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President's Column

--Mark McClelland

The days are getting shorter, and the nights are getting cooler. It looks like we've made it through another tough Texas summer. After the incredible cool weather and abundant rainfall of 2007, 2008 was a real shock. Thousands of Post Oaks and Loblolly Pines have died across our counties this past year. Some of this had started in the previous couple of years, but I really saw it take hold this summer. On our property we lost our "signature" Post Oak that was the centerpiece of our front landscape, along with over a hundred other trees spread throughout our woods. We'll certainly enjoy a more varied and patchy habitat in the coming years. Not all bad perhaps, but sad to witness.

Our club assisted the folks at Bastrop State Park with the first public hikes on their Alum Creek property. This quiet property offers some great plants and animals that are hard to find in the more public areas of the park. There will be two more hikes in November, and they will pick up again in spring. Try to take time for one of these hikes in the coming year. You will be glad that you did.

The Saturday morning Discover the Lost Pines interpretive hikes continue as well, with good numbers so far this year. This is another great opportunity to learn more about the area and meet some of our neighbors. With our next training class drawing near, this is a good opportunity to get the word out about our group.

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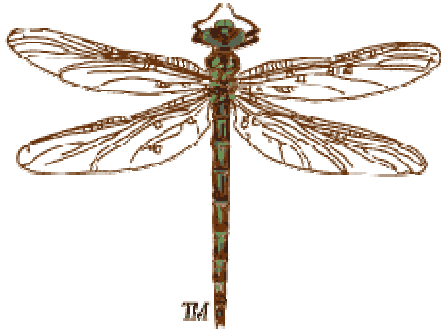
Almost Time to Elect New Officers!

With the impending end to another year – where DID it go? – come the nomination and election of new officers for our chapter. As past president, Andy Butler is the chair of the nominating committee and will be working with the committee members to select a slate of officers for the chapter's consideration.

As usual, we would always like to know of anyone who might be interested in serving as an officer. Don't be shy now! Here's a chance to help the chapter out and earn volunteer hours, too. Just contact Andy at 512 321-1308 or abutler@mac.com by November 25 and let him know you'd be willing to serve and the office you're interested in.

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: Jeff Watts; 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 **December 5, 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.

November

Monday, November 17 – Chapter Meeting and Advanced Training: Bastrop Gardens, 6:30 PM. Deena Spellman will discuss "Xeriscaping with Native Plants," providing suggestions based on her own gardening and landscaping experience in our area.

December

Monday, December 15 – Chapter Meeting and Holiday Party: Bastrop State Park Refectory, 6:30 PM. We will be electing officers for next year and exchanging gifts in our "traditional" Chinese auction. Bring your favorite holiday treat to eat!

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

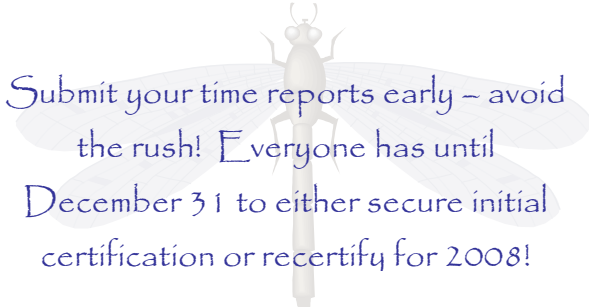
Send your advanced training and volunteer hours reports to Marsha Elrod: melrod1@earthlink.net; use the on-line reporting form on our website; or mail to
187 Billingsley Hts
Cedar Creek TX 78612

Volunteer Opportunities

- **Bastrop State Park Interpretive Hikes** – Saturday mornings, 10:00 am. “Discover the Lost Pines” interpretive hikes continue through December 13, and volunteers are still needed! Contact Sue Fischer at 512 321-1308 or email smfischer@mdanderson.org to sign up. The schedule for the hikes can be found on the Yahoo Group website calendar. Volunteers to lead hikes can sign up on the website but are also asked to notify Sue of any changes to the schedule.
- **Bastrop State Park Guided Alum Creek Tract Hikes** –select Saturdays and Sundays, TBA by park personnel. Public pre-registration is required for these guided nature hikes in a remote area of the park along Alum Creek not yet open to park visitors. Hikes are scheduled for Sundays November 9 and 16, and will pick up again next spring. The first hike, “*An Autumn Walk in the Woods,*” highlighted some of the changes that occur in the forest this time of year. Hikes are held in the mornings and run for about 2 hours. A maximum of 15 people per hike will be allowed. Contact Mark if you are interested in leading or helping to lead one of these hikes.
- **McKinney Roughs Nature Survey** – Kathy McAleese is coordinating a long-term project to survey the burned-out areas of McKinney Roughs. Plans call for at least 2 surveys per month, one during the week and one on week-ends, and Kathy will be providing additional information shortly. Please contact her at 512 718-1313 or kmcaleese@austin.rr.com if you are interested in leading or participating in either week-day or week-end surveys, or both.
- **Project Feeder Watch** – The 2008-09 season of Project FeederWatch got underway November 8 and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants submitted more than 115,000 checklists during the 2007-08 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges – a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment. There is a \$15 participant fee, which covers the costs of the project kit, web site, and other project expenses. Participants receive the FeederWatcher’s Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, Winter Bird

Highlights. Go to www.feederwatch.org or call 800 843-2473 to register.

- **Houston Toad Habitat Workshop** – Mon, Dec 8, McKinney Roughs, 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM. TPWD and US Fish and Wildlife are sponsoring a workshop to provide landowners with ecology information, resources and incentive program information, and habitat management information, as well as information on the Lost Pines Habitat Conservation plan for Bastrop County. Volunteers are needed to staff our booth. Contact Andy Butler if you would like to volunteer.
- **Adopt A Highway** – one Saturday every 2 months. Brett Finch is leading the Adopt A Highway project for our chapter. It involves six clean-ups a year, for which TxDOT provides all clean-up and safety equipment. We have adopted a 2-mile section of Hwy 95 to the north and south of FM 2336. The next clean-up will in December. At least 3 volunteers are needed in addition to Brett, and clean-up should take about 1-2 hours. To volunteer, contact Brett at goldweard@yahoo.com.



Submit your time reports early – avoid the rush! Everyone has until December 31 to either secure initial certification or recertify for 2008!

Nature Quotes

I wish you might be here and go with me on a sunny afternoon to Mt. Bonnell or up Barton Creek. Everywhere it is beautiful. I think we could settle most of the world’s problems to our satisfaction. And a thousand years from now friends such as we will wander over these same hills inhaling the same scents and feasting their eyes upon the same beauty, and maybe the identical matter that composes our bodies now will nourish the worm that feeds the mockingbird whose songs will go thrill out over the green fields.

Roy Bedichek, 1878-1959

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. Upcoming programs include:
Dec. 2 - Dan Hardy, Austin's local butterfly and host plant expert.
Contact Bill Brooks at bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu or 512-581-0377 for additional information.
- **Travis Audubon Society** – Thur Nov 20, 6:30 PM, LCRA, 3601 Lake Austin Boulevard, Room 108 (downstairs), Austin. Robin Doughty, faculty member in the Department of Geography and the Environment at the University of Texas and wildlife conservation author, will present a program on the Whooping Crane. A whole range of efforts from new laws and habitat preserves to hands-on experiments in breeding, transplanting, and releasing birds into the wild is counteracting the effects of over hunting that brought the great white crane to the brink of extinction. The US Fish and Wildlife Service continues to dedicate time and effort to saving the Whooping Crane from extinction. Robin will detail these efforts based on his research and experiences with these birds that resulted in his book, and will discuss recent moves to return birds to their former ranges within the US. For additional information see <http://www.travisaudubon.org/meetings.html>.
- **Houston Toad Habitat Workshop** – Mon, Dec 8, McKinney Roughs, 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM. TPWD and US Fish and Wildlife are sponsoring a workshop to provide landowners with ecology information, resources and incentive program information, and habitat management information, as well as information on the Lost Pines Habitat Conservation plan for Bastrop County. You must pre-register by Monday Nov 24. The agenda and registration form have been posted to our Yahoo site, or e-mail Andy Butler abutler@mac.com for a copy. You can also call Meredith Longoria at 512 332-7280 to register.

Directions to Bastrop Gardens

Bastrop Gardens is located at 316 Old Highway 71 (CR 335). From Bastrop, take Highway 71 west toward Austin roughly 9 miles. You'll pass the Hyatt entrance and the Fina station at Pope Bend Road. Old 71 is on the right approximately 6/10 mile past the Fina station. The green highway sign says "CR 335;" the white street sign says "OLD 71." Highway 71 Veterinary Hospital is on the right just past the turn.

Bastrop Gardens is 1 mile down Old 71 on the left, just past the entrance gate to River Crossing. Carpooling is encouraged if possible, since parking is very limited. For a map and more information on Bastrop Gardens go to <http://www.bastropgardens.com/>.

– President's Column, continued

Our chapter also assisted with the Fall Festival at the park. Activities included displays, crafts, music, nighttime nature walks, and, finally, scary stories around the campfire. About 300 kids and their parents participated throughout the day. Folks really do seem to enjoy a weekend at the park.

With Kathy McAleese leading the charge, we have started a census project within one of the recently burned areas at McKinney Roughs Nature Park. One of the park naturalists, Nicolas Cowey, is asking for assistance in documenting the changes and development of flora and fauna in the park as it recovers from the fires of 2008. Several members participated in a first-time orientation walk of the area, and we were amazed at the diversity. The area is by no means devastated, but is burned in patches and zones that vary from small to large. There are already plenty of signs of emerging life in the burned areas, with much more to come as the weather cools and rains (hopefully) come. Stay tuned for announcements of both weekday and weekend census opportunities.

Please note that the location of our November meeting has changed!! Deena Spellman of Bastrop Gardens will be hosting us at her wonderful nursery and will be teaching us about gardening with native plants and xeriscaping. Consider carpooling as she has a modest amount of parking and arrive early to tour the garden and perhaps pick up a little something to take home! Driving directions can be found on our website and elsewhere in the newsletter.

Hospitality Committee

Thanks and a gentle reminder to our hospitality committee volunteers for the November meeting. Sue Arcy will be providing the snacks, while Michal Hubbard will bring the drinks. Thanks to all of you for stepping up and pitching in!