

Native Plant Society of Texas
Big Bend Chapter
May 2007 Newsletter

May meeting - Nature Conservancy Preserve, Fire and Hike -

With cool weather continuing, treat yourself to a non-sweaty hike on the Nature Conservancy Preserve with expert guides. Or if you're feeling like a quiet moment, stay after the presentation and instead of hiking, bird watch, photograph or sketch - or just sit in the silence. Here's the press release in this week's papers. Call One Way before everyone else does!

Native Plant Society meeting at Nature Conservancy Preserve

The Big Bend Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas hosts a meeting from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday, May 5 in the McIvor Education Center of the Nature Conservancy Preserve, 23 miles northwest of Fort Davis on Hwy 118.

Following a presentation on the uses of fire to control pasture and tame the woodlands by Conservancy naturalist Colin Shakelford, participants will join Shakelford and Conservancy volunteer Pete Szilagyi, a certified interpretive guide specializing in hiking and birding trips in the mountains of Far West Texas, on an easy hike exploring parts of the Preserve trails and learning about various aspects of the Preserve itself.

Those who may not wish to hike are invited to come for the presentation and stay to photograph, sketch or bird watch.

Hikers are advised to wear long pants and hiking shoes and to dress for the weather. Hats, sunscreen, water and walking sticks are advised.

The meeting is free to Native Plant Society members; visitors are welcome and are asked to make a \$5 per person donation. Membership information is available at the meeting.

Reservations are necessary and may be made by calling One Way Plant Nursery in Alpine, 432.837.1117 by 3 p.m. Friday.

April Wildscapes Workshop -

The April 14 workshop was attended by about 40 folks who heard excellent presentations and came away inspired in many areas - and we raised \$500 for the chapter as well!

We will do a fundraiser every year - please put on your thinking caps and make suggestions - we can do almost anything and go almost anywhere, so if there something you've been yearning to do, we might make it a fundraiser and have fun while we're raising money to further our mission!

Gardening opportunity with a bonus -

Mary Baxter and her husband Neil Chavigny are looking for a NPSOT member who would like to do some gardening at their guest house in return for lodging at the guest house. The house, a cute yellow bungalow in the middle of Marathon, has a great garden that has gone to seed. Mary and Neil would like to get it back in shape and would like to offer lodging in return for gardening services - (details to be worked out between you and them).

The house has one bedroom and one bath and sleeps two. Other features include a kitchen, a washer, two nice porches and a great view. Normally, it rents for \$250.00 a night.

Even if you don't do the gardening, you might like to know about this cottage for a) a getaway b) your family when they visit c) to let others know there is a "non-hotel" option in Marathon.

Additionally, funds from the rental of this cottage will go to the Jeff Davis County Humane Society for their work with abandoned animals. Interested? Call 432.386.0689 to talk to Neil or E-mail him at chavigny@sbcglobal.net

Four-Lane Highways in the Big Bend? -

The La Entrada Al Pacifico (LEAP) fight is heating up. For those who have asked for "what's going on" in a nutshell, here is a short piece to send to all your friends far and near, worldwide even:

- The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is currently studying the feasibility of turning U.S. 67 into a divided, four-lane NAFTA truck highway between Presidio and Midland/Odessa via Ft. Stockton. This route, part of the proposed "La Entrada al Pacifico" trade corridor, would send tens of thousands of 18-wheelers across the Big Bend and through Marfa and Alpine every year.
- Currently, many trucks are going through Marfa and on to I-20 at Balmorhea through Fort Davis in order to avoid the construction on the highway between Alpine and Marfa. Hwy 17 from Marfa to Balmorhea is not appropriate or safe for 18-wheelers.
- A rail line currently exists from Presidio through Ft. Stockton to a point 70 miles NE of San Angelo, near Ft. Worth. If it were upgraded, it would provide a safer, more efficient, less costly and less polluting freight transportation alternative.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Contact TxDOT** and ask them to fund and develop this rail alternative and to keep as many trucks as possible away from the Big Bend's fragile ecosystems, small towns and scenic highways.
- To contact TxDOT with your comments, please e-mail Peggy Thurin at TPP_TXDOT-LEAP@DOT.STATE.TX.US
Please note the underscore between TPP and TXDOT and the dash between TXDOT and LEAP
- **Write your State and Federal legislators.** You can find ALL their addresses at a site sponsored by the Texas senate. Just go to this link and enter your address:
<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/Senate/Members.htm#FYI>
- **Tell your family and friends** that the Texas Big Bend needs their help. Log on to our **Web site:** www.stophetrucks.org to learn more and volunteer to work with us

This message is sponsored by Stewards of the Big Bend, a group of citizens from Marfa, Alpine, Fort Davis, Marathon, Terlingua and all across the Big Bend of Texas. We encourage economic development in West Texas but not at the expense of the wilderness, quiet and clean air found in the Big Bend. We think trains are the solution to this issue. We urge you to join us.

Composting -

If you're feeling that you'll never make a successful compost pile in the dry desert air, try this hint from Marfa Farm Stand neighbor Sandra Harper:

"I never thought I would stop making compost heaps in my garden, but I've eliminated many steps and am saving a lot of time and back strain by burying my kitchen waste in my garden paths. I dig a hole, dump the bucket in and cover it with dirt. Then I mulch the path with hay or leaves. After a few months, I dig up the path. The kitchen waste has turned to humus, so I can put it right around the base of the nearest plants. No more wheelbarrows of compost from the heap to the garden."

Remember no June or July meeting - See you Aug. 24 with a Social and plant swap at One Way

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