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## MONARCH BUTTERFLIES: HELPING THESE DELICATE CREATURES ON THEIR FALL JOURNEY TO MEXICO

In October hundreds of thousands of Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) will make a miraculous journey from the northern United States to their winter home in Mexico. Monarchs, one of the most recognized butterflies in North America, are amazing creatures that migrate thousands of miles between Mexico and North America every spring and fall.

Monarchs follow several migration routes, including two in Texas – a coastal route and a central route. The beautiful and beneficial Monarchs often can be seen throughout Texas during migration season.

You can help sustain these winged wonders on their long trip by providing nectar and larval food in your own backyard. Monarchs use most milkweeds as a source of nectar and larval food in the spring, while their main source of nectar during fall migration is the late-blooming frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*). The easiest-to-find plants for migrating Monarchs in both the spring and fall are tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*), blue mist-flower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*), white boneset (*Eupatorium serotinum* or *Eupatorium havanense*), and most varieties of sunflowers.

Keep in mind that the use of pesticides will adversely affect Monarchs and other beneficial insects, and realize that your milkweeds will be eaten heartily by Monarch caterpillars. Watching their growth from egg to adult in the spring can be a wonderful educational experience for children and adults.

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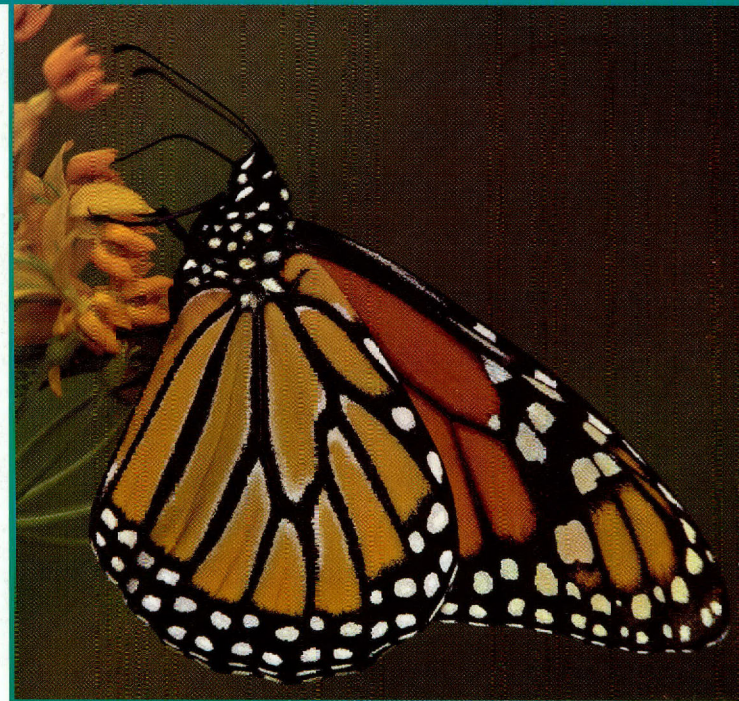


PHOTO: Female Monarch on tropical milkweed  
Photo by Kusty Ray.

### QUICK TIPS

- Provide nectar and larval food sources (milkweeds and dogbanes) for spring migration in March and nectar food sources for the fall migration in October.
- Avoid the use of pesticides on or near plants that attract butterflies.
- Keep in mind that, although larval host plants will be eaten by caterpillars, the plants should survive.

## WELCOME TO LAND LINE

Autumn brings cooler weather and plenty of reasons to enjoy the outdoors. This issue of Land Line has great stories and tips on a variety of outdoor activities for fall.

Featured in this issue:

- Migration of Monarch butterflies
- Family-friendly hiking spots
- Plants to avoid in your landscape
- Planning for prescribed burns
- Recycling in rural communities
- Tree spotlight: Possumhaw Hoily
- Viewing and photographing wild turkeys





**PHOTO:** Mountain biking is a favorite activity at LCRA's Muleshoe Bend Recreational Area. Photo by Billy Moore.

## DAY HIKE CHECKLIST

Here are some must-haves for every day hike, no matter how short or long:

- **Water:** the rule of thumb is to bring 16 ounces of water per person for every hour you plan to be outdoors in the summer. You may need less at other cooler times of the year.
- **Sunscreen and protective clothing:** prevent painful sunburns by applying sunscreen often and wearing a hat and long sleeves.
- **Footwear:** protect your feet and ankles by wearing athletic shoes, sandals or boots that will suit the terrain. Avoid heels and flimsy footwear that could slip on rocks and gravel.
- **Directional aids:** pay attention to where you are going to keep from going in circles. Bring a compass or refer to hiking trail maps when available.
- **Food:** hiking can be hard work, so bring snacks or pack an energy-filled lunch suitable for your planned hike. Trail mix, apples, sliced veggies, cheese, sandwiches, nuts, muffins and oatmeal cookies are examples of nutritious foods that won't leave you feeling loaded down.
- **First aid kit and a cell phone**

## TAKE A HIKE: GREAT PLACES FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY ADVENTURES

With school back in session and soccer and football season under way, finding time together can be tough. A family hike at one of LCRA's regional parks is a great way to spend time together. Bring overnight camping gear for a weekend escape. Here are three of our favorite parks for hiking:

**Canyon of the Eagles Lodge and Nature Park:** Fourteen miles of trails wind through this 940-acre park and nature preserve at Lake Buchanan. Trails cross varied terrains, from lakeside lowlands to wooded ridges 300 feet high. Hikers may glimpse a variety of wildlife, even the black-capped vireo, golden-cheeked warbler and American bald eagle. Three and a half miles of trail are wheelchair accessible. Portions of the trails may be restricted or closed during nesting seasons for endangered and threatened species.

*Facilities:* lodging, camp and RV sites, restaurant, natural science center and fishing piers, swim area, rental boats and the Vanishing Texas River Cruise. *Information:* [www.canyonoftheeagles.com](http://www.canyonoftheeagles.com) or 1-800-977-0081.

**McKinney Roughs Nature Park:** More than 15 miles of equestrian and hiking trails cross canyons, grasslands, and pine and oak groves at this 1,100-acre park along the lower Colorado River between Austin and Bastrop. Four of the 10 ecological regions converge here to support an unusually diverse variety of plants and wildlife.

*Facilities:* natural science center with displays and educational programs, guided river tours and amphitheater. *Information:* [www.lcra.org/parks](http://www.lcra.org/parks) or 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 8002.

**Grelle Natural Resource Area:** A two-mile hiking trail winds through gentle hills at this 480-acre park along the southwest side of Lake Travis. Points along the trail offer spectacular views of the lake.

*Facilities:* picnic sites, shoreline and isolated cove, primitive camping (rest rooms are available). *Information:* [www.lcra.org/parks](http://www.lcra.org/parks) or 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 3366.

Most LCRA parks have nominal entry and camping fees – for information, visit [www.lcra.org/parks](http://www.lcra.org/parks) or call 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 3366.

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## USING FIRE AS A LAND MANAGEMENT TOOL

**F**ire is a fearsome force that can destroy everything in its path. When carefully managed, it also can be a friend to wildlife habitat and agriculture. Prescribed burns – fires that are planned, set and managed – are an effective, efficient and inexpensive land management tool used by many public and private landowners.

Preparation is key to a successful prescribed burn. When properly planned and executed, prescribed burns can remove unwanted vegetation, making room for crops to feed grazing livestock or native plants that can provide forage and habitat for wildlife. These four steps should be followed for a safe, successful prescribed burn, no matter how small or large.

### 1. Develop a written plan with:

- Goals for the burn.
- Photo or sketch of the property.
- Description of how the burn will be conducted, including precautions such as adequate firebreaks, necessary equipment, and fire pattern and direction.
- Assessment of vegetation conditions: types of plants and their moisture content and susceptibility to fire.
- Schedule of activities and assignments from start to finish.
- What to do and who to call in an emergency.

**2. Notify neighbors, local law enforcement and fire departments beforehand.** Check for specific local regulations. Identify and address potentially adverse conditions, such as limited visibility on roads and health and safety of neighboring residents, businesses and livestock.

### 3. Check weather conditions before and during the burn.

The National Weather Service provides local weather data and forecasts for prescribed burns on request. Ideally, air

temperature is between 40 and 60 degrees, humidity is 40 to 60 percent, and winds are eight to 23 miles an hour.

**4. Don't work alone, use the right equipment and know your limits.** Provide cell phones or two-way radios to everyone involved. Have water on hand. Wear protective clothing and gloves and avoid synthetic fabrics that aren't flame retardant. If you have little or no experience, consider hiring a professional to assist you.

Contact your local office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for prescribed burn classes and planning assistance.

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### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Which of the following statements are true?  
Prescribed burns benefit land by:

- a) Improving water quality, soil retention and wildlife habitat by suppressing undesirable invasive brush and allowing native plant species to thrive.
- b) Reducing the hazard of naturally occurring fires by eliminating dead, dry vegetation.
- c) Suppressing insects and parasites that destroy crops and improving the nutrients of grasses and plants for grazing livestock.
- d) All of the above.

*Answer: D) All of the above.*

**PHOTO:** Cool-season burns can help manage forage, increase native vegetation, and improve quail habitat. Photo by Ted Reiley.





## KNOW BEFORE YOU GROW: PLANTS TO AVOID IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

It's often tempting to bring home those colorful or unusual exotic plants at the nursery and place them in your garden. But it's important to know exactly what you are getting yourself – and your landscape – into before you buy.

Some exotic plants are highly invasive non-native species that can cause economic or environmental harm. Invasive species often have no natural predators and can reproduce and spread rapidly and prolifically, overcoming beneficial native species. Left unchecked, many invasives can transform entire ecosystems, as the native species disappear along with the wildlife, birds and insects that depend on them for food, shelter or habitat.

These three invasive plants are increasingly common in Central Texas and should be avoided or removed from landscapes:

**Macartney rose** (*Rosa bracteata*): Imported from the Orient in the 1800s as a hedge for fencing and as an ornamental. It has a thorny stem and produces white flowers in early summer. Today about 500,000 acres of Texas rangeland is infested with this plant. It is easiest to control when the plants are still small.

Consider planting low-maintenance antique roses such as the Cecile Brunner instead.

**Berrying varieties of nandina** (*Nandina domestica*): A native of China, also known as heavenly bamboo. The berrying varieties grow in a clump and have bright red berries in the winter that serve as a food source for birds, who then distribute the seeds. It has been used as an ornamental plant in Central Texas.

Consider planting Texas sage, Barbados cherries or nonberrying varieties of nandina instead.

**Chinaberry tree** (*Melia azedarach*): A native of China, this tree has been planted as a drought-tolerant ornamental. Birds feed on its yellow berries then disperse the seeds over large areas, allowing the plant to spread rapidly. These trees often are found along rivers and creeks. Young trees can be pulled up by the roots, while older trees should be cut down and the stumps treated after being cut.

Consider planting a Chinquapin oak or a Texas red oak instead.

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**PHOTO 1:** Macartney roses have petite blooms. Photo by Lee Fritsch. **PHOTO 2:** Nandina produces bright red berries in the winter. Photo by Rusiy Ray. **PHOTO 3:** Chinaberry trees produce fruit. Photo by Lee Fritsch.





## HOW RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE SHRINKING THEIR WASTE

**U**nlike their urban cousins, rural communities often lack the resources to support a full-time recycling program. As a result, paper, plastics, motor oil, computer parts, cell phones and other recyclable materials are tossed in the trash or illegally dumped. These types of materials, if improperly placed in landfills, may leach chemicals into local water supplies, harming water quality and aquatic habitats.

There's good news for rural communities – these four types of recycling programs can work for even the smallest city or town.

- **Recycling cooperatives:** Regional recycling programs enable small communities to share both the cost of collecting recyclables and the revenue from selling the materials for reuse. Last year the nonprofit Central Texas Recycling Association sold nearly 10,000 tons of recyclables and returned more than \$472,000 to its 59 member cooperatives, which represent more than 500 public, private and nonprofit entities – most of them in rural areas.
- **Annual collection events:** One-day events enable residents to drop off recyclable materials and household hazardous wastes such as lawn and garden chemicals for proper disposal. Product exchange centers at these events enable residents to take home reusable products. A Wharton County collection in April brought in 50,000 pounds of recyclable and hazardous items such as paint, computer components, tires, oil,

pesticides, chemicals, compressed gases and acids. The event was sponsored by the county, three cities, a regional planning council, LCRA and the Colorado River Foundation.

- **Recycling programs and fund raisers:** Some businesses sponsor recycling programs for specific products. Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe program recycles athletic shoes into surface material for sports fields and playgrounds. Nike has four collection sites in Texas and also accepts shoes by mail. EcoPhones, a Texas-based cell phone recycling company, helps schools and community groups raise money by collecting old cell phones and turning them in to EcoPhones for cash – up to \$100 a phone.
- **Recycling centers:** Some communities find that a permanent recycling center is achievable after all, considering landfill savings, water quality protection, and revenues from selling recycled products. Examples of rural governments with recycling centers include Blanco and Fayette counties and the cities of Columbus and Johnson City.

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### CELEBRATE "TEXAS RECYCLES DAY" IN YOUR COMMUNITY

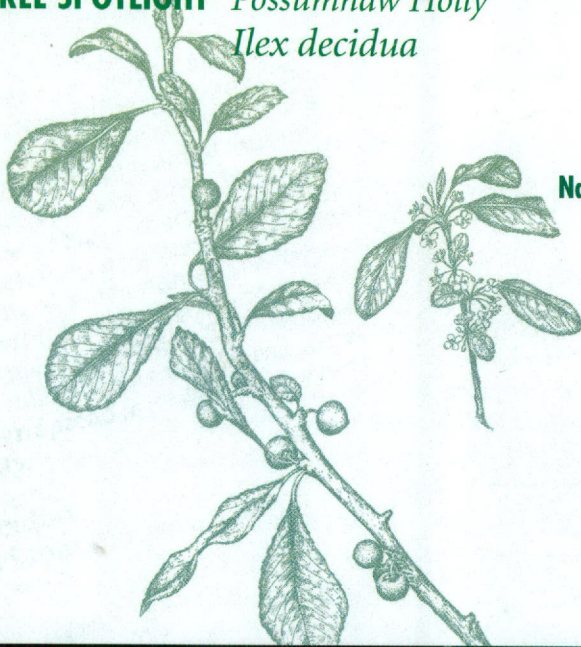
Help your community celebrate Texas Recycles Day on Tuesday, Nov. 15, by organizing a local collection. Limit the event to a specific item such as cell phones or athletic shoes, or broaden it to include paper, plastics and other recyclable materials.

Nearly 160 cities took part in events on Texas Recycles Day 2004. For information on how to sponsor an event, visit [www.texasrecyclesday.org](http://www.texasrecyclesday.org) or call Mary Kelley at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality at (512) 239-6324.

**PHOTO:** Some rural communities have a permanent recycling center for residents. *Photo by Billy Moore.*



## TREE SPOTLIGHT *Possumhaw Holly* *Ilex decidua*



**Benefits:** *Versatile in landscapes, winter color, wildlife food, stream bank stabilizer.*

**Texas Range:** *Naturally occurring along woods and swamp edges in East and Central Texas, south to Victoria*

**Native U.S. Range:** *Virginia to Illinois down to the Gulf of Mexico*

**Appearance:** *Symmetrical canopy growth with branches growing upward and outward. Normally 10 to 15 feet, but can grow up 20 feet.*

**Growth Rate:** *Medium growth rate (12 to 18 inches annually).*

**Problems:** *No serious problems.*

**Site Preference:** *Sun, part sun, shade but best with at least six hours of sun daily. Prefers moister soils and grows in sand, loam clay or caliche. Requires good drainage but adapts to seasonally boggy conditions.*



**PHOTO:** *Community volunteers take advantage of cool fall weather to plant trees in a Central Texas park. Photo by Janie Bolger.*

## FALL IS THE TIME TO PLANT TREES

**Fall is the best time to plant trees in Central Texas. Here are a few helpful tips:**

- ✦ Plan before purchasing so that you choose the right tree for the right location.
- ✦ Purchase quality, healthy trees that are considered appropriate for your area.
- ✦ Transport trees with care and store them for only a short time before planting.
- ✦ Avoid planting in locations where trees will grow into above- or below-ground utilities.
- ✦ Plant with care, provide three to four inches of mulch and remember to water regularly.

## FALL TREE CARE

**MULCHING:** Try to maintain a 3-inch to 4-inch layer of coarse mulch around the base of trees to retain moisture during periods of low rainfall. Mulch should be pulled away from the trunk to discourage disease and insect problems.

**INSPECTING:** Once leaves have fallen, inspect trees carefully and plan for winter pruning.

**PRUNING:** While pruning can begin now, the best time to prune is between late December and early to mid February.

**FEEDING:** Avoid feeding trees now, because feeding may stimulate tender new growth that can be damaged by freezes.

**WATERING:** Maintain a weekly watering regimen for newly planted trees. Remember to irrigate established trees as needed.





## TALKING TURKEY: THESE WILD BIRDS RANGE THROUGHOUT CENTRAL TEXAS

**T**he closest many people will come to a turkey is Thanksgiving dinner, but there are plenty of opportunities to view these fascinating creatures in their native habitat in the Texas Hill Country. Here are some interesting facts about the Rio Grande turkey, which can be found throughout the region.

- **Habitat:** Rio Grande turkeys prefer areas with suitable habitat for roosting and foraging – usually places with a mix of open space and brush, close to creeks and rivers and along drainages. They are attracted to areas with an abundant food supply and typically roost in tall trees. In the winter, turkeys tend to move in flocks of 20, 30 or more. During mating season in the spring, turkeys travel alone or in small groups and may range as far as 10 miles from traditional wintering sites to find nesting areas.
- **Physical characteristics:** Adult male Rio Grande turkeys are gobblers and adult females are hens. They are about four feet tall at maturity; gobblers can weigh as much as 20 pounds, while hens range from 8 to 12 pounds. In the spring hens typically lay eight to 15 eggs that hatch about a month after incubation; chicks mature in 12 months.
- **Food:** Turkeys are opportunistic foragers that eat insects, nuts, acorns and berries and seeds produced from broad-leafed plants and agricultural crops. Planting food plots with native grasses and legumes can be an excellent way to attract wild turkeys. Prescribed fires (see story on page 4) also can promote plant diversity that provides nesting, brood, and foraging areas for turkeys.

Wild turkeys can be seen year-round, but spring mating season typically is the best time for viewing. South Llano River State Park near Junction has a wild turkey roosting habitat. Turkeys also have been known to roam several LCRA parks, including Gloster Bend, Shaffer Bend and Turkey Bend natural resource areas at Lake Travis. For directions to these and other LCRA parks, visit [www.lcra.org/parks](http://www.lcra.org/parks) or call 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 3366.

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## WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

If you're aiming to shoot turkeys — with a camera, that is — here are five tips to help you take high-quality, sharp photos. These recommendations apply to photographing other types of wildlife as well.

- Use a good-quality 35 millimeter or digital camera; an inexpensive or disposal camera won't work as well for most wildlife photography.
- Borrow, rent or buy a telephoto lens to allow close-up shots —without getting so close you scare the birds away.
- Use a tripod to stabilize the camera and help prevent even slight movements that can blur photos.
- Buy the appropriate speed of film for 35-millimeter cameras, using 400-speed at a minimum and preferably 800-speed or even 1600-speed for best results. With a digital camera, set the sensitivity of the camera as high as possible.
- Be in the right place at the right time. Turkeys and other wildlife tend to be most active in early morning and later afternoon. Stake out the site beforehand if possible, get there and get set up early — and wait for the right shot to come along.

**PHOTO:** *Mature Rio Grande turkey gobblers can sport impressive beards. Photo by Rusty Ray.*





## LAND LINKS: USEFUL WEB SITES FOR LANDOWNERS

<b>Monarch Watch</b>	<a href="http://www.monarchwatch.org">www.monarchwatch.org</a> ;	Information on Monarchs and how to rear them at home.
<b>Texas Cooperative Extension</b>	<a href="http://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide">insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide</a>	Field guide to Monarchs and other common Texas insects.
<b>North American Butterfly Association</b>	<a href="http://www.naba.org">www.naba.org</a>	Information about Monarchs and other butterflies across the United States.
<b>Pulling Together Initiative</b>	<a href="http://www.texasinvasives.org">www.texasinvasives.org</a>	Information on identifying and managing invasive plants.
<b>Austin City Connection</b>	<a href="http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/invasive.htm">www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/invasive.htm</a> ;	List of invasive plants to avoid and alternative plants to use.
<b>Texas Recycles Day</b>	<a href="http://www.texasrecyclesday.org">www.texasrecyclesday.org</a>	Information about Texas Recycles Day and how to sponsor a local event.
<b>Keep Texas Beautiful</b>	<a href="http://www.ktb.org">www.ktb.org</a>	Information on recycling, including cell phone recycling fund raisers.
<b>Central Texas Recycling Association (CTRA)</b>	<a href="http://www.cash4trash.com">www.cash4trash.com</a>	Information on CTRA and the recycling services it provides to members.
<b>Arbor Day Foundation</b>	<a href="http://www.arborday.org/trees/righttreeandplace">www.arborday.org/trees/righttreeandplace</a>	A step-by-step planning guide and helpful illustrations on proper tree selection.
<b>Native Texas Trees</b>	<a href="http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/natives/tamuhort.html">aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/natives/tamuhort.html</a>	Descriptions, photos, and search engine with a wealth of information on trees for any Texas growing region.
<b>Texas Parks and Wildlife's Passport to Texas</b>	<a href="http://www.passporttotexas.com">www.passporttotexas.com</a>	Excerpts from a weekday radio series about the Texas outdoors featuring interviews with experts on everything from birding and biking to wildlife management and habitat restoration.

Government Publications  
Texas State Documents

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