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2000-2001

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## Beginnings...

*Reflections on the New Year*

It's the beginning of both a New Year and a new millennium; a good time for reflection on new beginnings in general.

We are also beginning the first full year of our new Lost Pines Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program. For our Chapter, it is a time to identify new challenges and new goals.

The beginning of this New Year is a good time to remind ourselves that we do not own the earth, we are only its stewards.

Beginning this year we have a new legislature in Austin, and a new Administration in Washington,

D.C. Both will undoubtedly make important decisions that affect our land, water, air quality, and wild life.

We all make, and too often break, New Year's resolutions. Why not make one more resolution this year, for Nature? Resolve to do more, in whatever way suits you, to be a good steward for the earth. Perhaps recycling, reusing and reducing refuse. Possibly making more use of native plants or xeriscaping. Improving wildlife habitat on your property. Or volunteering in support of an important natural resource or environmental cause. And then make sure not to break that resolution!

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## From the Desk of the President

**Rick Johnson**

I certainly hope that everyone had a joyous holiday season and that your direction for the new year is challenging and forward moving! The New Year is off and running for the Lost Pines Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists. We will meet on the 4th Monday of each month with a few other dates set for special training as needed.



Our January meeting will be on Jan 22 at 6:30 in Rockne. Jody King has graciously volunteered to bring the meal so we will have food!!! What a deal. Our February meeting will be on Feb 26, also at Rockne. We will meet for a few minutes in our committees to catch up on where we are and

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# How to Collect, Press, Mount and Store Plants

by B.J. Ragsdale,

*Extension Range Specialist, Texas A & M University*

*Editor's note: Muriel Lem has suggested that we collect plants for use in a future Chapter meeting focused on identification of local plants. This article by B.J. Ragsdale provides useful background information for this project.*

One of the most extensive, important and renewable resources in Texas is native vegetation. These plants furnish food for livestock, provide cover and food for wildlife, conserve soil and water and produce timer products. Many plants are valuable as ornaments; others are toxic to livestock and some are worthless. The vast number and variety of plants in Texas make it essential that individuals know the names of plants. This is why it is important to know how to collect, press, mount and store plants for proper identification.

## Collecting Plants

Select a complete, representative plant. Include the roots, leaves, stems, flowers and seeds. Do not collect unusual, abnormal or diseased plants for identification.

Collect grasses, weeds, aquatic plants and legume specimens as a complete plant, since it usually is necessary to have all the parts to make positive identification.

Tree and woody specimens should include a twig with 10 to 20 leaves, bark, flowers, fruits or seeds.

Use a shovel or other tool to dig grasses, weeds and legumes.

Select two or more specimens—one to submit for identification and one for your files.

## Before Pressing Plants

1. Remove all soil from root system.
2. Bend, break or cut the plant and fold to proper size, 8 1/2 x 11 inches or 11 x 16 inches, to fit herbarium paper for mounting.
3. Place folded plant between a folded single newspaper page and place in the press to dry.
4. Be sure to include all identifying plant parts on the specimen.

## How to Press Plants

Press each specimen soon after it is collected. Keep plants

between pages of a magazine during collecting trip and until the plants are ready for pressing.

Place plants in single newspaper sheets folded to the same size as the press. Use only the amount of plant material that will dry properly. Place only one plant in each folded newspaper. Dryers to go between each specimen should be the same size as the press. They can be made from building felt, blotter paper or corrugated cardboard. Change dryers each day for 5 to 10 days to fully press the plant and to preserve color. Handle the plants by the specimen sheets until they are dry to retain the normal shape of the plant.

The press may be held together firmly with tow canvas, web or leather belts. A bag filled with coarse gravel and placed on the press will help to do a better job of pressing, as the gravel may be shifted to equalize pressure. When dry, retain the specimens in the folded paper or mount them on herbarium sheets.



## How to Make a Plant Press

A plant press can be made from 1- to 2-inch strips of 1/4-inch plywood, ordinary lath or other light material. First, make a frame about 12x17 inches. Then place the strips running both ways and from 1 to 2 inches apart on the inside of each frame. It takes 8 to 12 strips of wooden material to complete the press. The strips may be nailed or riveted together. The slatted press allows maximum ventilation for good drying of plants.

## How to Mount Plants

Standard herbarium mounting sheets are of moderately heavy white paper 8 1/2 x 11 inches or 11 x 16 inches. Mount the specimens for convenience of displaying and filing. There are several ways to mount the specimen, but a simple practical way is to use narrow transparent tape or gummed cloth mending tape. Place the tape across the large stems and branches to hold the plant specimen firmly. The tape should not cover the flowers and other parts to be observed for identification.

## How to Store Plants

After mounting, cover the specimens with cellophane or other heavier transparent material for display purposes. For filing for the specimens, 12 x 17 inches plant genus folders

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where we are going. We will be sponsoring and starting a new class in March or April so if you know anyone interested in this program please contact Rachael, Lytle or myself.

We are still working on scheduling classes for makeup and advanced training, so that we all can complete the initial training. We will also be looking at some chapter projects in the two county area we can adopt for the year 2001. We will also look at how to record our volunteer time and activities in a consistent way. Gerry will give us suggestions on how to do this so she can keep those records up to date.

So, for now, I hope to see you all on Jan 22. Please let me know if you have any questions or ideas for consideration by our chapter.

*Rick Johnson*

should be made. The genus folders usually are of moderately heavy manila placard. One or more specimens may be placed in a genus folder and the plant names indicated on the outside of the folder. In most herbaria collections, specimens are poisoned to keep insects from destroying them. This is laborious and impractical for a small collection. An occasional treatment with paradichlorobenzene crystals or naphthalene flakes (mothballs) will kill or repel insects and preserve your collection for many years.

Most biological supply houses sell collecting equipment, plant presses, dryers, mounting sheets and labels, but an ingenious worker can use local supplies and materials for considerably less expense.

### Where to Send Rangeland Plants

Mail rangeland plant specimens, accompanied by a complete D-853, to:

Extension Range Specialists  
 Department of Range Science  
 Room 225, A1 Bldg.  
 Texas A & M University  
 College Station, TX 77843

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR-

Regular meetings of the Lost Pines Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist, are the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month.

### JANUARY MEETING

ROCKNE CHURCH  
 JANUARY 22, 2001  
 6:30 PM

Bird Identification—Mark Klym, Texas Parks & Wildlife, will present a program on Bird Identification by site and sound.

### FEBRUARY MEETING

ROCKNE CHURCH  
 FEBRUARY 26, 2001  
 6:30 PM

Program—Carolyn Scheffer-Vogel, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and Texas Land Trust, will discuss conservation easements.

### MARCH NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

March 9, 2001. Send information to Andy Butler ([butler@mdanderson.org](mailto:butler@mdanderson.org)) or Doyle Kolle ([kolle@totalaccess.net](mailto:kolle@totalaccess.net)).

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*Wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact called civilization.*  
 —Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

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## Volunteer Opportunities

### McKinney Roughs Volunteer Opportunities

Current Opportunities at McKinney Roughs. For more information, call 512-303-5073, ext. 8040 (Bastrop Area) or toll-free, 800-776-5272, ext. 8040.

- **Trails and Parks support**—Activities include monitoring trail activities, ecological restoration, trail maintenance & construction projects data collecting on native plants and wildlife
- **Education activities**—Serve as guides for student groups, give orientations, assist in preparation for student & teacher groups.

### Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

- Maintaining trails, watering gardens, collecting seeds, helping in the store. Contact Megan Murphy, Director of Volunteer Services, at (512) 292-4200 to arrange for

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a volunteer interview, or E-mail  
[megan@wildflower.org](mailto:megan@wildflower.org)

### Texas Nature Trackers

Projects coordinated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department or partner organizations. Some projects available:

- **Texas Horned Lizard Watch**—provides instructions for surveying the Texas state reptile on your property or on public areas. For more information, contact the Wildlife Diversity program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Texas Mussel Watch**—volunteers are helping us document the presence or absence of native freshwater mussel species. To volunteer for Texas Mussel Watch, call the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Texas Monarch Watch**—monitor the spring and fall migration of this familiar butterfly on your own property or public lands. Volunteers can call the Monarch Watch hotline at 1-800-468-9710 (or if you are in Austin, 326-2231) to report sightings of monarchs or hear a recorded message about the status of the migration in Texas. For more information about Texas Monarch Watch or to receive monitoring kit, call the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Hummingbird Roundup**—provides instructions for monitoring hummingbirds, along with suggestions and supplies for improving hummingbird habitat on your property in Texas. For more information, call the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 4644.
- **Texas Amphibian Watch**—a partner with the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program. Texans involved in this project will use field guides, web sites and audio tapes to learn to identify the various species of frogs and toads native to their area by sight and by listening to their calls. For more information about Texas Amphibian Watch or about related workshops, contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.
- **Project Prairie Birds**—Answer questions about Texas' wintering sparrows and their avian grassland neighbors. Project Prairie Birds can be conducted in any temperate grassland site. For more information, contact Cliff Shackelford, 512-912-7045 or by E-mail: [clifford.shackelford@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:clifford.shackelford@tpwd.state.tx.us).
- **Adopt-A-Species Projects**—Takes place on public properties that support populations of rare Texas plants or animals. Learn monitoring techniques. Volunteers

## Field Notes

### Birding at Hornsby Bend

#### Andy Butler and Sue Fischer

On November 19, Dr. Stan Wellso led the second in a series of Birding classes sponsored by the Bastrop Audubon Chapter. For this outing, about 15 of us met at the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory (HBBO). Now here's the deal: The HBBO is located at the Hornsby Bend Biosolids Management Facility—this is where the City of Austin composts and manufactures “Dillo Dirt” for use as a soil amendment. So if you visit, be prepared for an occasional malodor.

The site contains over 700 acres, and includes four old sewage lagoons, riverside habitat, and prairie habitat. This combination provides a great environment for a variety of birds. According to the experienced Birders in attendance, the HBBO is the premier birding destination in the greater Austin area, particularly for waterfowl and shorebirds. Over 350 species have been recorded at the site. Also at the site is the Hornsby Bend Center for Environmental Research, which includes some interpretive exhibits and conference rooms. There are also a few trails along the Colorado River. The HBBO is located off FM 973, just east of Austin Bergstrom International Airport and on the north shore of the Colorado.

In these Audubon outings, Dr. Wellso and the other experienced birders help neophytes with tips on visual field marks and identification of birds by call. In addition, they provide ideas on what to look for in binoculars for birding, and selection of field guides. What about the birds? On this particular day, we identified over 30 species in less than two hours, including greater yellow legs, kestrel, both green- and blue-winged teal, pied grebe and eared grebe, bufflehead, caracara and an osprey.

Bastrop Audubon plans several more birding field trips in 2001, including another visit to Hornsby Bend on January 28. Trips to other locations will occur throughout the spring. For information on the dates, call Priscilla Jarvis at 512-281-2762.



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agree to continue monitoring for a set period of time. Suitable for schools, club or civic groups. (Not available in all parts of the state). Contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at 1-800-792-1112, ext. 7011.

- **Remember**—Get approval before you begin a project that you want to count for volunteer credit. Record your volunteer service and hours and submit to Gerri Martinez (512-303-5936). Documenting your service hours helps you to become certified. In addition, it helps the Master Naturalist Program to justify support received from our sponsors.

## Special Events

- **Fayette County Outdoor Expo**—April 28 and 29, La Grange, Fayette County Fairgrounds. Contact La Grange Area Chamber of Commerce, 979-968-5756 for information.

## Advanced Training

- **New Concepts in Tree Care**—The Wildflower Center, January 28, 1-3:30 P.M. (Members, \$30, non-members, \$40). Join arborist Don Gardner to learn how your trees grow and live, and how to keep them healthy through proper tree care, including pruning, root care, and wound care. Pre-registration required, call 512-292-4200.

- **Wildlife Use Appraisal Workshop**—The Wildflower Center, February 3, 9 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. (Members, \$75, non-members, \$85). Join Beryl Armstrong for a workshop addressing issues facing landowners who want to manage their land for wildlife. Learn about habitat management practices, environmental restoration, and applicable techniques for identifying and maintaining the natural plant and animal species of the region. Pre-registration required, call 512-292-4200.

- **National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitat Workshop**—The Wildflower Center, February 17 & 18. (Cost, \$35, includes materials and lunch). The National Wildlife Federation teams up with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to present workshops for educators. Learn about creating a native plant landscape for your schoolyard and help students learn about plants, ecology, and the local environment. For registration, contact Marya Frech, Senior Education Coordinator, 512-476-9805; E-mail [frech@nwf.org](mailto:frech@nwf.org).

- **Native Trees in the Landscape**—The Wildflower Center, February 24, 8 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. (cost, \$35 for symposium, \$15 for optional workshops). Co-sponsored by the Native Plant Society of Texas and Treefolks. Lectures and workshops will focus on native trees in the landscape. For more information and registration materials, contact the registrar at 512-292-4200x109 or by E-mail at [allison@wildflower.org](mailto:allison@wildflower.org).

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