

Joe Piazza

From: Betty Watkins [bwatkins1@austin.rr.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 02, 2003 10:27 AM
To: Undisclosed-Recipient;
Subject: Master Naturalist September Newsletter

Hays County Master Naturalist Newsletter

September 2003

Scheduled Class Meetings: Tuesday September 9, 2003 at Aquarena Springs

Hillside Nature Walk by Jay Cody

Restoration Nursery by Minette Marr

Wetlands by Randy Moss

Keying Plants by Jill Harding

HCMN Chapter Meeting: Thursday Sept. 25, 2003 @ the extension office

Volunteer Projects:

Texas Parks and Wildlife's Wildlife Expo (Oct. 4-5) **

Statewide Meeting and Advanced Training (Oct. 24-26)

Help update the statewide website:

{<http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>}

Reminders:

Bracken Cave Bat Watch- Wed. Sept. 3 @ 6:00 (for those who previously signed up)

Butterfly Boot Camp report

Discussion on Delbert Bassett's Food for Thought article

~~~~~

The statewide Texas Master Naturalist conference is coming up October 25th and 26th at Camp Allen in Navasota. It is a great opportunity for advanced training, and for getting to know some fellow Master Naturalists. Contact Michelle Haggerty for sign up information. 979-458-2034 or [mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu](mailto:mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu)

\*\* The Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo is coming up next month! Be sure to mark your calendars for October 4th and 5th. It takes place in south Austin at TP&W Headquarters. It is a hands-on day of fun, with introductions to camping, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities such as kayaking and rock climbing. There is a new wetlands exhibit, a blackland prairie demo, and a birds of prey show, with native hawks and owls. It is lots of fun for the whole family, and best of all, it is free! The statewide Texas Master Naturalists have a booth there as well, and if you'd like to volunteer your time, please contact Mic! helle Haggerty at [mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu](mailto:mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu) or call her at 979-458-2034. For more information about Expo, see [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expo/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expo/)

Keep Sunday October 19 open for the Hays County Master Naturalist afternoon Picnic at Five Mile Dam.

The Wildflower Center in Austin is having their Fall Plant Sale of the 11th and 12th of October.

---

## Up Close and Personal with the Daddy Longlegs

I knew of Daddy Longlegs (officially "Harvestmen") when we moved into our house at the end of the road, but I had never seen them in such large populations. They gathered in clumps in corners of the porch roof, giving the appearance of armpit hair.

Pioneering individual Longlegs sometimes stilted their way into our living quarters when doors were opened to let the cat, dogs or humans in or out, and we tolerated increasing numbers as the season progressed, but I never really thought about them until the day a Longleg clambered onto the windowsill next to the bathtub as I bathed one morning. Fearlessly approaching a splattered droplet the size of his own body, he stooped over it and sipped it down to a damp spot while his body swelled to twice its original size. I had always thought spiders got all the moisture they needed from the food they caught. But what do Longlegs eat? Printed information is sparse, usually little more than a picture and a paragraph.

Longlegs aren't actually spiders, of course, and they act considerably differently. They are very social, forming large colonies for reasons of their own, as yet unshared with the scientists who conjecture that massing together helps conserve moisture or maintain an even temperature. At our house, at the first hint of impending rain, they make an exodus up the walls

of the house to the edges of the roofline where the runoff, if any, would collect and drip. A light mist collects a crowd, a downpour disperses it.

Some say that these creatures are the most venomous known to science but are harmless because their mouthparts are too small to inflict any damage. The Texas A & M website states there is no evidence to support such a claim. I have seen them carry comparatively large items with their mouths, such as moths, grasshopper legs, grain and once, a pinto bean that must have come from my garden 40 feet away, and personally don't buy the "mouthparts too small" theory. I believe they are omnivorous opportunists, not hunters. I have seen them gathered around! a scorpion that had been stepped on earlier, and then later, the scorpion was gone. Perhaps it was a funeral, but I think they ate it. They also seem to appreciate a little pet food from time to time.

I read that the females overwinter under dead leaves and trash at ground level. I never saw any Longlegs, but the odd-looking "red spiders" under scrap lumber and other debris might be the females, better adapted to life under cover with shorter legs and a flatter profile. As the years pass, the Longleg numbers on the porch have decreased. Perhaps it is because there is less construction scrap and brush-clearing debris for them to hide under in the winter, or perhaps they suffer predation from the Mediterranean geckos and traditional web-spinning spiders, whose numbers have meanwhile increased. I can only watch to see if this is a trend or just an anomaly, and take comfort in the fact that there are still lots of Longlegs in them-thar hills. Article contributed by Linda Anderson

### **Site Visit Report:**

There was a site visit at Scott Collier's home on Knox Ranch in August. There was a lot of diversity, especially along the creek, with Little Bluestem, Switchgrass, and Inland Sea Oats among the grasses that were seen. Another interesting plant seen was Snow on the Mountain, with its beautiful green and white leaves, and small white flowers. A few people hiked up to the fire tower for the sunset and the scenic 360 degree view.

## **Landscaping seminar is September 18 in San Marcos**

Robert Hager of Hager Landscape & Tree Company will be the guest speaker at the Hays County Master Gardener Association meeting on September 18, 2003 at 7:00p.m. at the Hays County Extension office. Mr. Hager will discuss "reality landscaping" --- plants that will grow and thrive in the San Marcos/Hays County area with a realistic amount of care

involved.

Mr. Hager will speak from his experience in landscape installation and tree pruning and removal that will assist area homeowners in caring for their landscapes. A Q&A session will be held afterward. Century-News

**WATCH YOUR E-MAIL FOR A SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER PROJECTS!**

'til next time,

Melissa Brooks

HCMN

Ringtails 2002

([benmiss@worldnet.att.net](mailto:benmiss@worldnet.att.net))