



Riverside Nature Notes

The Riverside
Nature Center

Volume 13
February, 2006

What Is a Master Naturalist?

A few months back, we began highlighting the organizations associated with RNC that directly help us fulfill our mission, "to foster greater public awareness and appreciation of the Hill Country's natural resources through education, information and by example." This month we will highlight an important RNC partner, the Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter.

The Texas Master Naturalist program trains volunteers in the beneficial management of wildlife and natural resources in our local area. Members then provide education and service to their communities. The program is sponsored by two state agencies, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Cooperative Extension. The Hill Country Chapter includes Kerr, Bandera, Gillespie, and Kendall counties. At the end of 2004, there were 27 Texas Master Naturalist Chapters in the state with a total of 2,750 members.

What do Texas Master Naturalists do? Their mission is to share what they learn with the public through educational activities, including their monthly meetings where guest speakers address topics such as Archeology, Water Conservation, Bird Behavior, Hill Country Insects, and Wildscapes for Butterflies. These meetings are usually held at RNC on the fourth Monday of the month

beginning at 6:30 PM, and are publicized in local newspapers.

A second part of their mission is to teach by example, by volunteering in nature centers, such as RNC and Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne, and in parks, including the Butterfly Garden in Kerrville Schreiner Park. Members also volunteer in various roles in state natural areas, including teaching the public about bats at the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area near Comfort and creating native plant gardens in the Hill Country State Natural Area in Bandera.

A third part of their mission is outreach to the public. Volunteers in the new "Land Management Assistance Program" make site visits to landowners' properties to identify native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses, and discuss any concerns the owner might have regarding management of grasslands, woodlands, or riparian areas (areas near streams and lakes). Master Naturalists also identify any erosion problems on the property and can suggest simple measures to mitigate the loss of soil and help heal most gullies. Volunteers prepared for this project by taking an additional 40+ hours of special training with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and UGRA.

If you would like a Land Management Assistance visit to your property, please call RNC at 257-4837.

How can I become a Texas Master Naturalist?

The Hill Country Chapter accepts applications from April through July of each year for their fall training class. Trainees attend 13 half-day classes and two fieldtrips over a three month period. They study a broad range of topics including the remarkable work of the early Texas naturalists, the ecological regions of Texas with an emphasis on the Hill Country, weather and climate, geology, soils, hydrology, the water cycle, ethnobotany, taxonomy of plants, range management, grass identification, grasslands, woodlands, wildscapes, reptiles and amphibians, invertebrates, fish, mammals, birds and archeology. The state curriculum is customized to cover more information on the topics most pertinent to the Hill Country. This year the Hill Country Chapter has 36 trainees that will become members in November.

Please turn to page 3 to read more about this wonderful organization!!



Meet Riverside's Volunteer of the Month

by Barbara Staggs

A VERY SUCCESSFUL EVENT!



Priscilla came to RNC looking for answers to what would grow in our rocky soil and climate. She found a wonderful group of volunteers and friends that she could garden with side by side on Thursdays as well as valuable information on native plants. Her philosophy is that RNC has such variety of trees, native plants, and wildlife that it is an excellent example of habitat intertwined to form an oasis of "wildscape" right here in downtown Kerrville.

Priscilla is a Texas Master Naturalist, a member of the Native Plant Society and the Tierra Linda Garden Club. Be sure and thank her for all her hard work and feel free to ask her a plant question! She is a wonderful source of knowledge and will graciously share. Thank you, Priscilla!

Priscilla Stanley is an extraordinary plant enthusiast and expert! She can give you the name of a plant and then help you to understand its value and purpose in the realm of nature. She has been a wonderful asset to RNC in many ways. Priscilla is very involved with the Habitat For Humanity project as the coordinator and trainer of the plant coaches. The plant coaches and homeowners study plants at RNC to decide which ones would best suit their needs and interests. This is an essential and unique element in this project.

Priscilla grew up in Schenectady, New York and was a chemist for 32 years with Union Carbide. She and her husband Jim met while working together. Jim, being a Texas native from Seminole, thought retiring in the hill country sounded good, so they moved to Kerrville.

NOTICE THE VOLUNTEER INTEREST SURVEY ENCLOSED!!!!

The insert in this month's newsletter is a survey we would like for all our members to fill out.

This will allow us to update information and give us a chance to see areas in which you might meet a need here at RNC.

Returning it to RNC will save a phone call to you later! Thank you for your time to complete it and mail it! Don't forget to put a stamp on it!

A GREAT, BIG Thank You Goes Out:

To Jim Boman who helped get the meeting rooms ready for the sale.

To those who picked up deliveries and to those who carried Rummage Sale items to where we needed them: Andy Pesez, Angelo Falzarano, John Quinby, Jim & Priscilla Stanley, Mike Gray, Shannon Smith

To those who organized and priced the items: Selma Gibson, Jim & Ann Laughlin, George Kay, Jill Parker, Angelo Falzarano

To those who came to sell our items or were cashiers: Margaret Van Landingham, Laurie Pesez, Mary Boman, Maggie Tatum, Terri Vasquez, David Vasquez, Julie Trevino

To those who came to help with sales on February 4th: Angela Bailey, Jodie Harmon, Ann & Jim Laughlin, Andy Pesez, Woody & Kay Woodward, Angelo Falzarano

To Joy Bradford who brought us a wonderful soup for lunch!

To those who came and worked in the gift shop: Virgie McRae, Maggie Tatum, Mary Hart Frost

To those who came back on Monday to help clean up: Andy Pesez, John Quinby

To all of you who donated items for our fantastic Rummage Sale and to those who purchased items! We made nearly \$2,400!!!



.....more about the Texas Master Naturalists!

What are the requirements to be a certified Texas Master Naturalist?

After completing the training course, each year a member must contribute a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service on approved projects in the Chapter's Kerr, Bandera, Gillespie and Kendall County area. This requirement is easy since there are over 40 projects to choose from, including volunteering to care for the RNC gardens and grounds, being an RNC Nature Guide for school classes, helping with the children's summer camp and more. Other projects involve birds, bats, butterflies, nature trails or helping various state agencies gather data for natural resource studies.

Texas Master Naturalists also attend a minimum of 8 hours of approved Advanced Training each year in topics of their own choosing to continue building their skills. The Chapter identifies several Advanced Training opportunities in each monthly newsletter. These classes range from prescribed burning as a land management tool to monitoring Monarch butterfly eggs and larva on milkweed plants for a long-term study at the University of Minnesota tracking the Monarch population.

Members completing both the required volunteer service and advanced training each year maintain their status as certified Texas Master Naturalists.

What has the Hill Country Chapter accomplished?

Chapter members have provided **10,600 hours of volunteer service** to their communities in four counties since the Chapter began in late 2002 with 28 members. There are currently 66 members in the Hill Country Chapter. To date, the Chapter has provided **2,482 hours of volunteer service to RNC** by 34 members in the following projects: Gardening and Grounds, the Hillside Prairie with Native Grasses, the Wildflower Meadow, the Gleaners wildflower seed collection and plant

rescue, and Youth Education, including Nature Guides and Summer Nature Camp. Last year, 27 members volunteered 259 hours for the joint Riverside – Master Naturalist sponsored “Down By the Riverside” Nature Fair and Native Plant Sale. If any of these projects at RNC sound interesting to you, please call the RNC office at 257-4837, as you are welcome to join the Master Naturalists and other volunteers on these worthwhile educational projects.

The second most popular project for Hill Country Chapter volunteering is the “Bat Tunnel” where 14 members have contributed 885 hours helping the public understand more about bats and how they help us by devouring literally tons of agricultural pests.

If you want more information about the Texas Master Naturalist program, please visit the website of the Hill Country Chapter at www.hillcountrymasternaturalist.org or the State Master Naturalist program at <http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>.

WELCOME, New RNC Members!

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:
Rev Sharon Strain

FAMILY LEVEL:
Mr. & Mrs. John Farmer

**A Very Special
THANKYOU
For the Gifts!**

**Olin Whitescarver
Wes & Marci Dorman
Charles R. Ratliff
Susan Sander**



The Riverside Nature Center

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Website: www.riversidenaturecenter.org

Office and Store Hours:
9AM– 4PM Monday— Friday;
10AM-3PM Saturday and Sunday
TREE TRAIL open daily DAWN to DUSK
FREE ADMISSION !!!

RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER'S MISSION IS
TO FOSTER GREATER PUBLIC AWARENESS
AND APPRECIATION OF THE HILL
COUNTRY'S NATURAL RESOURCES
THROUGH EDUCATION, INFORMATION,
AND BY EXAMPLE.

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COMING EVENTS MARK YOUR CALENDAR !!

Come Celebrate Kerr County's 150th with us on Saturday, April 8th! We are planing to have several historic displays, informative speakers, amazing storytellers, tasty food, games like horseshoes, and other really fun old-time activities for everyone!

PLUS.....

Earth Day is just around the corner—Saturday, April 22nd! We are planning to have our usual, wonderful native plant sale (Members, you get to come the night before on April 21st) sponsored by the Native Plant Society of TX! We are also planning to have informative programs—including a star party!
PLEASE PLAN TO COME!

**'06 BROWN BAG
LUNCH & LEARN
Program Schedule**
(All are set for the 2nd
Thursday of each month)

**March 9th,
Hill Country
Wine Making
by Danny Hernandez**

**April 13th,
Native American
Arts and Crafts
by Wayne Este**

**May 11th,
Hill Country Snakes
By Mark Gumbert**

**Sept. 7th,
Seeds: The Fruit
of the Matter
by Barbara Lowenthal
& Linda Riner**

**Oct. 12th,
Basic Birding:
How to Identify Birds
by Jay Keen**