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President's Column

--Mark McClelland

We've just survived Blizzard 2009, which turned out to be something of a disappointment. We were told to expect between 1 and 2 inches of snow. I saw at least one or two snowflakes, but that was about it. It did get plenty cold though. Our frost-tender vegetation is done for this year. You have to love our Texas weather!

Our November meeting was a huge success. Kim Bacon gave an informative and interesting presentation on native Texas bees. Her presentation was a mixture of facts and humor that made it delightful. We all went home looking for these special bees, but we may have to wait until next spring to really get going.

It is hard for me to believe that this will be my final column. Two years certainly does pass quickly, and I've had a great time. Like many of you, I joined the chapter to pursue interests related to the outdoors, and I was completely resistant to the idea of being "pulled in" to any sort of office. But after watching Elaine and then Andy in action as chapter presidents, and seeing my classmates Kathy and Louise stepping up to the plate as secretary and vice-president, I decided that I was interested in helping out after all. Meeting, working with, and learning from our chapter members has been a great experience for me. What a wonderful group of folks!

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Lost Pines Chapter Elections

--Andy Butler

According to our chapter by-laws, officers for 2010 are to be nominated at our annual meeting, which will be held in conjunction with our holiday party on December 14 at the Bastrop State Park refectory. The nominating committee, chaired by our Past President (Andy Butler) with members Marsha Elrod and Kathy McAleese, has proposed a slate of candidates for election. Candidates are: Louise Ridlon for President; Walt Elrod for Vice President; Liz Pullman for Secretary; and Carole O'Toole for Treasurer. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

Our current officers have done a great job, and the nominating committee is confident that the nominees for 2010 can continue to advance the chapter. Remember, in a volunteer organization such as ours, the officers will need help and support from the entire membership to be effective.

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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,
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The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the 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, Meredith.Longoria@tpwd.state.tx.us; (512) 332-7280.



Newsletter Deadline

Deadline for the next issue is **January 8, 2010**. 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 Wendy Sera: wendy_sera@hotmail.com, (512) 652-8605.

Chapter Calendar

Chapter meetings generally 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 public.

December

Monday, December 14 (NOTE: this is the 2nd Monday of December!) – Chapter Meeting: Bastrop State Park Refectory, 6:30 pm. Annual meeting, elections, and holiday party.

January

Monday, January 18 – Chapter Meeting: Red Rock Community Center, 6:30 pm. Our own Andy Butler will give a presentation on "GPS for Naturalists." He'll walk us through the functions and uses of GPS units, and have a Q and A session where learners can find out more and those who are experienced with GPS's can share their knowledge.

Chapter Web site

<http://www.lostpinesmasternaturalist.org/>

Please check our Web site 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 e-mail to mLPMN-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or log on to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LPMN/>.

Reporting Training & Volunteer Hours

Send your advanced training and volunteer hour reports to Marsha Elrod: melrod1@earthlink.net; use the online reporting form on our Web site or mail to:

187 Billingsley Hts
Cedar Creek TX 78612

Volunteer Opportunities

- **Boy Scouts of America, Capitol Area Council – Webelos Winter Camp** – December 27-30, 2009, in Bastrop. Volunteers needed to teach activity badges (Naturalist, Geologist, or Forester badges may be of interest to Master Naturalists) to 10-11 year olds in morning and/or afternoon sessions. Please contact Sonya Willis at goodturnusa@yahoo.com or Nicholas Cowey at ncowey@lcra.com for additional information.
- **McKinney Roughs Nature Survey** – Kathy McAleese is coordinating a long-term project to survey trails through the burned-out areas of McKinney Roughs. Plans call for at least two surveys per month, one during the week and one on a weekend. Actual days and times will vary based on the weather and Kathy's schedule. Please contact her at (512) 718-1313 or kmcaleese@austin.rr.com if you are interested in leading or participating in either weekday or weekend surveys, or both.
- **Bastrop State Park Interpretive Walks** – We need volunteers each Saturday morning from October 3 through early December. Hikes are from 10 AM to about 11:30 AM. Remember, these hikes are literally a "walk in the woods": one leisurely mile. Meet at the kiosk next to the playscape rest rooms (down the road from the Refectory and swimming pool). Please contact Sue Fischer to volunteer at smfischer@mdanderson.org or (512) 321-1308.
- **Adopt-A-Highway** – One Saturday every 2 months, Brett Finch leads 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. At least three volunteers are needed in addition to Brett, and clean-up takes about 1-2 hours. For information on the next clean-up date and to volunteer, contact Brett at goldweard@yahoo.com.
- **Hornsby Bend – Ecological Literacy Days – Last Saturday of every month, 9 am - 1 pm** – Combining volunteer work with learning about local ecology, the Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend 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 bring your binoculars. For more information, contact Kevin Anderson at coordinator@hornsbybend.org or (512) 972-1960.

- **Hornsby Bend – Monthly Bird Survey – Second Saturday each month** – Meet at the **Center for Environmental Research at 7:00 am** for the morning survey [coffee and donuts at 6:30 am] and **4:00 pm** for the afternoon survey. All levels of birders are welcome - the survey is a great way to improve your skills since we form teams matching experienced and novice birders. For more information, contact Eric Carpenter at ecarpe@gmail.com.
- **National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology – Great Backyard Bird Count** (GBBC) – Friday, February 12 through Monday, February 15, 2010. The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. For information on how to participate, go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>.

Nature Quotes

All good things are wild and free.

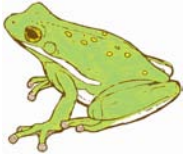
~Henry David Thoreau



Advanced Training

- **Austin Butterfly Forum** (club meeting) – **Wasp Evolution, Biodiversity and Behavior** – Monday, **January 26**, 7:00 PM, Zilker Botanical Garden Center. Dr. Allan Hook, Professor of Biology at St. Edward's University, will speak about the evolution of Hymenoptera, the group that includes wasps, ants, and bees. He will talk about diversity within this large group, and how and why various behaviors developed. He show films and explain the behavioral ecology of solitary wasps at Pedernales State Park. For more information, see Dr. Hook's Web site at <http://www.stedwards.edu/science/biology/people/hook.html>.
- **McKinney Roughs Nature Park – Ranger in the Roughs** – Thursdays from 7:00-8:00 pm, **December 17** – Beavers; **January 21** – Texas Hummingbirds; **February 18**- Texas Wildflowers. Sit in the amphitheater under the night sky and learn about the native animals that inhabit the land in and around the Colorado River. The focus will be on the natural history of and folklore about each animal. Program will be held indoors in bad weather. Registration not required. FREE, all ages welcome. To register, contact Erin Barker at (512)303-5073, Ext. 8013.
- **Lost Pines Native Plant Society of Texas** – Select **first Tuesdays of each month**, 7:00 PM, First National Bank, Smithville. Presentations count as advanced training. Contact Bill Brooks at (512) 581-0377 or bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu for more information.
- **Texas Bluebird Society** (club meeting) – **Bluebird Nesting Season Kickoff** – Saturday, **January 30**, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, Brazos Center in Bryan, TX. The schedule is being developed but will probably run from about 9:00 AM to about 3:00 PM. Eight speakers will talk about various topics having to do with such things as enticing Bluebirds to one's land, helping them stay, photographing Bluebirds, etc. For more information, go to www.texasbluebirdsociety.org or contact Jim Anding, the local coordinator at kittyoncole@msn.com or 979-776-8381 or 979-324-8389.
- **McKinney Roughs Nature Park – Backyard Habitat Basics** – Saturday, **January 16**, 9:00 am–Noon. Learn how to create a habitat for butterflies, birds, and native creatures in your own backyard! All you need is shelter, water, and food. Enjoy saving money by planting natives and getting rid of the lawn – more time to watch the wildlife you have attracted! Take away ideas about how to make small changes to your backyard that will result in huge benefits for native wildlife. Pre-registration is required. FREE, adults only. To register, contact Erin Barker at (512)303-5073, Ext. 8013.
- **TPWD – Project WILD Workshop** – Saturday, **January 9** – **Pflugerville, TX**. Learn how to teach young people about ecology and wildlife using fun, hands-on educational activities. During the 6-hour training workshop, 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. SBEC credit available for teachers. Group size limited. Held at Pflugerville ISD Board Room, 1401 W Pecan. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; preregistration required. Contact Lori Reemts at lori.reemts@pflugervilleisd.net or (512) 594-0114.
- **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** – Docent Training – **Thursdays 9:30 AM to 4 PM** from January 21 through March 11. If you have thought about volunteering to represent the Center and educate the public about our offerings, the next round of training for docents begins. You will learn about the Center and the many ways you can serve, including giving tours, working with children's groups, and helping out at the store. Docents complete a two-part learning program that combines classroom and field study with self-scheduled experiential learning. For an application or information, contact Carrie McDonald, volunteer services manager, at cmcdonald@wildflower.org or 512-232-0102.





- *President's Column, continued*

I would like to thank Louise for acting as vice-president during my two terms. She consistently came up with interesting programs for the club, and was always available to step in to run meetings in my absence. Thanks to Kathy for being club secretary during that period, and making sure that we always had meeting minutes to send out, even when I forgot to send them! Thanks to Marie, and later Carole, for acting as treasurer and making certain that the club finances were well taken care of. And finally, thanks to Andy for assisting me every step of the way, and acting as my mentor with regards to chapter activities and the role of president. Marsha and now Wendy have been exceptional newsletter editors, and I feel that we have one of the best MN newsletters in the state. And finally, thanks to all of the folks who helped out with the various classes, hikes, festivals, counts, and other activities through the years. These activities make the club an important part of our community, and we couldn't do any of them without the active participation of chapter members.

I would like to thank Andy, Kathy, and Marsha for acting as our nominating committee to seek out candidates for the 2010 year. They have come up with a great group of candidates to vote on at the December meeting, and I am certain that the chapter will be in good hands come January.

Our December meeting is a week earlier than normal to get us clear of Christmas week. The meeting will be on Monday evening, December 14th, at the Bastrop State Park Refectory. The meeting will begin at 6:30. This will be our combination meeting/meal/gift exchange, so plan to bring some food to share, and a small wrapped gift to our final event of the year.



Lost Pines Master Naturalists Volunteering in the Community



Master Naturalists Walt Elson (top), Brian Estes (middle), and Susan Blair (bottom) talk to students attending 5th Grade Science Day at Lockhart State Park. (Photo courtesy of Liz LaRue)