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President's Column

--Louise Ridlon

Regardless of what Punxsutawney Phil or Bee Cave Bob indicated, the calendar tells us that it's still winter. However, there's a promise of spring between the mud puddles. On a recent biosurvey at McKinney Roughs, we marveled at all the rosettes that will develop into wildflowers in a month or two. Liz spoke for many of us when she wished for a field guide to rosettes!

Our new training class holds a promise, also. We have a group of 25 people enrolled, and their backgrounds, interests, and enthusiasm make them each a great asset to our chapter. Our first joint chapter meeting, which will be held in conjunction with the training class, will be on February 15 at the Red Rock Community Center. I hope many of our "veteran" members will come out and introduce themselves to the new group. The program will be on Forest Ecology and Management, presented by Daniel Lewis of the Texas Forest Service. This qualifies as advanced training for those not in the class.

I hope many of us will turn out for the workday at the Colorado River Refuge on February 20. This is an exciting opportunity to get in on the creation of a new trail that will provide public access and appreciation for

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Colorado River Refuge Work Day

Pines and Prairies Land Trust (PPLT) has invited the Lost Pines Master Naturalist chapter to partner with them in developing a trail system on a 30-acre tract of land at the Colorado River Refuge. This parcel, known as the Lost Lake area, is upland from the river.

PPLT, along with trail master Dale Morrison, is planning a workday at the Colorado River Refuge on **Saturday, February 20**, beginning at 9:00 am. Lost Pines Master Naturalists and any other interested folks, including children, are invited to meet at the Cliffhanger Trailhead parking area. We especially want to encourage members of the 2010 training class to participate; this would be a great group project!

The Cliffhanger Trailhead is located along Riverside Dr just east of Lover's Lane. To get there from Hwy 71 exit 71 to the south side just east of the

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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 **March 7, 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.

February

Monday, February 15 – Chapter Meeting: *Red Rock Community Center, 6:30 pm.* Daniel Lewis from the Texas Forest Service will give a presentation on Forest Ecology and Management. (Joint meeting with 2010 training class.)

March

Monday, March 15 – Chapter Meeting: *Lockhart State Park Recreation Hall, 6:30 pm.* Dr. Bob Lyons will give a presentation on Rangeland Ecology and Management. (Joint meeting with 2010 training class.)

April

Monday, April 19 – Chapter Meeting: *Bastrop State Park and Refractory, 6:30 pm.* Topic TBA. (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 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.
- **Lockhart State Park – Lockhart Fifth Grade Outdoor Science Labs** – Interpretive Ranger Liz Larue at Lockhart State Park has set up five sessions in March and April to work with fifth graders from the local elementary school on outdoor science labs. The planned dates are Friday, **March 5**; Thursday, **March 11**; Friday, **March 12**; Thursday, **April 1**; and Thursday, **April 8**. The labs run from 9:00 am-12:30 pm; volunteers should arrive by 8:30 am. If you'd like to volunteer, contact Liz Larue at Liz.larue@tpwd.state.tx.us or (512) 398-3479.
- **Colorado River Refuge – Nature Education Classes** – Joan Russell has organized a series of nature education classes for homeschoolers. Master Naturalists can volunteer to assist with these classes, held on Thursday mornings from 10:00-12:00. Class sessions will be held at the Water District Building in Tahitian Village just off Hwy. 71 on Tahitian Drive. Dates for the upcoming classes are **February 11 & 25, March 11 & 25, April 8 & 22, and May 6 & 20**. Contact Joan Russell to volunteer at joanrussell@suddenlink.net or (512) 321-8618.
- **Texas Parks & Wildlife Department – Family Fishing Clinics** – 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. Park entrance is free for volunteers, and necessary training will be provided on site. Clinics will be held on:
 - March 13** at Bastrop State Park
 - March 16** at Buescher State Park
 - June 12** at Bastrop State Park
 - June 19** at Buescher State Park
 - July 10** at Bastrop State Park
 - July 1** at Buescher State ParkClinics run from 9:00 am to Noon, but volunteers should be there at 9:00 am. At least 7 volunteers are needed for each clinic. This is a fun project for kids, parents, and volunteers! Contact Bill Brooks at (512) 581-0377 or bgbrooks@mail.utexas.edu to participate.

Advanced Training

- **McKinney Roughs Nature Park – Ranger in the Roughs** – Thursdays from 7:00-8:00 pm, **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.
- **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** – 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.
- **Lockhart State Park** □ **Gardening for Wildlife Workshop** □ Saturday, **February 27**, 1:00–2:30 pm. Learn how gardening with native

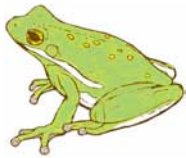
plants can attract butterflies and hummingbirds to your flower garden. Not only are these gardens beautiful and support wildlife, they are low maintenance. Lockhart State Park is located at 4179 State Park Road, Lockhart. For more information, call (512) 398-3479.

- **Lockhart State Park – Nature Hikes** – Hikes are scheduled for **March 6**, and **April 3**. They began at 1:00 PM. Learn about the plants in our area by taking a hike along Lockhart State Park's Interpretive Nature Trail. All along the trails are markers identifying some of the plants. Your guide will tell you about the plants' traits and intriguing points of interest. If you want to know more about the plant world, then please join us. The park is located at 4179 State Park Road, Lockhart, Texas 78644. For more information, call (512) 398-3479.
- **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**.
- **Travis Audubon Society** has also scheduled workshops on **Chimney Swift Tower Workshop at Chaetura Canyon** and **Bird Songs and Vocalization**, starting in mid-March. Please go to their Web site for more information:
<http://www.travisaudubon.org/classes.html>

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- Advanced Training, continued

- **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.
- **Wildfire Preparedness for Homeowners Workshop** – Tuesday, **February 23** at 7:00 p.m. at the Tahitian Village Fire Station. While giving thanks for all the rain, folks who live in the Wildland-Urban Interface should be aware that all the rain is helping next summer's wildfire fuels to grow! These workshops will aid you in defending your home against those potential wildland fires. FREE. Call 512-517-1416 to register.



- Presidents Column, continued

this unique area of Bastrop. Pines and Prairies Land Trust and Dale Morrison will provide us with direction. I know that there will be many follow-up tasks to be done that will add to your volunteer time.

If you prefer to keep your hands clean while performing volunteer service, take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This annual bird census, held on February 12-15, provides researchers with a snapshot of bird populations throughout the U.S. You don't have to be an experienced birder to participate. It's fun to get the whole family involved! Details can be found at www.birdsource.org/gbbc/.

Plans are underway for the annual Earth Day Festival at McKinney Roughs Nature Park. Our chapter usually has a booth, with a hands-on activity for kids, as well as informative handouts for adults. We need volunteers throughout the day, both to staff our booth and to help with other activities. Contact Jana Hellbusch at Jana.Hellbusch@lcra.org or myself at fridlon@htomail.com for information or to sign up. We hope the day promises to be sunny this year!

With all the promises that the coming season holds, make some promises of your own to get out and share your passion for nature!

Nature Quotes

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

~William Shakespeare



Colorado River Refuge Work Day, continued

river bridge. There is a 2-way access road there. Lover's Lane comes into the access road beside the RR tracks. Follow Lover's Lane south as it twists and turns approx. 1.5 miles. You will see Riverside Dr. on the left. Turn left here and the Cliffhanger Trailhead is about 200 yards down on the right. Among the tasks to be completed:

1. using GPS to survey the property for access points
2. locating and staking out a trail
3. evaluate water crossings for solutions on bridging them
4. pruning brush along the proposed trail
5. surveying and documenting flora and fauna

The plan is to identify a trail on both sides of the creek bottom in the Lost Lake section of the Refuge. Anyone wishing to help plot GPS coordinates is welcome to bring their personal devices. We plan to make the new trails accessible from four different points of entry. People can walk as little or as much as they like. Please bring any hand tools for trail clearing that you wish such as loppers, pruning shears, and gloves. Wear sturdy boots/shoes, and dress for the weather. PPLT will provide drinks and some hand tools. The bad weather date for the workday is March 13, 2010. For more information or questions, contact Carrie Knox at PPLT (512 308-1911); for weather worries call Dale Morrison (512 629-3345) on the day of the event.