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President's Column

--Louise Ridlon

The New Year has jumped into the midst of the roller coaster ride of extreme climate/weather events that we have experienced in Central Texas. Two years of drought were ended by a soggy fall; the hottest summer on record was followed by the coldest temperatures in 15 years! Who knows what the next 12 months will hold?

Meanwhile, the Lost Pines Master Naturalists will be bursting out of our winter holiday lull with a new training class! I understand that the applications are coming in at a good rate, thanks to the excellent planning and organization of Paulette Boudreaux and Lisa King, and Denis McGinnis' timely articles in the *Smithville Times* and *Bastrop Advertiser*. I appreciate their efforts. As I take office as new chapter president, I find (with relief) that many of the tasks associated with a new year and a new training class are already being handled by members. The first class session will be held on January 25 at the Bastrop State Park Refectory. I encourage current members to come and meet the new trainees. In addition, anyone who missed sessions in the last training class can make them up by attending those same sessions this year. I would encourage those who need a few classes to complete their initial certification to take this opportunity do so.

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2010 Lost Pines Master Naturalist Training Class

The Lost Pines Chapter is pleased to announce our 2010 introductory Master Naturalist training class. The class includes over 40 hours of intensive classroom and field-based instruction, with an emphasis on our local ecosystems. Training will begin on January 25, 2010 and will continue until May 17.

There will be an average of three evening classes (Mondays 6:30-9:30 pm) per month and five Saturday morning field trips during the spring. **Completed applications for the course are due no later than Friday, January 15, 2010.** For more information and application forms, see our Web site at <http://www.lostpinesmasternaturalist.org/basictraining10.html>.

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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 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 **February 6, 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.

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.

February

Monday, February 15 – Chapter Meeting: Bastrop State Park Refectory, 6:30 pm. Presentation on Weather and Climate. (Joint meeting with 2010 training class.)

March

Monday, March 15 – Chapter Meeting: Red Rock Community Center, 6:30 pm. Presentation on Geology and Soils. (Joint meeting with 2010 training class.)

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

- **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 **February 27 into June**. 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 goldward@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 4-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

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

~John Muir



Advanced Training

- **McKinney Roughs Nature Park – Ranger in the Roughs** – Thursdays from 7:00-8:00 pm, **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 – Statewide Bluebird Nesting Season Kickoff** – Saturday, **January 30**, 9:50 am to 2:50 pm, Brazos Center in Bryan, TX. 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: Enticing Wildlife to your Home** – Saturday, **January 16**, 9:00 am–Noon. Learn how to create a habitat for butterflies, birds, and native creatures in your own backyard! 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 30**, 9 am- 4 pm, **Texas Memorial Museum** (Austin), 2400 Trinity. 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 are welcomed. Fee \$10 (refundable upon completion of the workshop); preregistration required. For more information or to register, contact lauramn@mail.utexas.edu or (512) 232-5506.
- **TPWD – Project WILD Workshop** – Friday, **February 19**, 9 am- 4 pm, **Inks Lake SP**. See description above. Preregistration required. For more information or to register, contact laurie.connally@tpwd.state.tx.us or (512) 793-4689 or 793-2223.
- **Buescher SP – Texas Amphibian Watch Workshop** – Friday, **February 26**, 5:00-10:00 pm, Recreation Hall. Learn to identify amphibians by call to help monitor local amphibian populations. Texas Parks and Wildlife Nature Trackers will teach you how to identify local amphibians by sight and sound; includes fieldtrip. Special emphasis will be placed on the Houston toad. Register by Friday, February 19 at 5 pm. Cost is \$10 (includes dinner). For more information or to register, contact Meredith Longoria at meredith.longoria@tpwd.state.tx.us or (512) 332-7280.
- **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. 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 at cmcdonald@wildflower.org or 512-232-0102.
- **McKinney Roughs Nature Park – 4th Annual Wildlife Management Practices Workshop** – Monday, **February 15**, 8:30 am-1:00 pm. This is an educational program for landowners in Bastrop & Caldwell counties who would like to know more about eligible wildlife management practices and activities that count towards wildlife tax valuation. Topics will vary from previous years. Cost is \$10 (includes lunch and materials)—pay at the door. Registration begins at 8:30 am. **RSVP before 5 pm on Monday, February 8** to Meredith Longoria at meredith.longoria@tpwd.state.tx.us or (512) 332-7280.

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Advanced Training, continued

➤ **M. O. Neasloney WMA (Gonzales, TX) – Prescribed Fire Workshop** – Saturday, **January 16**, 8:00 am-4:00 pm. This workshop is designed to give landowners and managers a basic understanding of the use and application of prescribed fire in wildlife or grazing management programs. Participants will conduct a burn if conditions permit. Bring lunch, drinks, leather gloves, and boots, and wear cotton outerwear. For more information or to register, contact David Veale at david.veale@tpwd.state.tx.us or (830) 424-3407.

➤ **High Meadows Land and Cattle, Chappell Hill, TX – Partners, Parcels and Persistence: Keys to Restoring Quail Habitat** – Saturday, **January 23**, 9 am- lunch (burgers & boars). This workshop is for landowners who would like to improve habitat for quail to boost native quail populations. Presentation topics include quail biology and management, working with neighbors and wildlife associations, and understanding quail inside and out – quail necropsy. Registration begins at 9 am and the workshop ends with lunch (burgers and boars). RSVP by Jan. 15 to the Washington County Texas AgriLife Extension Office at (979) 277-6212.

➤ **McKinney Roughs Nature Park – Saving from a Rainy Day: Rainwater Collecting for Beginners** – Saturday, **February 13**, 9:00 am-Noon. Don't let our water resources go down the drain. Capture the rainfall when it comes! Plants love the Texas rain as much as we do – a source of pure, soft, low-sodium water. Learn how to lower your bills and build a rain barrel for your home. Pre-registration required. FREE; adults only. For more information and to register, contact McKinney Roughs Nature Park at (512) 303-5073 or send e-mail to outdoorprograms@lcra.org.

➤ **Travis Audubon Society** also has classes scheduled in **Waterfowl Identification** and **Backyard Birdwatching**, starting in late January and early February, respectively. Please go to their Web site for more information: <http://www.travisaudubon.org/classes.html>

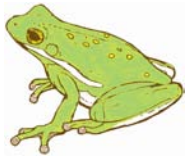
➤ **McKinney Roughs Nature Park – “Leave No Trace” Awareness Workshop** – Saturday, **February 27**, 9:00 am-2:00 pm. Learn how to minimize your impact during outdoor recreation. Free for adults and children ages 11 and up. For more information, contact outdoorprograms@lcra.org or (512) 303-5073.

➤ **Travis Audubon Society – Beginning Birding Classes** –The class is designed to provide new birders with the techniques and skills to help them identify unfamiliar birds. Tuition is \$55 for TAS members and \$65 for non-members. Class size is limited and fills fast. For more information or to register, contact Jane Martin at begbird@austin.rr.com or (512) 343-7053. Be sure to specify whether you want to attend the class with the Tuesday afternoon lectures and Wednesday field trips or the class with the Thursday evening lectures and Saturday field trips.

Afternoon Class: Tuesdays, **February 16, March 2, March 9, and April 6**, 1:00-3:30 PM in northwest Austin. Fieldtrips (generally 7 am to noon or 2 pm) are scheduled for **Wednesdays** on **February 17, March 3, March 10, and April 7**.

Evening Class: Thursdays, **February 18, March 4, March 11, and April 18**. Fieldtrips (generally 7 am to noon or 2 pm) are scheduled for **Saturdays** on **February 20, March 6, March 13, and April 10**.





- *President's Column, continued*

Our first general meeting of the New Year will be held on January 18 at 6:30 PM at the Red Rock Community Center. Andy Butler will present a program on "GPS for Naturalists." He will walk us through the functions and uses of GPS units, followed by a question-and-answer session. Anyone who is an experienced GPS user is encouraged to share his or her expertise! I know that I'm looking forward to learning more about how to use this fabulous technology. Andy has been a tremendous resource to our chapter in so many ways; thank you, Andy!

At the meeting, I will encourage members to consider the types of volunteer activities you would like to participate in this year, as well as any committees you'd be willing to serve on: Membership/Outreach, Volunteer/Service Projects, Advanced Training/Program, Training (already handled by Paulette and Lisa), Hospitality (currently led by Martha Mobley), and Communications/Publicity. For the most part, none of these involves much effort, but it would be good to have them in place if there is a need.

With the New Year, dues of \$10 are due from each member—payable at any time to Treasurer Carole O'Toole. Checks should be made out to LPMN. Also, if anyone has any items to put on the agenda for the next meeting, please let me know and/or come prepared to share at the meeting!

I appreciate that members of our chapter have always been willing to fill the needs of our many volunteer/service projects, and I look forward to working with you all during the coming year. I thank past President Mark McClelland for passing on so much good information and advice about the workings of the chapter. His shoes will be difficult to fill!

Here's to a healthy, productive New Year for you all. Get out there and enjoy nature's wonders, and be prepared to share your enthusiasm with others in our community!



Lost Pines Master Naturalists Volunteering in the Community



Master Naturalists Jan Walter (top), Rick Johnson (middle), and Jim Estes (bottom) guide students attending 5th Grade Science Day at Lockhart State Park. (Photos courtesy of Liz LaRue)