



AUDUBON'S FIELD AND FOREST DAY

Joan Russell

Editor's Note: Please note the March 29 workday in which our Chapter will help Joan identify and flag native plants in preparation for this event. (See page 3).

The Bastrop County Audubon Society is hosting a **Field and Forest Day** on Sunday April 6 from 4-7 pm for guests to learn about various techniques for woods and prairie management and to observe a pond site in stages of management and restoration. This event is being held at the home of Joan and Horace Russell who live on 7 acres in the Lost Pines.

Non-profit environmental groups and government agencies will highlight their approaches to forest health, wildfire prevention and plant and wildlife diversity on the same piece of property at the same time for this event.

The Circle D Volunteer Fire Department will have information about lowering the risk of a damaging wildfire, prescribed burning to clear a forest of litter fuel and how to burn a brush pile safely as well as the regulations concerning all outdoor burning. **Natural Texas Forest and Land Management**, owned by Carl Brockman, Certified Arborist and Sam McClamb, biologist will be on the site. They will have a demonstration plot of invasive and volatile brush that has been cleared and mulched by the forestry mulching mower to allow in light and air and to let native forbs and grasses re-establish.

Jan Fulkerson, Urban/Wildland Interface Specialist with the **Texas Forest Service** will answer questions about how to reduce the risk of destructive wildfire and how to protect structures in a wildland environment.

Texas Master Naturalists will identify native species of trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers growing on the site. Len Polasek, **Texas Parks and Wildlife** Biologist will answer questions about prescribed burning, and food and forage plants for deer. Kelly Bender, Urban Biologist with **Texas Parks and Wildlife** will have life-sized bird models that sing that bird's song and she will talk about providing habitat for birds and wildlife.

The Russell property is in the critical habitat for the endangered Houston toad and a toad pond is being constructed for habitat enhancement. Kariann Sokulsky, a consultant working with **Bastrop County** will be

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available to talk about the county's conservation plan and how interested landowners living in toad habitat can help. A biologist from **U. S. Fish and Wildlife** will also be on hand to answer questions about the life cycle and habitat requirements of the toad.

Pines and Prairies Land Trust members and **Lost Pines Forest Landowners Association** members will have information about the activities of these two groups and how they work to preserve the natural areas of the Lost Pines and central Texas.

Maron Finley, **Texas Cooperative Extension** agent will have information about chemical brush control of invasive species including yaupon, cedar and mesquite.

This event is being planned and hosted by the **Bastrop County Audubon Society** as a service to all residents who are interested in preserving the beautiful forests and fields of Texas. Various stages of forest health from choked, with very little diversity of plants, poor wildlife habitat and at high risk for fire to almost completed restoration will be on the site for

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—*Field & Forest. cont'd from base 1*

observation. Plant lists for wildlife habitat, food and forage plants and FireWise landscaping guidelines will be available.

Bastrop County Audubon is grateful to all the non-profits and government agencies participating in this Field and Forest Day. As far as we know this has not been done in Bastrop County before. Plan to come. There is no charge.

Directions to the Russell house: 348 Old Firetower Rd., Bastrop, 321-2718:

From 290: take Hwy 95 to Bastrop, left at FR 1441, drive 4 miles, past Circle D Firehouse on the left, left at Oak Leaf Dr. drive to the Y, right onto Old Firetower Rd. House on left at top of hill.

From Bastrop: Take Hwy 21 east, left at FR 1441, to Pine Path, turn right, turn left immediately onto Old Firetower Rd. House on right at top of hill.

*"The more clearly we can focus
our attention on the wonders and
realities of the universe,
the less taste
we shall have for destruction."
—Rachel Carson*

The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension Agency and by Texas Parks and Wildlife.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR-

Regular meetings of the Lost Pines Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist, are the 4th Monday of the month.

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 24, 2003

6:30 PM

Red Rock Elementary Library

SNAKES & OTHER REPTILES OF CENTRAL TEXAS, BILL BROOKS

APRIL NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

April 4, 2003. Please send information to Andy Butler (butler@mdanderson.org). We welcome relevant contributions, photos, announcements or other material relating to the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program, particularly those pertaining our local area.

CHAPTER WEBSITE:

www.lostpinesmasternaturalist.org

Volunteer Opportunities

Right Here at Home Opportunities

- **Field and Forest Workday**—March 29, 10:00 am until we're done. Help identify the native species of trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers growing on Joan Russell's property and flag them in preparation for the April 6 Field and Forest Day. Contact Joan at 321-2718.
- **Bastrop Yesterfest**—April 26. Help staff our Chapter's booth at Bastrop's annual Yesterfest. Yesterfest is a community event with hundreds of volunteers that help to put on a wide variety of activities. This is a great way to 'get the word out' about our Chapter and network with other volunteer groups. Volunteers are needed for 2 hr blocks of time beginning at 9:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Call Janice Rampy at 512-303-7994.
- **Rockne Historical Museum Landscaping**—The Rockne Historical Museum is scheduled for its grand opening on June 14, 2003. Plans are now being made for paths, roads, parking, and landscaping. The Lost Pines Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists has volunteered to help plan, obtain and plant native trees and shrubs. Anyone wishing to donate a plant or help in this project should contact Gerri Martinez (512) 303-5936 or Carol Brown (512-303-7271).
- **Fire-Wise Landscaping Development**—Ongoing. Joan Russell is working with several agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, an urban forester from TPWD, and local fire departments to develop landscaping techniques and landscaping plant materials which will make our homes "fire-wise." She is looking for volunteers to help with this project which includes developing a list of fire-wise native plants. Call Joan at 321-2718.
- **Bastrop/Buescher State Park Volunteer Activities**—Ongoing; Sue Fischer will serve as our liaison with these parks to provide them with assistance in a variety of activities from trail maintenance to leading group tours. This opportunity is in the development stage. For further information, please call Sue at 321-1308.
- **Lockhart Demonstration Garden**—Ongoing; contact Lytle Arche for the specific time, and details of future work dates, at 512-398-3122 or by E-mail l-arche@tamu.edu.
- **GIS Software Input**—Take a short training course on this software and help our TPWD Wildlife Biologist map wildlife activity in a three county area. Call Len Polasek at 332-7280.

Other Opportunities

- **Bastrop State Park**—The Friends of the Lost Pines State Park will hold their monthly work session on Saturday February 22. Meet at the Bastrop SP pool

building at 9:00 A.M.

- **McKinney Roughs**—For information about volunteering at McKinney Roughs, call 512-303-5073, ext. 8040 (Bastrop Area) or toll-free, 800-776-5272, ext. 8040.
- **Wild Basin Preserve Trail Maintenance**—Second Saturday of most months (October 12; December 14), from 9:00 A.M. to noon. Volunteers are welcome to join Wild Basin Second Saturday crews, to help repair trails, control erosion, and make trails safer. Restoration projects and removal of non-native plants also help maintain the preserve. Wear sturdy shoes, bring water and dress for the weather. Tools and work gloves are available. For reservations, call (512) 327-7622, E-mail hike@wildbasin.org or visit the Wild Basin website, www.wildbasin.org.
- **Texas Horned Lizard Watch**—provides instructions for surveying the Texas State Reptile on your property or on public areas. Data from volunteers in the first year have helped biologists suggest possible relationships between fire ant distributions and the distribution of Texas horned lizards. Contact the Wildlife Diversity program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Texas Mussel Watch**—volunteers are helping document the presence or absence of native freshwater mussel species. To volunteer for Texas Mussel Watch, call the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Texas Monarch Watch**—monitor the spring and fall migration of this familiar butterfly on your own property or public lands. Volunteers can call the Monarch Watch hotline at 1-800-468-9710 (in Austin, 326-2231) to report sightings of monarchs or hear a recorded message about the status of the migration in Texas. For more information about Texas Monarch Watch or to receive monitoring kit, call the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Hummingbird Roundup**—provides instructions for monitoring hummingbirds, along with suggestions and supplies for improving hummingbird habitat on your property in Texas. For information, call the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 4644.
- **Texas Amphibian Watch**—a partner with the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program. Use field guides, web sites and audio tapes to learn to identify the various species of frogs and toads native to their area by sight and by listening to their calls. For more information about Texas Amphibian Watch or about related workshops, contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Remember**—Get approval *before* you begin a project for volunteer credit. Report your monthly volunteer service to Sue Fischer (512-321-1308).

Advanced Training

Note: Please obtain prior approval for advanced training, and don't forget to report your hours!

- **Wetlands Advanced Training**—March 20 or April 17, Tyler, Tx. Designed for landowners and the general public, this 1-day course is an introduction to the basics of wetlands, their functions and values. Topics include basic wetland identification, importance to water quality and wildlife, wetland processes, government programs available for landowners, human impacts, watershed roles, and economic values. One half day classroom, one half day in the field (transportation included). Lunch is provided. Sponsored by Whitenton Group, Inc, Texas Wildlife Association, Ducks Unlimited, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Cooperative Extension - Texas A&M University, The Wildlife Society - Texas Chapter, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. To register (\$25), contact Scott W. Jecker, 512-353-3344, or swjecker@whitentongroup.com
- **Hill Country Land Stewardship Workshop**—March 22, 2003 at Bamberger Ranch. A day on the Ranch with emphasis on "Stewardship" for the large or small landowner or anyone considering buying land, who wants to know how to improve land for all plant and animal species. Transportation is on the "Bluebonnet". This eight hour, outdoor workshop will be conducted by our experienced ranch personnel. You will look at and examine the many projects that demonstrate the principles which have been successfully used on this ranch. Registration: \$100 (discounts available to Texas Master Naturalists). Visit the Bamberger Website, <http://www.bambergerranch.org/workshops.htm> , or call 830-868-2630 to obtain a registration form.
- **The 2nd Annual Texas Native Fish Weekend**—March 28 (evening) and 29 (all day), Athens Texas. The Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, East Texas Master Naturalists and the North American Native Fishes Association present an opportunity to get to know some real Texas Natives! Includes presentations on fisheries diversity, tours of the Fisheries Center, field identification tips, comparative anatomy and taxonomy, and some actual fishing! Approved for 8 hours of advanced training credit. For more information or to register, contact Margie Ranc, 903-676-2277, 5550 FM 2495 Athens, Texas 75752.
- **Texas Ornithological Society Meeting**—April 24-26, at Port Lavaca. The Texas Ornithological Society meeting will be holding its 50th anniversary meeting at Port Lavaca from 24-26 April 2003. Many field trips are scheduled for birding activities, speakers are scheduled each night and during Saturday running concurrent with field trips is a science session running from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For details, see http://www.texasbirds.org/meetings/port_lavaca_2003.html.

- **Texas Hill Country River Regions' 4th annual Nature Quest**—April 22-27, in Uvalde County. Nature Quest participants can choose from expert-led birding, butterfly, wildflower, and native plant tours and workshops in the Frio, Sabinal, and Nueces River Canyons, including scenic Garner State Park and Lost Maples State Natural Area. Located where the eastern and western bird species overlap, the Texas Hill Country River Region is a mecca for birding enthusiasts. This year Marshall Johnston, author of *The Vascular Plants of Texas*, will offer a wildflower workshop. There are many options in the Quest, so for information, see www.thcrr.com .
- **Texas Amphibian Watch Workshop**—May 21, 2003, at Wildbasin Wilderness Preserve, 805 Capital of Texas Hwy (Loop 360). Workshop to qualify for Texas Amphibian Watch monitoring program. Please contact Marsha Reimer for information and reservations at marsha.reimer@tpwd.state.tx.us or (512) 912-7062.

Stalking the Wild Palmetto Pill Snail

Melba Sexton's 4-H students have conducted monitoring studies of mussels and snails along the San Marcos and Guadalupe Rivers, as part of the TPWD's Texas Nature Tracker Program. By monitoring the same areas over several years, they have learned about yearly population fluctuations. Here, they apply their random sampling skills to a search for the rare Palmetto Pill Snail. By examining various habitats—close to or further from the water—these enthusiastic volunteers are helping to define the snail's preferred habitat.

