



Newsletter

The Alamo Sierran e-Newsletter — March, 2015

* General Meetings *

Tuesday, March 17th: Winter Prairie Bird Research

The prairie of the American Southeast, unlike the vast Great Plains, is an abused and often-ignored habitat, yet it is critically important to many species of plants and animals. Citizen Scientists at the Cibolo Nature Center and Farm, in Boerne, Texas, have surveyed the wintering birds on a 30 acre patch of native tall-grass prairie for over 15 years, to document the species using the prairie and the long-term changes in numbers and species composition. Dave Bolster, a research biologist and education staff member at the CNC&F, will describe the work being done on the Cibolo prairie, and give an overview of the many other projects being conducted, mostly by Citizen Scientists, to catalog and examine the wildlife there, and monitor how it is changing. This program is approved for Advanced Training by Alamo Area Master Naturalists.

Tuesday, April 21st: A Sustainability Plan for San Antonio

Students in the graduate Urban and Regional Sustainability class at UTSA will eagerly present a draft of their sustainability plan for San Antonio. The class is part of the Urban and Regional Planning Program within the UTSA College of Architecture, Construction and Planning. The graduate students have spent the semester reviewing sustainability issues as well as sustainability plans and climate action plans from various cities. Based on their research and their knowledge of San Antonio, they have developed a preliminary plan for San Antonio that is ready for review. The students look forward to getting feedback on their work.

Because of a fee increase, **we will no longer meet at the Witte Museum.** Our new location is **EcoCentro**, located at San Antonio College, 1802 North Main Avenue at the northeast corner with Locust Street.

Times, a map, and speaker bios are on our Events page.

A Word from the Alamo Group Co-Chair

Risky Business

We should take heart that the business community is finally taking climate change seriously. The Risky Business Project, packed with top business, economic and government leaders, has just issued an independent study of the economic risks of climate change, "The American Climate Prospectus: Economic Risks in the United States." According to **this report**, Texas is probably going to be the state hardest hit by impacts from climate change. Texas findings taken directly from the assessment are:

Heat

Unmitigated climate change is expected to lead to increasing heat throughout Texas during the 21st century, and will be the primary catalyst for higher mortality, lower labor productivity, reduced crop yields, higher energy costs and, indirectly, increasing property losses along the coast.

Mortality

Texas will likely have among the nation's highest death tolls as a result of higher temperatures driven by climate change.

Labor Productivity

Texas is likely to face a significant hit to its labor productivity in sectors reliant on outdoor labor.

Energy

Energy prices in Texas are likely to increase as growing demand for cooling strains supply.

Agriculture

Rising temperatures will likely reduce crop yields, especially for cotton, the state's largest crop.

Sea Level Rise

The Texas coast is likely to suffer from more destructive storm surges and coastal inundation as the Gulf of Mexico warms and rises.

Like an unfolding Shakespearian tragedy or Biblical judgment, if Texas continues to deny the science and projected impacts of climate change, Texans stand a poor chance at weathering future conditions well. Texans ignore our outsized contribution to this global and local disaster at our own peril. Texas is the number one state for Green House Gas emissions. We emit twice the GHGs of the number two state, California, which has an economy almost double that of Texas. This means California is three to four times more effective at controlling GHG emissions while building a strong economy. Yet some Texas leaders speak with contempt of California and most continue to proudly promote unsustainable economic growth.

With these dire predictions, you may be wondering why I feel we should take heart? Because finally the most prominent business and economic leaders realize we need to act to reduce GHGs, meaning we have a better chance that influential Texas business and political leaders will embrace these truths. This may enable the political will to ensure our decisions become more sustainable.

by Margaret Day, Executive Committee Co-Chair

Lion's Field Events

Monthly films and presentations for your edification and enjoyment

Wednesday, March 25th: *The Human Scale*

This documentary visits dynamic urban environments for new inspiration under leadership of Jan Gehl, architect, who focuses on public spaces and public life in megacities. He is concerned, among other things, about how to make large cities more pedestrian friendly. Film is by Andreas M. Dalsgaard.

Wednesday, April 22nd: *Cadillac Desert*

We will view one of four films in the *Cadillac Desert* series. A paradigm shift for water usage will be necessary and important in our region in the future.

Our Lion's Field events are **free** and open to the public. They occur on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Lion's Field Adult Center, 2809 Broadway @ Mulberry. Programs begin at **6:30 p.m.**

Visit our Lion's Field Events page for a map and additional information.

Is regional rail from San Antonio to Austin/Georgetown in our future?

On Tuesday, February 17th, Rail Manager of the **Lone Star Rail District**, the agency in charge of regional rail that would run the 118 miles between Georgetown/Austin and San Antonio, spoke at the first general meeting at the William R. Sinkin Eco-Center. Black provided an update on the LSTAR, or regional rail. Attendees were able to ask many questions, as he is very knowledgeable and likes an engaged audience.

The LSTAR is in beginning segment of gathering comments for the Environmental Impact Statement. The EIS will take three years. After that, assuming the funds have materialized, construction could begin using the existing Union Pacific (UP) track that parallels I-35, with some modifications/repairs. In trade for the existing track, a new track for the UP freight line will be built which will enable faster freight trains that will haul more freight than at present, thus removing a percentage of trucks from I-35.

For more details, please view the **LSTAR power point** that Black provided. In addition to the LSTAR, Austin may have Urban Rail in the future to reach the last mile of a trip, or an electronic card would provide access to a Zip-Car, or Car-Share, or Bike Share for the last mile.

Here is more news. Dallas Area Rapid Transit received an additional \$2 billion for expansion. Dallas already has 90 miles of light rail transit. A proposed High Speed Rail (HSR) may run from Dallas to Houston. Another HSR line may run from Oklahoma City to Dallas to Austin/SA, and to the Valley. The LSTAR would stop in San Marcos and New Braunfels and in smaller cities in the region in addition to Austin and San Antonio.

by Barbara McMillin, Alamo Group Transportation Chair

Help with our tables at fun events

Volunteers are needed for tabling events. We go to many "green" events and distribute information about the Sierra Club and provide petitions about environmental concerns to be signed by the events' participants. For more info or to sign up contact **Gay Wright**, 210-362-1984.

Volunteers are needed for info tables at the following events:

- March 7th: *Earthwise Living Day*, Leon Valley Community Center, 6427 Evers Road, 9 am-2 pm. [Click here for information on this event.](#)
 - March 7th: Seventh Annual *Get Outdoors!* San Antonio River Authority, at Mission Park Pavilion, 6030 Padre St, 9 am-1 pm. [Click here for information on this event.](#)
 - March 14th: *Spring Bloom*, at SAWS headquarters 2800 US-281 North, 9 am-1 pm. [Click here for information on this event.](#)
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Special April Outing at Sabine National Forest

The Golden Triangle Group invites Alamo Group members to participate in their 2015 *Trail Between The Lakes* spring trip which will be April 10-12, Fri-Sun, in the Sabine National Forest. You can hike the entire 28 miles over 3 days, or parts over 2 days or just 1.

If you want to backpack you can camp at designated areas on the trail, or you can let them shuttle you from their group campsite to the starting points each day and hike back with just a day pack. RV'ers can camp at Mill Creek, Lakeview, and other spots. Or you can "rough it" in a few motels and lodges in the area.

Food for thought

May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds.

- Edward Abbey

There is no size limit to this outing and no fee, but it is important to RSVP so they can plan. Call, text, or email the trip leader, **Phil Rogers**, (409) 543-4616. For trip details see the [group's web site](#), its [Facebook page](#) or on the [Alamo Sierra Club Outings page on Meetup](#). Here is a good [map of the trail with a description](#).

Sign Up for Action Alerts

The Sierra Club is all about citizen action on critical issues. Quick citizen input often spells the difference between victory and defeat for important measures at the local and state levels. Sign up now to receive our local e-mail Conservation Action Alerts and let your voice be heard. **Call (674-9489) or email Loyd Cortez** and we'll add your name to our growing list of environmental activists.

Outing February 7th: Hill Country State Natural Area

Among the outings of the Alamo Group in February there was one to Hill Country SNA near Bandera. This was originally scheduled to be up into the protected habitat area of Government Canyon SNA, but the venue was changed as Government Canyon trails were closed due to muddy conditions. A key objective for State Natural Areas is protection of the environment and wildlife, and so at GC SNA it is important that visitors not be rearranging the trails due to them sticking to the bottoms of their boots.



Outing attendees Feb 7, still cheerful

This was a nice 7.7 mile loop hike up and around the highest viewpoints in the park. Some neat fossils were observed.



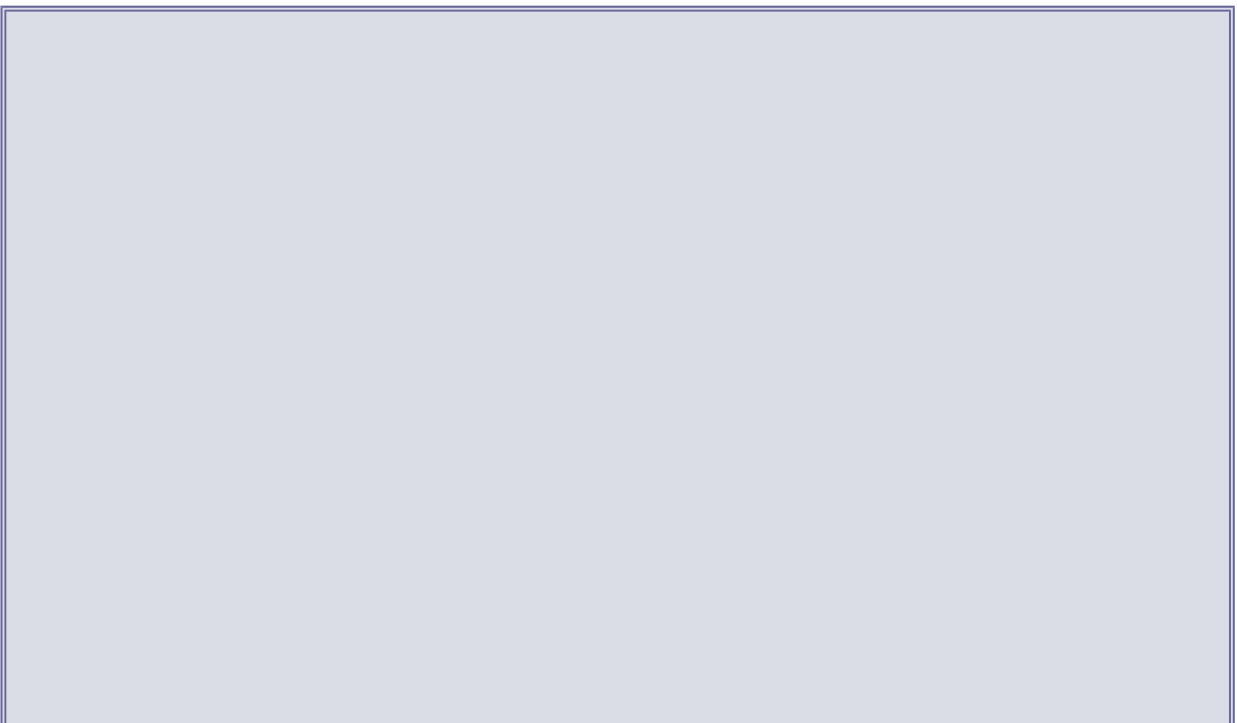


Attendees Feb 7 mugging for this advertising shot

For more information on Hill Country SNA see the Texas Parks and Wildlife web page for [Hill Country State Natural Area](#). See our web page for more information on [Alamo Group outings](#). There please note the link to [our Meetup page](#) where we manage our sign-ups for outings such as this one.

Wanna be an outings leader?

Do you like Alamo Group outings? Attended a number of them? Have you wondered about the responsibilities of your outings leaders?





A few of the outings leader event attendees relaxing

We can always use an additional outings leader or two. There is a good on-line training course. First-aid certification is required, and facilitated. There are a few perks, notably the non-existent salary which doubles regularly, and the prestige resulting from being associated with such an elite group.

On occasion there are special events. Our outings leaders and a few friends were graciously invited to visit a private ranch near Bandera by a frequent Alamo Group outings attendee on January 25th. Great ranch house on a hilltop. We did some short hikes to look around the land, identify some plants and look at fossils, and then partake of some good food and drink.

by Kevin Hartley, Newsletter Editor

Outings: The Call of the Wild

Visit the [Alamo Sierra Club Outings page](#) on Meetup for detailed information about **all** of our upcoming Sierra Club Outings.

