



Officers

President

Elaine Cearley

512-237-3021

ElaineA@starband.net

Vice President

Andy Butler

512-321-1308

butler@mdanderson.org

Secretary

Marcy Youngman

(acting)

Treasurer

Marie Medrano

512-360-4172

Past President

Carol Reidy

512-321-5073

carolreidy@hotmail.com

State Representative

Michal Hubbard

512-303-5976

Michal_photog@yahoo.com

President's Column

Elaine Cearley

Happy Holidays everyone. I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Even though this is the time of the year when we focus on our families, it is also the time when we have to focus on some important Master Naturalist tasks.

One of the most important of those tasks is the writing of the annual report for the state. This report compiles everything our chapter did for the past year, for instance: number of people trained, number of volunteer hours, advanced training hours (total, for everyone), total number of acres impacted, trails worked. These numbers are needed not only for this year but for our chapter since inception. We are fortunate to have Sue Fischer who keeps this information for us. But she needs your help. Now is the time to report all your volunteer and advanced training hours. Please send them to her soon, or give them to her at our December meeting on the 12th. These numbers along with the numbers from all the other chapters support and justify the state program, and were instrumental in the Texas Master Naturalist program winning the Take Pride in America award. They also help support grant requests.

Our meeting will be at Bastrop State Park Refectory this month. Since this is the first meeting since the State Meeting, those who went will be asked to say a few words about their experiences. We will also be having election of officers for the coming year and will work on our plans for the training class which will start some time in February. Since this will be our last meeting before Christmas feel free to bring a snack of some sort to share.

Speaking of the state meeting, let me tell you of our recognitions. Sue Fischer was awarded her 250 hour pin on stage along with others from the state who gained theirs. Pat Abell and Alvin Cearley won photography awards, Rachel Riffe worked as a volunteer there and also was granted our chapter scholarship. We had an outstanding chapter display, the loblolly seedling giveaway was a big hit (seedlings donated by Pat Abell), but it did not win an award although we received many compliments.

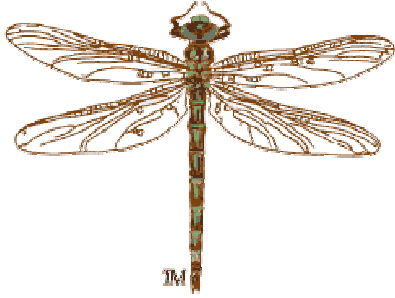
And I am not forgetting the canoe trip in November, such fun and such an adventure. You will hear about the experiences. If you haven't seen the pictures Andy has them posted on the chapter web site.

See you at the meeting,

—Elaine

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MISSION STATEMENT:

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.

STATE PROGRAM CONTACTS:

Website: <http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>

State Coordinator: Michelle Haggerty,
mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu; 979-458-2034.

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

SPONSOR CONTACTS:

Caldwell Co. Extension Office: Rachel Bauer, CEA-AG/NR; Caldwell-tx@tamu.edu; 512-398-3122

Bastrop Co. Extension Office: Maron Finley, CEA-AG/NR; Bastrop-tx@tamu.edu; 512-581-7186



CHAPTER CALENDAR

December

Monday, December 12

Chapter Meeting, 6:30 PM, Bastrop State Park Refectory. Program: Election of Officers; planning for 2006 training; State meeting report and photos; river trip photos.

January

Monday, January 16

Chapter Meeting, 6:30 PM, Red Rock Community Center.

JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Deadline for the next issue is **January 6, 2005**. We welcome relevant contributions, photos, announcements or other material relating to the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program, particularly those pertaining to our local area. Please send information to Andy Butler: butler@mdanderson.org; 512-321-1308.

CHAPTER WEBSITE

www.lostpinesmasternaturalist.org

Please check our website for updated event information and for links to many resources about our region's natural history.

New! Yahoo Group

Join our Yahoo Group to keep up with the latest Chapter happenings. Send an email to LPMN-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or log on to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LPMN/>. To join, you will have to register (free) with Yahoo. Yahoo does a good job of protecting your privacy, but there is no need to give them more than the minimum required information about yourself. As a member of the Chapter Yahoo group, you can post messages or photos for the group as well see a group calendar and receive reminders of events. For now, only registered members will be able to view messages and other materials on the Yahoo group site.

Volunteer Opportunities

- ▶ **Spring 2006 LPMN Training**— We will need lots of help to organize this year’s training program. Whether its bringing refreshments, helping with facility arrangements, inviting speakers or giving a presentation, there are many needs and opportunities. If you would like to help, bring your ideas to the Dec. 12 Chapter meeting, or contact Elaine or Andy ElaineA@starband.net or butler@mdanderson.org.
- ▶ **Bastrop State Park Hikes**— Ongoing: Saturday mornings (10:00 AM) “Discover the Lost Pines” interpretive hikes at Bastrop State Park. This is a great excuse to go to the park! Lead small groups on a short hike (about 1 1/2 hr), giving them an overview of the importance of the park, both historically and ecologically. **Volunteers will be needed again for hikes in February.** To help, contact Sue Fischer at 512-321-1308; email smfischer@mdanderson.org.
- ▶ **FireCAP Facilitators**—Facilitators will make at least two presentations to home owners on how to protect their homes against wildfire, through creating defensible space and instituting other protective measures beginning in 2005. Facilitators were trained and certified at one of several workshops held early in 2005. Please contact Michal Hubbard 512-517-1416 or by email Michal_photog@yahoo.com for details.
- ▶ **Lockhart Demonstration Garden**—The Chapter Demonstration Garden now has a native wildflower plot and a tallgrass prairie plot. Some small trees have been planted so that a shade garden can develop. The garden is evolving to a demonstration of native plants for the home landscape. To help, contact Muriel Lem at 512-398-9427.
- ▶ **4H Sport fishing camp**—This will be a all day, week long camp, during June. Shara Kilarski is coordinating monthly meetings to plan for the June camp. Shara worked with Bill Brooks on his fishing programs in Bastrop & Buescher State Parks last summer. She welcomes fresh ideas and volunteers to join in the committee. Planning meetings are usually the first week of the month. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday January 13th at 9:30 at the Travis Extension Office (1600 B Smith Rd, Austin). Breakfast will be served! Contact Shara for further information (skilarski@ag.tamu.edu; 512-247-4807).
- ▶ **Bastrop County Audubon Christmas Bird Count**—**Sunday, Jan 1 at 7:00 AM.** Meet at the Texas Grill on Highway 71 in Bastrop. Join BCAS in this important scientific outing which helps determine the health of the wild bird population. David Mitchell (MitchellDL@starband.net) will coordinate the Count.

Monitoring Activities

- ▶ **Individual monitoring activities**—In addition to Chapter activities and events with our partners agencies, a variety of individual monitoring activities, such as those listed here, may qualify for Volunteer service, particularly when they involve reporting your results as part of a broader monitoring effort. Please get these activities approved by Chapter officers, preferably before you begin.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **See the TPWD “Nature Tracker” web page for detailed monitoring information**—
http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/texas_nature_trackers/index.phtml.
- ▶ **Remember**—Get approval for volunteer activities not listed *before* you begin a project. Report your monthly volunteer service to Sue Fischer at 144 Colovista Dr., Bastrop, TX 78602; email smfischer@mdanderson.org. Take a minute **now** to send in your hours. Activity report forms are available on our website at <http://www.lostpinesmasternaturalist.org/volunteer.html>. You can fill in the Microsoft “Word” form on your computer and return it by email, or print the PDF version and fill in by hand.

“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

Advanced Training

- **Arboriculture 101—Fri-Sat Jan 5-6 and Fri-Sat Jan 20-21, 8 AM-5 PM.** This course is sponsored by the Texas Forest Service and instructed by Dr. Todd Watson at Montgomery College, The Woodlands. For detailed schedule and registration information, visit <http://texasforestservicetamu.edu/pdf/urban/urban/arb101brochure9-05final.pdf>. Cost: \$125 for each individual day or \$450 for all four days. Registration deadline is December 30.
- **Prescribed burn workshop—Thursday, Feb 2, 2006,** Chaparral Wildlife Management Area, Artesia Wells. Topics include discussion of the effects of prescribed fire on vegetation and wildlife; planning a burn; prescribed burning procedures and safety; conducting a burn (hands-on activity). Registration is \$10 (includes lunch). To register, contact Texas Wildlife Association, %Helen Holdworth, 401 Isom Road, Suite 237, San Antonio, TX 78216 (phone 210-826-2904). Chaparral WMA is south of San Antonio: take I-35 south to exit 56; turn onto FM133. The entrance is 8 miles west of I-35. (A PDF describing this event is available from our website, at <http://www.lostpinesmasternaturalist.org/training.html>).
- **Master Naturalist Campout at Brazos Bend—Feb. 10-12, 2006.** The Gulf Coast Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists is sponsoring a “Hoot & Holler” campout and advanced training at Brazos Bend State Park near Houston. Several Advanced Training presentations will be available (also some volunteer activities). Fees are \$20 for Saturday only, or \$35 to campout. Register by Feb 2. For program and registration information, see the web site: <http://community-2.webtv.net/masternaturalist/EVENTSforTexasMNs/>.
- **Winter tree identification—Saturday, Feb. 18, 2006,** Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 LaCrosse Ave, Austin. Explore winter woods with botanist Flo Oxley and learn about methods of winter tree and shrub identification. You will learn basic methods utilized in taxonomy and botany to effectively identify these slumbering native plants. Fee \$35 (members)/\$45 (nonmembers). For registration visit www.wildflower.org/?nd=registration.
- **Native Plant Spring Symposium: Native plants as habitat—Saturday, Feb 25, 2006,** Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 LaCrosse Ave, Austin. Hosted by the Wildflower Center and the Native Plant Society of Texas. The Spring Symposium will include a plenary session reviewing ecological aspects of native plants as habitat, followed by in-depth afternoon break-out sessions. Specific animal and plant relationships will be addressed, and current biological research related to native plant ecology will be reviewed. Early registration

is \$65; \$75 after January 31

- **See our Web site for more events!** Note: For events not listed in the newsletter or web site, please obtain **prior** approval for advanced training credit.

Volunteer Hours

Please report your end of the year Volunteer and Advanced Training hours for 2005 before the holidays. Forms are available on our website or at the December 12 meeting. Send your reports to Sue Fischer, 144 Colovista Dr, Bastrop Tx 78602 (or return by e-mail, smfischer@mdanderson.org). **Please use the supplied forms**, as it is impossible to keep track of your hours otherwise. Remember that you get volunteer credit for administrative work done for our Chapter (Chapter development), as well as for your “hands on” projects.

Editor's Notes

Andy Butler

As one of the founding members of our Chapter, there are many times that I've felt like Sisyphus must have been a volunteer. But this year has been different, in large part because, after several years of classes, we now have a larger and increasingly enthusiastic group interested in learning about nature and volunteering in our communities.

That's why I'd like to appeal this month for members trained in previous years, as well as those in the 2005 class, to come to the December 12 meeting and make **your** voice heard in the planning of next year's class. I know we're all busy with the holidays, but we really need your help to make the 2006 class a success. Why should you care? First, by helping with the coming class, you can add to **your** volunteer hours. By helping to arrange for a speaker for a class or two, or with hospitality, or even by giving a presentation yourself, you can really add to those hours. Second, for those attending last year's training who may have missed a few classes, this is a 2nd chance to obtain the training **you** need to complete your certification. Third, by helping to attract new members, you will help assure that we can have more educational and fun events (like the recent Colorado River trip) that we can all enjoy. It's too much work for just a couple of people to put on a training, so please volunteer (there's that word again) to do your part.