

# LOST PINES CHAPTER

Texas Master Naturalist



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## Yegua Knobbs - Where Life is Always Wild by Larry Gfeller

Ansel Adams, a luminary conservationist, had a philosophy rooted in his deep belief that nature and beauty, particularly as symbolized by wildness, were essential elements of the human soul. It is this same belief, 31 years after his death, that guides the stewardship of 302 acres of upland woods near McDade, Texas, protected by Pines and Prairies Land Trust (PPLT). The property is known as the Yegua Knobbs Preserve (YKP).



The Yegua Creek forms in Lee County (named by the Spanish, Yegua means “mare”) and is the primary tributary forming Somerville Lake. The knobbs refers to a small line of seven forested sandstone mesas 1½ miles south of Knobbs Spring in northwestern Lee and northeastern Bastrop counties that run between the Colorado and Brazos river drainages. The preserve contains some of these mesas (this number remains contentious) in what is the largest parcel of preserved land in either Bastrop or Lee County. It sports woods, hills, pastures, a spring-fed bog, rare plants, interesting geology and valuable habitat for the endangered Houston Toad. Today it is a quiet place of serene beauty, but its history is right out of a B-grade western movie.

Yegua Knobbs was a stronghold for a gang of outlaws known as the “notch-cutters,” who cut notches in their pistol grips after each killing. Why Yegua Knobbs? It was an immense thicket with plenty of hiding places close to the Williamson, Lee and Bastrop County boundaries—making it easy to evade jurisdictions. Confederate veterans had little to return to after the war and many were desperate. Joining an outlaw band was an easy way to support themselves. Cattle pens were built in the nearby town of McDade and buyers and sellers had a connecting railroad. After four years of war, the area was rich in unbranded cattle, but it was just a matter of time before the notch-cutters began stealing branded stock as well.

They perpetrated cattle rustling, gunfights, brazen murders, and general hell-raising, terrorizing McDade. In 1875, far removed from local county law enforcement, citizens took matters into their own hands and launched a series of vigilante actions that resulted in multiple murders and a string of seemingly unending retaliatory violence for nine long years. A turning point arrived in 1877 when the vigilantes interrupted a city-wide dance, took four suspected outlaws out and lynched them. This slowed the mayhem for a while, but in

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# Yegua Knobbs, cont.

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November 1883 two men were murdered in Fedor, and in a separate incident a third man was robbed, beaten and left for dead. The notch-cutters were back! The deputy sheriff investigating the matter was soon shot dead in McDade. Four suspects were promptly hung and three more outlaws were executed on Christmas Eve 1883. This led to a showdown gunfight in front of a McDade saloon on Christmas Day. The ensuing gun battle left three more men dead in the street and put an end to the notch-cutter saga. Still, unrelated violence and gunfights plagued McDade for nearly another thirty years. It was a rough town.



YKP as we know it today was also borne of protracted conflict. This time the law determined the outcome. In the late 1990s the Alcoa Aluminum Corporation proposed to expand strip-mining operations into Lee and Bastrop counties. In 1999 a grass-roots organization, known as Neighbors For Neighbors (NFN), formed in opposition to Alcoa's strip-mining plans as well as to fight efforts by the city of San Antonio to import ground water from Alcoa's property in those two counties. Board members from PPLT were active in NFN and they struggled mightily in support of the fight. Eventually, NFN discovered evidence that Alcoa had been violating the Clean Air Act at its Rockdale coal plants. In the end, NFN successfully sued Alcoa over those

violations, resulting in Alcoa paying several million dollars in fines. A tidy amount of those fines made their way to the Trust for Public Land and PPLT. In 2004 PPLT purchased what is now YKP from private landowners who sought to preserve their land from intense development.

Together with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Forest Service, PPLT began a long process of wildlife habitat restoration on the property. Today, the property is managed as a wildlife preserve. PPLT board member and land steward (also president of NFN) Travis Brown says, "Our goal is to ensure this unique property remains wild and natural—that it provides the best possible habitat for wildlife." The preserve has undergone a regimen of prescribed burns, large-scale mulching, brush removal and clearing of understory from the bog and springs. To date, several hundred feral hogs have been trapped and removed and public dove hunts have been conducted in concert with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Public Hunt Program. Deer hunting is not permitted in the preserve. As part of the wildlife management plan, a twice annual bird census is conducted on field days open to the public. Nest boxes dot the acreage.

YKP is not a public park, nor is it ever intended to be. It's there to provide a protected home for a rich and varied population of wildlife. This is why it is opened to the public only at specified times of the year to accommodate carefully-vetted special requests, or to conduct research. In 2015 Cristin Embree, board member and registered professional archaeologist, began offering cultural resource field days in recognition of the storied history of the land. The public is invited to help assess, research and protect archeological treasures in the preserve. This is a new and untried endeavor for PPLT, although there appears to be ample reason for optimism. Well before the notch-cutters, the area may have been used by a variety of historic and pre-historic cultures, especially as a potential stopping point for travelers on the celebrated El Camino Real trail. YKP is also believed to have been a location for an underground commercial kiln during the 1850's—one of three possible area sites for the old Knobbs community. The Knobbs spring, a good source for water, is nearby, as is Marshy Creek. It is also home to a few species of rare plants, one of which (bladderwort) is carnivorous.



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# Meet Cat May

by Larry Gfeller

Southern women are known for their charms. Gracious, circumspect, intuitive and graceful, these ladies are the product of traditional values distilled from the inviolability of family. From the viewpoint of Southern parenthood, these women have been Raised Right. Cat May is one such woman.

Of course, girls will be girls. Whether setting up lovingly prepared mud pies to dry in the Texas sun, collecting bugs and scorpions in the back yard, or playing with horny toads, box turtles and snakes, more earthy appetites sometimes intermingle with formal upbringing, rendering colorful personalities—a certain patina.

An inquisitive and passionate woman, Cat will not abide ignorance, especially on subjects of importance to her. She will immerse herself in learning how something works—until she thoroughly beats it into willing submission. She is a superb carpenter and an experienced mechanic. I have seen her diagnose and fix an errant tailgate on an F-250 that three different guys would send to the dealership in exasperation. She can wax poetic about the architectural intricacies of wasp nests or deliver an impassioned dissertation on the virtue of mud. She can visualize and create beautiful art from items others merely throw away. She thrives on personal relationships, but will verbally beat you like a rented mule if you push one of her hot buttons; her vocabulary is . . . robust! She also wields a mean chainsaw. This combination of gentility and fundamental competence can be disarming for the unprepared. To add complexity, Cat May is a deeply spiritual being . . . not like a Bible-thumping zealot, but rather someone acutely sensitive to the rhythms of life. You can see it in her eyes. She maintains some gossamer connection with the universe, and it speaks to her. The entire north wall of her living room is a realistic panorama of the firmament viewed from somewhere just above and behind the moon—peering down onto Earth. I remember staring at it with open mouth, like a caveman seeing fire for the very first time. Cat May came of age during the turbulent 60's and has never been afraid to connect to a greater consciousness.



Cat May at the loom



Youth on the beach

Cat was raised in the Houston area. Her parents were good people who provided a nurturing home and loved each other till death separated them. Cat's father graduated from UT as a chemical engineer, her mother an SMU alumna and an accomplished commercial artist. Cat describes her daddy: "His first two jobs were inventing the first man-made fabric for parachutes—cotton was being used previously and it had a short life span—and being sent to Decatur, Illinois to work on the bomb. He was also a do-it-yourselfer." Cat's mother was an active member of the Fiber Artists of Houston and won several awards for her creations. She made all clothing for the kids until high school. About her mother, Cat says, "She dabbled in many types of art media but finally settled on stained glass. She made beautiful Tiffany style windows, lamps, manger scenes and colorful birds to hang in windows."

Cat had a younger sister (Susan) and an even younger brother (Dale). Theirs was a secret underground pact. Around parents, they were polite, respectful and well-behaved. Released from

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# Cat, cont.

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parental oversight, they chased each other through the house with a starter's pistol, fomented outrageous soap-suds fights, and tied little brother to a Chinaberry tree so girls could tend to back yard zoos and miniature doll towns without threat of wanton destruction. Despite occasional gender conflicts, Dale loved and looked up to his sisters. They shared secrets with each other, stuck up for one another—the blood bond deepened through adulthood and beyond. “I consider my childhood to have been perfect,” Cat says. Dale's death in 2012 was a devastating and transformative tragedy for both sisters. Cat poignantly muses, “I held him in my arms when he was one day old, I taught him to drive.”

As a young Texas lady—after engagement to someone else—a long tall Texan she had known for eight years re-entered her life and stole her away (LPMN newsletter, November/December 2015). Cat married Frank May in her parents' backyard in June 1970. It would be the beginning of a frantic and colorful life together—at once exciting and spontaneous. Frank describes it this way, “That spark was ignited at age 17 on the dance floor at Garner State Park in 1963, caught fire at age 24 in 1970 and has been burning ever since.” Soul mates. They even graduated LPMN together in 2012.

Want to get to know Cat May better? You won't do it indoors. She hangs out at the Lost Pines Nature Trails (the original bag lady) or with the Bridge Maniacs most every week. River water (mixed with a little mud) runs in her veins. She knows every inch of that riparian habitat, looks out after the critters that live there and cares deeply about how folks treat the land. New challenges, new opportunities and ever more commitment, there's always something that needs doing. Cat finds some of the most unlikely treasures as she scours the river banks. If someone happens upon a snake trapped in washed-up netting, Cat rushes to the rescue. An unusual moth resting on a tree trunk or a green frog clinging to the inside of a river reed, Cat produces her ubiquitous waterproof camera and records the event. She collects all things natural (twisted vines, sea shells, driftwood, seeds and nut shells). You and I see roadkill . . . Cat sees an opportunity to recover a skull, skeleton, or skin—artifacts of nature.

A natural teacher, Cat is re-discovering her inner child. Last year she thrilled kids from the Austin Trinity Lutheran School, special needs children from Weeden Elementary, and fifth graders at Red Rock Elementary. During night hikes at the Colorado River Refuge, Cat delights hikers by introducing them to orb weaver spiders suspended in silver moonlit webs, or nocturnal mammals or sounds of the night forest. A charter member of the Outdoor Adventures Group, Cat now develops presentation materials and research to support LPMN outdoor educational programs with the newly formed Education and Resource Committee. She is our Chapter Historian, a board member and writes for our chapter blog.

Curiosity haunts this woman 24/7. Never comfortable with indoor classrooms or lumbering text books, give her an unexplained act of nature or a mysterious unidentified bug, and she devours field guides and reference material until the truth is laid bare. Her interests are wide and deep. Last year she spent 4 days in southern Mexico learning from a master weaver: “Walking looms are massive things with only 2 harnesses, which are operated by standing on two 2 x 4 'peddles,' shifting your weight from one peddle to the other to raise and lower the harnesses, so there is no sitting down—it's all done standing and weight shifting like on a stair stepper exercise machine—an 8-hour day of weaving was quite a workout.”

Cat May is easily consumed by creative currents that carry her off into deep water. She converts natural materials into jaw-dropping art. Artistic technique was honed and polished at her mother's side from age 5



Saving a rat snake

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# Frank May Honored with Point of Light Award

by Julia Akin, LPMN President

I had the pleasure of joining several chapter members at an event honoring our friend Frank May on Saturday, Feb. 20, 2016. The Bastrop Chamber of Commerce recognized Frank at their annual banquet as a recipient of their Point of Light award for his tireless work at the Lost Pines Nature Trails (LPNT). Frank was nominated for the award by Dorothy Skarnulis, former president of Keep Bastrop County Beautiful. Dorothy works with Frank and other chapter volunteers on the Friends of Lost Pines Nature Trails, a group that was formed in 2015 for the purpose of bringing attention and resources to the 30+ acre tract in Tahitian Village that fronts on the Colorado River. Prior to Frank's involvement and the formation of the "Friends" group, LPNT had been taken over by drug dealers and vandals. It was not a park local residents felt safe visiting.

LPNT was very familiar to our chapter. The Bridge Maniacs built the first of their bridges on a contiguous property, Colorado River Refuge, back in 2009. Louise Ridlon and her group of chapter volunteers presented twice monthly nature lessons to a group of Bastrop County home-schooled children in an outdoor classroom in LPNT on the Colorado River, which was built by the Bridge Maniacs. I learned early on as one of Louise's volunteers that one of us needed to get to the classroom early in order to get it in shape for the children. Overnight camping in the park was not uncommon, and the trash that the campers left behind was not suitable for children. Imagine the worst, it was there. Used hypodermic needles were not uncommon. In addition, 4-wheeling and "mudding" were popular activities in the delicate wetlands and along the river bank.



Becky Womble, Chamber President/CEO; Jami Haney, Board Chair; Honoree Frank May; and Johnny Sanders, Past Board Chair



Frank patrolling the LPNT

Frank will tell you it started with picking up trash. He and Sugar, his yellow lab, visited the park for long walks regularly, beginning in 2013. Frank knew what was going on with regard to the drug dealing, mudding, and who knows what else. The thought occurred to him that no one was going to pick up the trash he found in the park, so he started. Cat joined him and soon other chapter volunteers got in on the act. What they realized is that the "bad actors" like to do their bad things under the radar, hidden. Once the trash was picked up regularly and it was clear SOMEONE was involved and working at the park, the bad actors began to move on. The quality of the trash improved and the vandalism began to slow down.

In 2015, Frank began to lobby the Bastrop County government officials to bring their attention to the park, solicit help in making necessary improvements, and plant the seed for them to consider taking LPNT on as a County park. Frank attended County Commissioner's Court regularly, became emailing buddies with Judge Paul Pape; basically, Frank was unrelenting. His tenacity paid off when Commissioner Bubba Snowden agreed to lend his road crew to LPNT to make improvements to the parking areas, boat launch and kayak takeout, and repair and replace bollards and cabling that protect the river and wetland from mudding

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# Frank May Honored, cont.

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activity. That's quite a sales pitch on Frank's part, considering the park is in Precinct 1 and Bubba Snowden is Commissioner of Precinct 3! The only catch was, we needed to raise about \$10,000 to cover the cost of materials. No problem. With the help of the Friends of LPNT, that money was raised in just over a week.

If you visit LPNT now, you'll find families enjoying the river and nature trails. Our chapter has hosted Austin school groups for a day of nature lessons and hiking. A group of Texas A&M students recently visited, doing research for a class project. The bad actors are gone. Tahitian Village residents are getting invested in park maintenance and protection. They volunteer regularly with The River Rats and they've coordinated a closing schedule for the new gate that now closes off the main parking lot at LPNT overnight. The owner of the nearby Tahitian Village golf course opens the gate every morning. He's invested in the new regimen as vandalism at the golf course is down considerably as a result of the clean up of LPNT.

## *Protection - Preservation - Education - Recreation*

This has been Frank's LPNT mantra since the beginning, in that order. It's now being heard by the surrounding community and government officials. As Frank says, "The beat goes on, and the beat grows louder!"

So the next time you hesitate to pick up a piece of trash, just remember Frank's work at LPNT. You never know what may begin with such a simple gesture.

Thank you, Frank May. 



LPMN Dave Hill presented chapter certificates of appreciation to Cammie Vail (left) and Toni Smith. Toni is a Lowe's store manager and Cammie handles donations for the retailer. Together these ladies donated numerous damaged or "defective" power tools and outdoor equipment to our chapter from items returned by store patrons. While Lowes does not attempt to repair this equipment, Dave Hill does. Once made operable again, almost all these items find their way into chapter silent auctions and are quickly snapped up. Those that do not (like a damaged plastic storage shed) are used by the Bridge Maniacs in support of their environmental work. A big THANK YOU to this trio for supporting our chapter and the work we do!

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# Brooks on Books - Texas Weather

## by Bill Brooks

Now that we all have our official CoCoRaHS rain gauge, perhaps you would like to learn a bit more about the complex forces that shape Texas weather.

The superlative classic on this subject is the 1983 new edition of "Texas Weather" by George W. Bomar. For an overview of Texas weather, this book can't be beat.

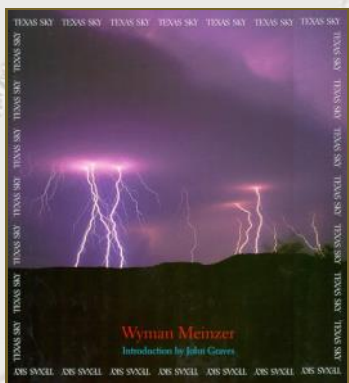
I should note that there are a couple of older (1975), smaller books also called "Texas Weather" by John Gardner and another by Jud Ashmore. I have never seen copies of these books and I really don't know anything about them.

If you want to learn about people who survived (and some who didn't) catastrophic Texas weather events you may want to read "That Terrible Texas Weather: Tales of Storms, Drought, Destruction, and Perseverance" (2000) by country western author Jonny D. Boggs. Another similar book is "Texas Storms: Stories of Raging Weather in the Lone Star State" (2010) by Gene Fowler.



Recent events have piqued interest in Texas flooding. For a historical perspective, "Flash Floods in Texas" is an outstanding conspectus. The first chapter deals with the failure of the dam in Austin that was completed in May 2, 1893. A flood on April 7, 1900, ruptured the city's dam. A fellow who witnessed the breach raced on horseback to warn people down river of the impending flood wave in what was then called "[a]nother Paul Revere's ride". A young Tom Miller witnessed the flood. Thirty-three years later Miller was elected mayor of Austin. In 1940 the dam built to replace the original Austin dam was named the Tom Miller Dam.

On the opposite side of the scale you may want to read "The Time it Never Rained" (1973) by one of our greatest western writers, Elmer Kelton. This book is not a scientific treatise. It is a novel inspired by true events featuring Charley Flagg in Kelton's imaginary Rio Seco, Texas. If you want to understand the desperation of Texas farmers and ranchers during the extreme drought of the early 1950s this book is wonderful.



There are several notable photography books depicting Texas weather. You may want to peruse "Snow, The South Texas Christmas Miracle 2004" (2005), photos from the HEB Christmas Miracle Photo Contest. Wyman Meinzer has published a couple of books filled with hundreds of his wonderful weather-related photographs. Meinzer was proclaimed the Texas State Photographer in 1997 by the Texas Legislature, as well as being the featured artist in many photo exhibitions and publications.

"Texas Sky" (1998) has an artfully written introduction by John Graves. "Between Heaven and Texas" was published in 2006 and features an essay on clouds by Austin novelist Sarah Bird and poems selected by renowned San Antonio poet Naomi Shihab Nye.

I would be remiss in my examination of weather books if I didn't mention the current social topic of concern, global warming. Although I couldn't find any books dealing exclusively with Texas, I still want to recommend "The Weather of the Future: Heatwaves, Extreme Storms, and Other Scenes from a Climate-Changed Planet" (2011) by Heidi Cullen. Cullen has a Ph.D. in climatology from Columbia and is a senior research scientist with Climate Control Central. She spotlights seven locations around the globe and explains how current trends will affect these cities.

Read on and enjoy!

# What's Blooming?

by Liz Pullman & Judy Turner

March . . . when so many plants take off in a spurt of growth. The next eight months will provide all sorts of opportunities for botanical exploration. An FAQ directed toward any plant person is, "Is this rare?" Following is an outline for a project for seeking out and documenting some of Texas' rare plants that we might find in our LPMN chapter area. Since Bastrop and Caldwell counties have areas with similar habitat, we can certainly have any or all of the plants. Two of the fourteen plants on this list have actually been found in either Bastrop or Caldwell County. You will need to do some searching, which is best done online. Enter the scientific name and search through the hits to find some photos. In many cases, what you find will seem familiar but several of these rare plants differ from their commoner cousins only in small ways, such as leaf shape or texture (smooth or hairy), overall size and flower arrangement. Differences can be subtle. Others, such as the crested coral-root are so outstanding that you just know you have found a special plant. My source is a book written by Jackie M. Poole (and William Carr, Dana Price & Jason Singhurst) named *The Rare Plants of Texas* (Texas A&M Press, 2007). Almost all libraries have a copy for lending. You may get so involved that you will want to own a copy!



Texas crested coralroot (*Hexaletris warnockii*)  
Photo by Aaron H. Kennedy

So, here is a short description of several habitats and a list of the possible rare plants to be found in each. Your homework is to become acquainted with the photos and other information and to keep your eyes open while you are outdoors. Another part of your homework is to identify which of the listed plants have people or places in their scientific names. Hint—there are only four that don't.

## HABITATS:

### *Deep sands in openings of post oak woodlands*

Elmendorf onion	<i>Allium elmendorfii</i>	Commonly associated with phlox and post oaks
*Sandhill woollywhite	<i>Hymenopappus carrizoanus</i>	Associated with bluejack oak and yaupon
Largefruited sand verbena	<i>Abronia macrocarpa</i>	Associated with phlox & little bluestem grass
Park's jointweed	<i>Polygonella parksii</i>	Associated with post oaks and sand palafoxia

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## Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the next issue is April 22, 2016. 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. Submissions may be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling, and space requirements. Please send information to the editor at [Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com](mailto:Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com).



## Blooming, cont.

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### ***Limestone slopes, canyon bottoms or outcrops, frequently in shade (juniper-oak)***

Bracted twistflower	<i>Streptanthus bracteatus</i>	Associated with mountain laurel and agarita
Canyon mock orange	<i>Philadelphus ernestii</i>	Associated with junipers and black cherry trees
Texas mock orange	<i>Philadelphus texensis</i>	Associated with junipers and oaks
Texas crested coralroot	<i>Hexalectris warnockii</i>	Associated with Texas red oak and juniper

### ***Seasonally wet limestone outcrops, seeps within canyons, sometimes on clayey or silty soils***

Big red sage	<i>Salvia pentstemonoides</i>	Associated with rushes and late flowering bonset
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### ***Grassland openings on clayey, chalky or gravelly soil***

Branched gayfeather	<i>Liatris cymosa</i>	Associated with other gayfeathers and little bluestem grass
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### ***Loamy clay soils in forested canyon slopes, bottomlands or terraces.***

Texabama croton	<i>Croton alabamensis</i> var. <i>texensis</i>	Associated with Texas red oak and black cherry
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### ***Wet sandy or silty loam with underlying clay near water or upland drainages***

Correll's false dragonhead	<i>Physostegia correllii</i>	Associated with spike rush and goldenrod
*Navasota ladies' tresses	<i>Spiranthes parksii</i>	Associated with oaks, yaupon, beauty bush

### ***In spring-fed rivers and streams with clear, cool swift water over coarse sand***

Texas wild-rice	<i>Zizania texana</i>	Associated with pondweed and duck potato
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\* These rare plants have actually been reported in Bastrop or Caldwell counties!

## Yegua Knobbs, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

Walking the land is an experience Ansel Adams would have enjoyed! During early morning or evening twilight, the place is teeming with animals, free to live their lives without encroachment. Because of the undisturbed nature of the property, it's a veritable bird sanctuary. Near the wetlands and natural bog, silver and holding sunlight, cattails and water lilies abound. If you're quiet, beaver can be spotted swimming near their lodge or making improvements. You can spot kingfisher, osprey and egret as the perch rise to an evening hatch, all rejoicing in their private Eden. This is ideal unspoiled habitat for the Houston toad. Deer gaze curiously from woodland edges as if they had never before seen a man. Native plants and trees grow free and unmolested by the avarice of development, a mixture of hardwoods and loblolly pines between islands of wispy waving bluestem, Indian grass and starred with wildflowers—the Post Oak Savannah of a hundred years ago! From atop the knobbs, you can see for miles, perfect for appreciating nature's fecundity or—not so long ago—spotting unwanted lawmen and local vigilantes.

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## Cat, cont.

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through college. Today she creates stunning jewelry, creative woven pieces, furniture and pottery (at the age of 8 her first piece of pottery exploded in a kiln during a class at the Museum of Art in Houston—she's better now!). Cat is accomplished at sewing and sculpting too. Working from her studio outside Bastrop, Cat creates those delicate table decorations for LPMN holiday events, graduation gifts, fabric envelopes for chapter awards and unique treasures for our chapter auctions.

Cat's working life has been equally eclectic as her personal pursuits. A short list: long-haul truck scheduler, secretary, main frame computer programmer, dispatcher, veterinarian's assistant, typesetter, radio ad writer. As she and Frank moved about the country, there was no one profession that could contain her curiosity indefinitely. She even switched jobs (unannounced to anyone) with her sister once—and pulled it off successfully. Cat retired from the narcotics section, Texas Department of Public Safety in 2011. Next adventure: Lost Pines Master Naturalists!

You can cover some significant ground when you live life like that. Cat channels young goats leaping in abandon in green pastures. Most people have a bucket list; hers has long since spilled over: sky diving, flying a plane, seeing Tahiti, snow skiing, motorcycling, scuba diving and much more. "I guess I need to come up with a new list," she says. Why be restricted by a bucket, why not try everything? For Cat, being Raised Right has not been a barrier to enjoying life, it's been the reason. This anonymous quote describes her perfectly: "Life's journey is not to arrive at the grave safely in a well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out, shouting "holy sh-- . . . what a ride!" ✨



At the potter's wheel

## Yegua Knobbs, cont.

(Continued from page 9)

Created from a crucible of conflict at the crossroads of competing interests, preservation and protection is the obsession today. Despite conspicuous progress, threats remain. Even though the land is protected by a conservation easement, caring for it properly is a big job. Sympathetic volunteer groups, local residents and PPLT board members provide most of the brains and muscle behind conservation activity. "We need more and better land stewards and more volunteers," Mr. Brown says. "One problem is the site's remoteness . . . it's pretty far out of the way for people to travel to regularly." Given the shortage of wild open spaces left in Texas, balancing the demands of a growing population with land protection and conservation is problematic. A nearby coal strip mine continues to grow closer and closer to YKP, devouring massive amounts of groundwater as it impacts aesthetics and air pollution. Fights over water rights have been a part of life in Texas since the early days and the wars continue to rage today. Water rights for thousands of acres in Lee and Bastrop counties have already been bought up, aimed at supplying San Antonio and Austin.

What, then, is the purpose of Yegua Knobbs Preserve today, you ask? Texas Highways recently reported: "In a 1905 survey of Texas mammals, only the bison, elk and Caribbean monk seal had disappeared from the state by the end of the 19th century. During the 20th century, they were joined by the gray wolf, red wolf, grizzly bear, black-footed ferret, jaguar, margay, bighorn sheep and manatee in the list of species gone from Texas." The purpose of YKP is incredibly simple—to hold on to key habitat that supports the web of life. ✨

# Bill's Snippets

## BAT FACTS

Our Mexican free-tailed bats are also called Brazilian free-tailed bats. They are but one species in the family *Molossidae* (free-tailed bats). There are 18 genera, which contain about 100 species in this family. All are insectivorous and catch their food on the wing. Of course they have tails projecting beyond the end of their uropatagium, the membrane that connects the base of the tail to the hind legs. They are among the fastest and most maneuverable of the bats.



The densest concentrations of free-tailed bats are found living in Bracken Cave north of San Antonio, Texas.

## CHINS

The only mammals that have chins are elephants, manatees, and humans. Evolutionists are still arguing, why. ~All things Considered, PBS radio, Jan. 29, 2016.

## REGAL DAMSELFISH FOUND IN SOUTH GULF OF MEXICO

Researchers with Nova Southeastern University have spotted the regal damselfish (*Neopomacentrus cyanomos*) among the coral reefs off the coast of Veracruz, Mexico. Using computer simulations, the researchers are not predicting a widespread range for the regal damselfish; however, the Southern Gulf of Mexico could see more of the species in its coral reefs. It isn't known how the fish, which is native to the Red Sea and the Indo-Pacific, entered the area, but it's a popular aquarium fish and is just one of many species associated with the aquarium trade found there. The growing prevalence of aquarium species suggests that people are dumping their pets. [Learn more about the regal damselfish discovery.](#) "Texas Invasives" newsletter Jan. 2016



## LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease is the most common insect-transmitted disease in the U.S.—even more than west Nile virus. Caused by a bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, and carried by infected black-legged ticks, Lyme can be a chronic debilitating disease of humans. Initial symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue and skin rash. Left undiagnosed and untreated, the disease can spread to the heart, joints and the nervous system. From Insects in the City blog, Jan. 28, 2016

## OCEAN POLLUTION

According to a World Economic Forum report, worldwide use of plastic has increased 20-fold in the past 50 years, and it is expected to double again in the next 20 years. About a third of all plastics produced escape collection systems, only to wind up floating in the sea or the stomach of some unsuspecting bird. "If we keep producing (and failing to properly dispose of) plastics at predicted rates, plastics in the ocean will outweigh fish pound for pound in 2050," [the World Economic Forum reports.](#)



# 2015 LPMN of the Year Award

At the LPMN annual Christmas celebration last December, President Julia Akin was recognized as the chapter's first ever recipient of the Naturalist of the Year award. The award was created by the LPMN Board of Directors to recognize that one chapter member each year who made exceptional contributions to the chapter.

The process for selection is not arbitrary. An Awards Committee is appointed from among chapter members. Nominations from the membership are requested in the fall. Nomination forms are then scored by each member of the Awards Committee and an average score is calculated for each nominee. A minimum score of 80 is required to receive the award—if there are no appropriate candidates, the award need not be given in that particular year. Procedures exist for breaking ties. All forms of chapter participation, at any level, are considered.

As a graduate of the class of 2012, Julia lives in Paige, Texas and has been president since 2014. In part, her award citation reads: "As president, Mrs. Akin boosted membership in the chapter, instituted a mentorship program for new trainees, served on the board of directors of Keep Bastrop County Beautiful and created a Junior Master Naturalist program for 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders in and around Bastrop County. She also established the first chapter strategic planning retreat and addressed numerous groups and agencies while working closely with local governmental and partner agencies to foster closer working ties." There can be little doubt that these are contributions of the highest possible caliber. Congratulations, Julia!



## Lost Pines Master Naturalist Monthly Business Meetings

The monthly business meeting, which occurs on the third Monday of each month, is an opportunity to hear first hand about volunteer and advanced training opportunities. The chapter's project leaders update members on their work and recruit volunteers if needed. In addition, chapter administration issues are discussed: brief committee reports, financial decisions, and news from our state organizers. Stay tuned to [Meetup.com](http://Meetup.com) to learn more about upcoming meetings.

*One hour volunteer time is awarded for attendance at qualifying business meetings.*

## STATE PROGRAM CONTACTS

**Website:** <http://txmn.org>

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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