold mornings we've had cleaned up the water in the river. Clear as an aquarium, we watch the bass and perch feed and jump. I love to see the limestone grooves striping the riverbed, hiding gar and catfish in their slots.

As for things to touch, it's the gleaning time, when we can gather grass and flower seeds into envelopes and save them to sow in wetter times. Those tender seeds make my hands happy and my heart sing. Despite the drought, the rains came at the right time to make this bumper crop of seeds to gather.

For the third year in a row, just as hunting season begins, we watch what appears to be an annual event. Young ravens arrive in a large group, 20-30 of them. Noisy with squawks and gulps, they whirl and swirl aloft, playing with the thermals of the cliffs above the river. Diving at each other, trying to fly upside down, grabbing moss and small sticks to drop and catch again. Are they courting? Are they looking for mates? Or maybe just playing and showing off. Whatever the purpose, their frisk and joy is catching, I find myself skipping to the barn.

The mockingbirds are feeding and bathing in groups. They gather in the persimmon bushes and have a lot to say. It sounds like a fractious board meeting or maybe parliament. Finally, our beloved White-crowned Sparrows arrived from the tundra. A friend calls them Skunk Heads. Their song lightens each day.

Though rain has been scarce, we have had several prodigious fogs, fogs with such personality, they come right up on the porch. Fogs that siphon up what little winter light we have. Fogs so strong they eat up sound. That is of course, except the pure tones of the White-crowned Sparrow who traveled all the way from the arctic to sing us through the winter and the challenges to come.



Snaggle-ear in repose

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 available from FlowerSong Press and can be ordered from this link: <https://www.flowersongpress.com/books/p/the-place-the-spiders-waved-by-lucy-griffith>

If you'd like a signed copy of The Place the Spiders Waved, email me 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.

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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:

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