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President's Column

-Andy Butler

After our January ice storm, this past week's balmy weather is a reminder that spring is almost here. With plentiful winter rains, we can soon expect an explosion of beauty in our Texas landscapes. Spring also brings a plethora of volunteer and learning opportunities for Master Naturalists. Among the volunteer activities on the horizon are the monthly Colorado River Refuge census, the Great Backyard Bird Count (February 16-19), and Bastrop State Park interpretive hikes, running February 17 weekly through May.

For advanced training, be sure to attend our February 19 meeting, for a presentation on bark beetles by Stephen Clarke of the Texas Forest Service. He will have collected beetles to show you what to look for! February 20, Bastrop Audubon has a program on bats. March 8, Maron Finley is sponsoring a prescribed burn workshop, which will include a small burn at McKinney Roughs. The area to be burned includes a watershed demonstration plot that our chapter members installed several years ago to assist Barron Rector. You can find these and other opportunities listed in the appropriate sections of this newsletter.

The Master Naturalist program should be a conduit for our members to express their passions for nature and their community. In this sense, we want to help you find volunteer projects and advanced training opportunities that give each of you, as an individual, a chance to exercise your enthusiasm in a way that also contributes to our program. As a chapter, we sponsor some events, and we work with our partners (Parks and Wildlife and Texas Cooperative Extension) on others. But we also rely on activities sponsored by other groups, which may be targeted directly at some of your individual interests.

In order to help streamline the process of approving such outside activities for LPMN credit, Mark McClelland is developing a list of generally approved advanced training situations. This won't cover everything, but should help to clarify when third party activities are appropriate advanced training activities. The draft of this list should be available at the February meeting for your input. We plan to come up with a similar list for pre-approved outside volunteer activities.

—Continued on Page 3

Inside This Issue

- 1 President's Column
- 1 From the Sidelines
- 2 Chapter Calendar
- 3 Volunteer Opportunities
- 3 Nature Quotes
- 4 Advanced Training

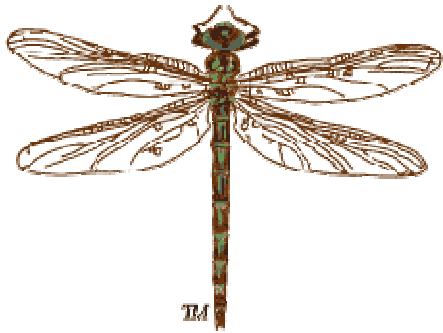
From the Sidelines Outgoing President's Remarks

I would like to take this opportunity (since I missed the deadline for the last newsletter) to thank you all for a great two years as president of our Lost Pines Master Naturalist chapter. Our chapter has grown in size and spirit, with increased involvement and participation. You can see the improvement by looking at our annual reports. I credit that both to the last two training classes, in which we acquired some great new members, and to our "old" members who continued to work, stay involved, and provide good role models for the newer members.

—Continued on Page 3

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 Department.

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

Bastrop/Caldwell Co. Wildlife Biologist: Meredith Longoria, 804 Pecan, Bastrop, mltwpd@onr.com; 512 332-7280.



CHAPTER CALENDAR

Chapter meetings alternate between Bastrop State Park's Refectory and the Red Rock Community Center and are normally held at 6:30 PM on the third Monday of each month. Meetings are open to members, prospective members, and the general public.

February

Monday, February 19– Chapter Meeting & Advanced Training: Red Rock Community Center, 6:30 PM. Stephen Clarke, Texas Forest Service, will give a presentation on "Rapid Detection of Exotic Bark Beetles" and will display some collected specimens

March

Monday, March 19– Chapter Meeting: Bastrop SP Refectory, 6:30 PM. This will be a planning and strategy meeting, with a focus on our next training class and ideas for volunteer projects. Unlike most of our regular meetings, this will count as volunteer time (Chapter Development).

Newsletter Deadline

Deadline for the next issue is **March 12, 2007**. 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 Marsha Elrod: melrod1@earthlink.net 512 321-7400, or Vernon Berger: vberger@austin.rr.com 512 454-0840.

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.

LOST PINES CHAPTER YAHOO GROUP

Subscribe to 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/>.

REPORTING TRAINING & VOLUNTEER HOURS

Send your advanced training and volunteer hours reports to Marsha Elrod: melrod1@earthlink.net or mail to

187 Billingsley Hts
Cedar Creek TX 78612

Volunteer Opportunities

- **Colorado River Refuge First Saturday Monitoring**
-- Kathy McAleese leads monthly monitoring surveys at the Colorado River Refuge. The next one will be March 3 from 9:00-11:00 or so. Bring your binoculars as we will be looking both for birds and new plant life. Dress for the weather. The CRR is located in Tahitian Village past the Pine Forest Golf Course clubhouse 0.7 miles beyond where the pavement ends. Contact Kathy at 512 718-1313 or kmcaleese@austin.rr.com for more information.
- **Bastrop State Park Interpretive Hikes** -- Ongoing: Saturday mornings (10:00 AM) "Discover the Lost Pines" interpretive hikes at Bastrop State Park. Hikes start again February 17 and continue through May. To help, contact Sue Fischer at 512 321-1308 or email smfischer@mdanderson.org.
- **Great Backyard Bird Count** -- Feb 16-19. The 10th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society. The GBBC site provides an on-line bird identification guide and tips on tricky ID's. In addition to submitting your check list, you can compete in the winter bird photo contest. For information on how to participate, go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc.
- **TPWD Coastal Expo** -- Mar 10, Marble Falls. Coastal Expo promotes Texas's aquatic and coastal ecosystems. Volunteers are needed to teach children about coastal/aquatic conservation and outdoor recreation. Necessary training will be provided on-site, and all volunteers will receive a free Coastal Expo T-shirt. For more information, please contact Kris Shipman at 512 912-7037 or kris.shipman@tpwd.state.tx.us.
- **Earth Science Outdoor Laboratory** -- Mar 9- Apr 13, May 11, 8:00 – 1:00, Lockhart State Park. LSP and Lockhart's Clear Fork Creek Elementary School are collaborating in a series of monthly outdoor classroom programs designed to increase the knowledge base of fifth grade earth science students. Volunteers work with Liz Larue, LSP interpretive ranger. Anyone who has an interest in the earth sciences, the natural environment, and our youths' education is qualified to instruct a lab class. Three volunteers are needed each month. For more information and to volunteer, contact Liz LaRue at Liz.Larue@tpwd.state.tx.us.
- **TPWD Junior Angler Program** -- Saturday, Mar 14, Jun 16, Jul 21, Buescher State Park; Jun 2, Jul 14, Bastrop State Park, 8:15 – 12:30. Volunteers are needed to assist with free learn-to-fish clinics for boys and girls ages 6 to 13. Parents must accompany their children. Park entry is free for volunteers, and training will be provided on site. At least 7 volunteers are needed for each clinic. For additional information and to volunteer, contact Bill Brooks at 512 581-0377 or Bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu.
- **Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Survey** -- 2nd Sat, 7:00 and 4:00. All levels of birders are welcome. The survey

is a great way to improve your skills since teams are formed matching experienced and novice birders. For more information see <http://www.hornsbybend.org/>.

-President's Column, Continued

Looking back on the last year (thanks to the annual report prepared by Marsha Elrod and filed with the state office), I note that our chapter activities increased significantly in 2006. Eighteen members either received their initial certification or recertified, and as a group we contributed almost 1400 hours of volunteer work to our communities. Both were LPMN chapter records, and I challenge all members to break those records in 2007! We also had three additional members reach their 250 volunteer hour milestones in 2006; congratulations again to Elaine Cearley, Muriel Lem, and Carol Reidy.

Finally, we need to recruit three volunteers. First, we need someone to chair the training committee responsible for coordinating our next basic training class. This is a fairly intensive job, at least for a couple of months before and during the class. There will be lots of help, but we need someone to coordinate the effort.

Second, we also need a new chair for the membership committee. A key task of this committee includes maintaining and contacting a list of potential new trainees. This committee also helps keep a roster with contact information for current members.

Finally, I'd like to set up a monthly monitoring survey (birds, flowering plants, butterflies, mammals, etc.) in Bastrop State Park (similar to what Kathy McAleese is doing at CRR), but I don't have the time to do it myself (at least, not every month). If anyone is interested in leading these outings, or chairing either committee, please contact me.

—From the Sidelines, Continued

Thank you for the parting gifts. That was very thoughtful. Now we need to throw our support to Andy Butler as he leads us through another year. I'll be happy to sit on the sidelines for a while.

~Elaine Cearley

Nature Quotes

I am not a lover of lawns. Rather would I see daisies in their thousands, ground ivy, hawkweed, and even the hated plantain with tall stems, and dandelions with splendid flowers and fairy down, than the too-well-tended lawn.

-- W.H. Hudson, *The Book of a Naturalist*, 1919

Advanced Training

- **Organic Gardening** – Thu Feb 15, 6:30 PM, TX Coop Extension, Lockhart Church of Christ Robert “Skip” Richter of the TV gardening series “Central Texas Gardener” will present the program on gardening organically. Program is free, but please RSVP Rachel Bauer at 512 398-3122 so she can prepare handouts.
- **Bats** – Bastrop County Audubon Society, Feb 20, 7:30, New 1st National Bank, Bastrop. Sara Zahendra of Bat Conservation International will present a program about bats’ feeding, their adaptations and phylogeny, and the threat to bats due to habitat disturbance and destruction. She will also cover the Bracken bat cave and the story of the Congress Avenue bats.
- **Lunchtime Lecture Series on Urban Ecology** -- Center for Environmental Research, Tue Feb 20, Mon Mar 19, Mon Apr 16, noon-1:00, Waller Center Rm 105, Austin. Kevin Anderson journeys into the urban wastelands and explores the marginal nature found there. Marginal nature is the focus of his dissertation in geography, and these free talks will examine both the ecological and the cultural significance of urban margins in American urban landscapes as well as within Austin. Waller Ctr is at 625 E 10th St, between Red River and IH 35. For additional information contact Kevin Anderson at Kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us or 972-1960.
- **Prescribed Burn Workshop** -- Thu Mar 8, TX Coop Extension. Registration starts at 8:30 at the First National Bank Training Room on the 2nd floor in Bastrop. (New Bank). There will be 3 hours of training at the bank. We will then proceed to McKinney Roughs where we plan to start the burn at 1:30. We plan to burn approximately 5 acres depending upon weather conditions. Speakers include representatives from the Texas Forest Service, Texas Parks & Wildlife, LCRA, Bastrop County Emergency Management & Dr. Barron Rector. There is no fee and lunch is on your own. For more information contact Maron Finley at 512 581-7186 or Bastrop-tx@tamu.edu.
- **Texas Wildscapes: A Gardening For Wildlife Habitat Workshop**– Sat Mar 17, 8:30-4:00, Center for Environmental Research, Hornsby Bend. \$25. Kelly Bender of TPWD and Bill Stout of National Wildlife Federation are teaming up to provide a Wildlife Habitat Gardening Workshop. Designed especially for Texas Master Naturalists™ and Habitat Stewards™, this workshop will help participants learn how to create wildlife gardens where they live, work, and play. In addition, there will be a special session to learn how to spread the backyard habitat message. Deadline for early registration is Mar 9. To register or for questions, contact Kelly Bender at kelly.bender@tpwd.state.tx.us or 512 308-0979. Information flyer and registration form have been uploaded to our Yahoo group website.
- **Go Native U** –starts Mar 17, LBJ Wildflower Center. Designed to teach gardeners of all skill levels to become

certified native plant gardeners. Classes teach both the benefits and how-to of gardening native. Classes may be taken individually or as a series on Saturdays at the Wildflower Center. Sign up for the entire course at [Go Native U courses](#) and receive a \$30 discount.

- **Global Warming** - Mar 20, 7:30 PM, Paramount Theater. Tim Flannery and Elizabeth Kolbert, two of the leading voices on climate issues, discuss the causes and impacts of global warming as part of KLRU’s Engaging Speaker series. Tickets are required and can be purchased on-line. For more information, go to <http://www.klru.org/spark/2007/flannery-kolbert.html>.
- **Project WILD Aquatic Workshop** -- Mar 23, 8:30-3:30, Austin. Learn how to teach young people about aquatic wildlife and ecosystems using fun, hands-on educational activities. Participants will sample activities and receive a curriculum and activity guide. Activities are adaptable for all grade levels, integrated with core subject curricula and aligned to the TEKS. Teachers, informal educators and youth group leaders may take the training. Held at the Region 13 Education Service Center; 5701 Springdale Rd, 8:30 - 3:30.; fee \$35; pre-registration required, contact Jennifer Jordan at Jordan@esc13.txed.net or call 512 919-5368.
- **Balcones Songbird Festival** – Fri Apr 27 - Mon Apr 30, Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge: a celebration of nature through a collection of interpretive events to experience birds, butterflies and wildflowers. Not all events qualify as advanced training. Additional guidance will be forthcoming from the LPMN advanced training committee. For information on the Festival, go to <http://www.balconesongbirdfestival.org> and click on *Events*.
- **Bamberger Ranch Wildflower Field Day** – May 5, 9:00-12:30, \$15. Spend a morning with botanist Laura Sanchez in the fields and woods around Selah identifying wildflowers.
- **Bamberger Ranch Land Stewardship Workshop** – May 12, 8:30 - 4:30. \$100. A day on the Ranch with emphasis on "Stewardship" for the large or small landowner who wants to know how to improve land for all plant and animal species. TMNs receive a 25% discount. For more information on these 2 events, go to <http://www.bambergeranch.org/tours/>.

A Murder of Crows

O.K., you may know about a gaggle of geese and a murder of crows, but what do you call a group of

1. foxes
2. jays
3. rhinos
4. otters?

Think behavior...and see below!

1. skull 2. scold 3. crash 4. romp