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President's Column

--Mark McClelland

After a scorching June, we've received some cooler (?), wetter weather thus far in July. I've talked to folks who have received as much as two or three inches and others, like ourselves, who barely got one-quarter inch. It doesn't take much to freshen the plants up a bit, but I am hoping for more!!

Many of our club members enjoyed the Amphibian and Mussel Watch Workshops held at McKinney Roughs in June. The Texas Parks and Wildlife instructors were great, and we came away with lots of good information. For Amphibian Watch we did some nighttime field work at the demonstration pond at McKinney Roughs, and then moved up the road to listen for frogs at the "big" pond in Bastrop State Park, as well as a pond on the golf course. We were able to identify five different species of frogs and toads. As a club, we'll be scheduling counts at selected ponds to help track the numbers and health of our local amphibian population.

The Mussel Watch field work saw us wading in the Colorado River at the canoe takeout just downstream of the Colorado River Refuge. The temperature was 100 degrees, and the water was running a little higher than normal, but we still managed to locate shells from three different mussel species, as well as the ubiquitous Asian Clams. We will be planning a mussel count later in the year when the water has dropped some and cleared.

Upcoming events include the 4th Annual "Butterflies, Dragonflies and Summertime Things Festival" to be held at Bastrop Gardens on July 26 from 9:00 till 5:00. Our club will have a display there, and we'll be joined by several other groups from the local area. Bastrop Gardens is a great garden center that offers a wonderful variety of native plants, so come by and help at our booth for an hour or two, and then go find something fun to add to your landscape!

Jim Estes will once again be hosting a club picnic at his ranch. The date is Sunday, August 3rd, with a starting time around 4:00, and supper at around 6:00. This will be a nice opportunity to relax and visit with each other outside of our normal meeting format. Please note that we have decided to substitute this event for our "regular" August meeting, so we will not be meeting on August 18th.

We have planned a club outing to Bat Conservation International's world famous Bracken Cave for Sunday, August 24th. This is one week later than

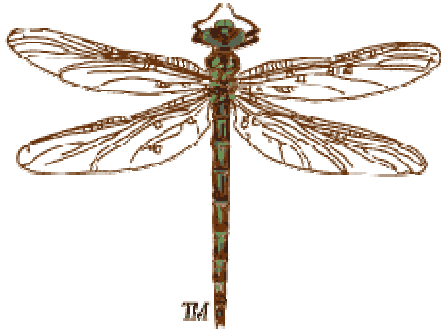
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MISSION STATEMENT

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 AgriLife Extension Service and by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

SPONSOR CONTACTS

Caldwell Co. Extension Office: position vacant;
Caldwell-tx@tamu.edu; 512 398-3122

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

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



Newsletter Deadline

Deadline for the next issue is **August 8, 2008**. 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.

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.

July

Monday, July 21 – Chapter Meeting and Advanced Training: Red Rock Community Center, 6:30 PM. Jennifer Peterson, Water Quality Program Specialist with Texas AgriLife Extension Service, will speak on the Texas Watershed Steward training program and water quality issues.

August

Saturday, August 3 – Chapter Meeting and Social: Estes Hilltop Hacienda, Lockhart, 4:00 PM. The Estes have graciously opened their beautiful home to us again, combining our chapter meeting with a nature walk and pot-luck dinner. See directions and details on page 3.

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@yahoo.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; use the on-line reporting form on our website; or mail to
187 Billingsley Hts
Cedar Creek TX 78612

Volunteer Opportunities

- **TPWD Junior Angler Clinics** – Saturdays, Jun – Aug, 8:00 – 12:30, Bastrop and Buescher State Parks. Volunteers are needed to assist with this free learn-to-fish clinic for boys and girls ages 6 to 13. This is a very basic clinic, and you don't need to be a fisher-person to help out. The kids really have a good time, and parents must accompany their children. Park entrance is free for volunteers, and necessary training will be provided on site. Clinics will be held on
July 19 at Bastrop State Park
Aug 2 at Buescher State Park
At least 7 volunteers are needed for each clinic. Contact Bill Brooks at 512 581-0377 or bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu.
- **Butterflies, Dragonflies and Summertime Things Festival** – Sat, July 26, 9:00 am – 5:00 PM, Bastrop Gardens Nursery. Volunteers are needed to work our booth, plus you can enjoy some of the day's events and enter the pesto and photo contests. Contact Mark McClelland at 512 281-5516 or markmcc@prodigy.net to volunteer.
- **Lockhart Town Branch Creek Cleanup** – Sat, Sept 20, all day. This is a city-wide effort to remove trash and noxious plants from Town Branch Creek and 5 pocket parks that border it. The city and sponsors will provide T-shirts and food for volunteers, as well as all necessary materials for the clean-up. Additional details will be forthcoming. Contact Rick Johnson at rickjohnson718@sbcglobal.net or 512 298-4405 for information and to volunteer.
- **Colorado River Nature Park Site Development** – Mondays & Thursdays, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Dale Morrison has been working on trails and other improvements at the new nature park adjacent to the Colorado River Refuge since its designation as such. It is an ongoing effort, and he would welcome some assistance. He is there Mondays and Thursdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM and is also available to work with volunteers on Saturdays and Sundays. For details, call Dale at 512 332-0998 or 512 629-3345 (cell phone).
- **Nature Education Classes for Kids** – Ongoing, Thursdays, Colorado River Refuge. Joan Russell and Louise Ridlon have been doing a series of nature education classes for kids at the Colorado River Refuge on Thursdays and are looking for some help. They have written 10 lessons, very unstructured, orienting the kids to different aspects of the CRR environment, e.g., birds, flowers, dragonflies, rocks & soils, etc.. Currently,

the Boys' and Girls' Clubs come from 5:30-6:30 PM every Thursday (the time may change once school is out), and the Bastrop County Home School group comes every other Thursday morning at 9:30 till 11:00-11:30 AM. At least one leader comes with each group. Materials are housed at the Pines and Prairies Land Trust office at Tahitian Village (lessons, tote bags with magnifiers, clipboards, dip nets, etc.). If you can help out (they're great groups of kids!), please contact Joan Russell at 321-2718, cell 321-8618, or Louise Ridlon at 985-5064 or email flridlon@hotmail.com.

- **Bastrop State Park Interpretive Hikes** – suspended for the summer, resuming in October.

Directions to Estes Ranch

The ranch is at 7620 Hwy 183, 3.6 miles south of the last traffic light in Lockhart and opposite the junction with Hwy 671. The driveway is the southernmost of three on the east side of Hwy 183 and is about a half mile long. The house number is on a post near the driveway. If you need more information, please call or email Jim Estes at 512 620-0322 or jestes@ionet.net. Feel free to bring your spouse or significant other and be sure bring your favorite dish to share.

Directions to Bracken Cave

Take IH-35 heading south toward New Braunfels. Take Exit 175 (FM 3009) and head northwest for 7 miles. The BCI gate is on the left and will be marked with two orange cones. There is no sign or other indicator. We will be met at the gate and lead back to the cave. They would like as few cars as possible, so let's try to organize as many car pools as we can.

We'll meet at the gate at 6:30 PM. Bring your camera, binoculars, water, and a snack.

Nature Quotes

In wilderness I sense the miracle of life, and behind it our scientific accomplishments fade to trivia.

~Charles A. Lindbergh, *Life*, 22 December 1967

Advanced Training

- **Lost Pines Native Plant Society of Texas** – first Tuesday of each month, 7:00 PM, First National Bank, Smithville. Presentations count as advanced training. Contact Bill Brooks at bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu or 512-581-0377 for program information.
- **Austin Butterfly Forum: A Trip to the Monarch Sanctuary** – Mon Jul 28, 7:00 PM, Zilker Botanical Garden. Marguerite and Vince Hirsch are new members who recently visited the Monarch's Mexican wintering grounds. They will share pictures and stories of their trip. Mike Quinn, the club's president, will discuss current issues in Monarch conservation. For additional information go to <http://www.austinbutterflies.org/Calendar/>.
- **Bracken Cave Tour** – Sun Aug 24. Bat Conservation International is making arrangements for us to visit Bracken Cave, which houses the largest colony of bats in the world. Some 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) summer here, where they give birth to and raise their young. For more information on Bracken Cave, go to <http://www.batcon.org/home/>. There is also a good article on the bats at <http://www.batcon.org/batsmag/v10n3-1.html>. See "Directions to Bracken Cave" on page 3 for directions and details on the tour.
- **Austin Butterfly Forum: True Bugs - Overlooked and Underrated** – Mon Aug 25, 7:00 PM, Zilker Botanical Garden. Val Bugh, a club member who is a marvelous photographer with wide-ranging interests in the insect world, will discuss the true bugs. The true bugs constitute a large, conspicuous, and diverse insect group. Although frequently encountered, they are often misidentified or passed over as being too confusing. Their size ranges from the minuscule to some of our largest insects. Their appearance can be cryptic or gaudy. Besides basic identification of common species found in the Austin area, Val will

provide captivating insights into unusual bug behaviors, survival strategies, and an intimate look at bug life history. For details go to <http://www.austinbutterflies.org/Calendar/>.

- **Ecological Literacy Days** – July 26, Aug 30, & last Saturday each month, 9:00-1:00 at Hornsby Bend. Combining volunteer work with learning about local ecology, the day begins with several hours of outdoor work - ranging from trail maintenance to habitat restoration to work in the native plant nursery - and ends with at least an hour of learning about local ecology - birds, bugs, and more! Wear boots and work clothing, and be sure to bring your binoculars. For more information contact Kevin Anderson at Kevin.Anderson@ci.austin.tx.us or 512 972-1960.

– President's Column, continued

the date that I'd previously sent out, but I feel like we've got it set with BCI at this point. This cave is located near New Braunfels and houses the largest population of Mexican Free-tailed Bats in the world. Don't miss this very rare opportunity to view the emergence of this enormous bat colony.

Our June planning meeting went very well, generating a lot of good ideas for club activities. The Bracken Cave tour is an example of an activity that was suggested at this meeting. Other ideas included setting up additional canoe trips to include Saturday mornings and some basic classes for things like bird, butterfly, and grass identification.

We also decided to kick off our next Master Naturalist training class on January 26, 2009. We assembled a good group of volunteers to assist with the class, but there is always room for more folks. If you are interested in assisting with next year's class, or with any of the other upcoming activities, be sure to let me know.

I hope to see you all at the July 21st meeting at the Red Rock Community Center. Our speaker will be Jennifer Peterson, a Water Quality Specialist with Texas AgriLife Extension Service. She will be talking with us about the Texas Watershed program, and what we can do to improve water quality with both small and large scale projects. At this meeting we will also unveil the rainfall run-off simulator that a number of you have been working on since this spring, so make your plans to attend.

Hospitality Committee

Thanks and a gentle reminder to our hospitality committee volunteers for the July meeting. Frank and Louise Ridlon along with Marcy Youngman will be providing the snacks, while Pam Hohmann will bring the liquid refreshments. Thanks to all of you for stepping up and pitching in!