

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



-- right here at home -- in the Hill Country

April, 2006

APRIL EVENTS

Chapter Workday

**Hays County Extension Office, San Marcos;
Saturday, April 8, 8:30 am – noon**

This Chapter-sponsored workday is an opportunity to earn volunteer hours, one hour for each hour worked, plus credit for travel time. We will help Bryan Davis with maintenance of the native plant demonstration gardens. Wear work clothes and work shoes.

The Extension Office is located at 1253 Civic Center Loop on the SE side of San Marcos. If you are traveling South on I-35, take McCarty Lane exit, take the switch-back under I-35 to the Northbound access road, drive North on the access road to FM269 (Clovis Barker Road with automobile dealership on the right corner), and turn right onto 269. If driving North on I-35, take McCarty Lane exit and proceed along the access road to FM 269 (Clovis Barker Road) and turn right. Proceed down FM 269 (Clovis Barker Road) to the second street to the left and the Extension Office is the large metal building on the left at the intersection. (Note: Civic Center Loop intersects FM 269 twice -- i.e., it is a real loop and you want the second intersection with 269).

April Chapter Board Meeting

**White Wings Ranch, Wimberley
Wednesday, April 12, 7:00 – 9:00 pm**

The preliminary agenda for the HCMN Board of Directors includes:

- Committee reports
- Officer reports
- Old business:
 - Membership retention
 - Program Calendar
- New business

All members are invited to attend and encouraged to participate.

HAYS COUNTY MASTER NATURALISTS

President	Tom Watson
Vice President	Dale Shively
Secretary	Susan Nenney
Treasurer	Winifred Simon
Training Committee	Nancy Turner
Records Committee	Judy Telford
State Advisory Board	Walt Krudop
Web Master	Herb Smith
Editor	Richard Barnett,
	512-847-6941, richb6986@aol.com
Extension Agent	Bryan Davis

Cibolo Nature Center Trip

**Prairie Management and Monitoring
Workshop**

**Cibolo Nature Centre, Boerne Saturday, April
15. 9:30 - noon.** (<http://www.cibolo.org>).

One-hour indoor lecture and additional outdoor discussions will cover principles of prairie management, review of local research results, demonstration of prairie vegetation monitoring, and a tour of prairie management plots.

Presenters: Rufus Stephens, Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks & Wildlife and Kelly Haile, Kendall County 4-H Range Team

Bring sunscreen, hat and comfortable shoes.

Advanced Training Credit: 2.5 hours

This event is a chapter outing, and carpool arrangements will be available.

The general route is 35S to New Braunfels, 46W to Boerne, then take first left turn after the fair grounds. From Wimberley, you can go by way of Canyon Lake and Bulverde.

Participation is limited to 30. Please reply to Susan Nenney, Snenney@sumaorchard.com, to make your reservation.

April 20 Chapter Meeting

**Jacob's Well Visitor Center
Dinner, 6:30 pm; Program 7:00 pm**

The Board of Directors invites all members and the 2006 Class to this Chapter Meeting at Jacob's

Well (WVWA Preserve), 101 Woodacre Drive, in Wimberley. This is the same location as our February meeting. Maps will soon be available on the HCMN web site, <http://www.hcmn.org>.

The dinner and social time precede a program featuring Cindy Contreras of Texas Parks and Wildlife. Cindy's presentation on "*Statewide Water Quality Issues*" focuses on advanced water quality issues and how they will affect aquatic insects and other aquatic organisms. Cindy will also join the 2006 Class on September 23 for the Field Trip to John Knox Ranch.

We are offering something new for our dinner. ***Our Lady of the Lunch*** will serve a catered dinner for \$5.00. It features King Ranch Chicken with salad, rolls, dessert, and iced tea. You may bring other beverages, but be sure to come and check out our menu!

Dinner Reservations are required. Please RSVP to Susan Nenny by April 14.

Earth Day Activities

The Chapter will observe Earth Day on April 22nd by staffing a booth at the **8th Annual Butterfly Festival** of the Emily Ann Theatre in Wimberley.

Karen Bartell leads this project (HCMN Project 602) and she needs help setting up and tending the rainfall simulator. Other activities include a site evaluation by Bryan Davis (good for ATC!) and site improvements. If you can help, please let Karen know at 512-894-0105 or hulene1@austin.rr.com.

We have an opportunity to set up a second booth at the San Marcos Nature Center's **Wildflower Fiesta Plant Sale & Gardening Festival**. If you can help with this, please let Judy Telford know right away at jt01@txstate.edu as we need to begin planning.

Canyon Gorge Field Trip **Canyon Dam Park; Canyon Lake** **Saturday, April 29, 9:00 am - noon.**

Dr. Carter Kearns of Texas State leads our fourth annual descent into the chasm eroded below the spillway of Canyon Dam by torrential floods in July, 2002. Canyon Gorge remains closed to the public, and this expedition provides an unusual opportunity to observe both the effects of rapid erosion and secondary succession processes at work as plants and animals reclaim the scoured terrain.

Please wear boots, hats, and clothing suitable for exploring steep, hazardous terrain. Forget water and sunscreen at your peril. 3 hours ATC.

THE PRESIDENTIAL VIEW

Tom Watson is away enjoying the views in the Big Bend. He will be back in Wimberley for the Board Meeting.

As always, he thanks you for all that you do for the Earth, for your neighbors, and for your chapter.



CHAPTER NEWS

Annual Dues Time

Annual dues are overdue! Please send your \$12:00 check payable to "Hays County Master Naturalists" to your Treasurer, Winifred Simon, 600 Red Hawk Rd, Wimberley, TX 78676. ✨

Please send your monthly reports of Volunteer Hours and Advanced Training Hours on the first of the month to Judy Telford at 2303 E. McCarty, San Marcos, TX 78666. Nothing could be easier than using the online form at our web site, <http://www.hcmn.org>. Your timely reports help the Board to monitor participation in our activities and to plan future activities. ✨

Members in the News

Whooping It Up at Hoot and Holler

Thirty-five Master Naturalists of the Gulf Coast, Heart of Texas, and Hays chapters gathered at a Hoot & Holler campout at Brazos Bend State Park in February. Four Hays County Master Naturalists, Ann Allen, Barbara Jacobson, Judy Telford, and Betty Watkins roughed the cold, damp weather in Betty's RV.

We learned, visited, ate, hiked, watched birds and gators, and attended several advance training sessions. Dennis Jones of Texas Parks & Wildlife, wearing a buckskin jacket and holding a corncob pipe, related the lives of Texians recruited by Stephen F Austin to settle in Texas. His history of settlement, conflict, and mismanagement

entertained and educated us. Later, he led us in making fire with a flint rock and metal striker.

Dick Benoit of the Galveston Chapter discussed the ecology of the prairie. He also taught how to make seed balls. We made several dozen balls containing native grass and forb seeds, which he will use to reestablish a black-land prairie in the Galveston area.

The Brazos Bend State Park contains several wetlands with living, breathing - but sleeping when we saw them - alligators. It is a favorite park of Houston area residents. Learn about it here:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/brazos_bend/



CALENDAR

(The dragonfly logo identifies official HCMN events)

April 5-7, 2006. **Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute 25th Anniversary Symposium** featuring "Frontiers in Wildlife Science: Linking Ecological Theory with Management Applications." Omni Bayfront Hotel in Corpus Christi and Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Center in Kingsville. For details of the symposium and registration information, please check www.ckwri.tamuk.edu or call 361-593-4025.

✧ April 8, 9:00 am-noon. **Chapter Work Day** at Hays County Extension Office. See page 1.

April 8, 10:00 am - noon. **Butterflies Galore Tour** at Westcave Preserve, led by Dan Hardy. For information & registration contact <http://www.westcave.org>.

✧ April 11. **2006 Class Session 4 at Freeman Ranch.** Nature Walk, 4:00 - 6:00 pm. Class, 6:30 pm. Human Impact, Barron Rector. For a map, go to <http://www.txstate.edu/freemanranch/MAPPAHE.HTM>.

April 13, 6:30 pm. **TOWN Regular Meeting** with Minette Marr, Field Botanist with Texas Forest Service. San Marcos Police Station, west side of I-35 between WonderWorld Drive & McCarty Lane. For more information, please check <http://www.townsanmarcos.org/>

April 15. **Austin Nature Day at Onion Creek.** Tom Watson leads a native plant identification walk. Please see [Austin Nature Day Event Detail](#).

✧ April 15, 9:30 am – noon. **Prairie Management and Monitoring Workshop.** Cibolo Nature Centre, Boerne. More information on page 1.

April 15, 7:00-9:00 am. **Sunrise Birding Tour** at Westcave Preserve. For information & registration contact <http://www.westcave.org>.

✧ April 20. 6:30 pm. **Chapter Meeting for General Membership and 2006 Class**, at Jacob's Well, Wimberley. See page 1.

✧ April 22. Earth Day booth at **Wildflower Fiesta Plant Sale & Gardening Festival**, San Marcos Nature Centre. 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under "Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre."

✧ April 22. Earth Day booth at **8th Annual Butterfly Festival**, Emily Ann Theatre, Wimberley. <http://www.emilyann.org>.

April 23-29. **National Volunteer Week.**

✧ April 29, 9:00 am-noon. **Chapter Field Trip to Canyon Gorge.** Dr. Carter Kearns, Texas State. 3 hours ATC.

✧ May 9. **2006 Class Session 5.** Birds, David Huffman. Texas Archeology, Britt Bousman.

May 11. **Making Floral Crafts from Your Own Backyard** workshop, San Marcos Nature Centre. 6:00 – 8:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under "Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre."

✧ May 13, 9:00 am – 11:00 am. **Chapter Field Trip: Beekeeping with Bob Benson**, San Marcos. Meet at corner of McCarty Lane and Hunter Rd (W of I-35) in the Raquetball Club's parking lot. Bob will discuss bee biology, Africanized bees, apiary equipment, and more. 2 hours ATC. For more info, contact Dale Shively at 512-389-4686; dale.shively@tpwd.state.tx.us.

May 13, 10:00 am – noon. **Wildflowers of Westcave Tour.** For information & registration contact <http://www.westcave.org>.

✧ May 20, 9:00 am-noon. **2006 Class Session 6** at Freeman Ranch. **Butterfly Boot Camp**, Chris Nice. For a map, please go to

<http://www.txstate.edu/freemanranch/MAPPAHE.HTM>.

✧ May 30, **2006 Class Session 7:** Water Resources in Hays County – David Baker; Ch 17 & 18, Wetlands Ecology – Doyle Mossier

✧ June 1, 6:30 pm. **Chapter Meeting for General Membership and members of 2006 Class.** Gil Eckrich speaking on “Land Management for Two Endangered Songbirds.” Gill will review protection of the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo at Fort Hood. Qualifies for ATC.

✧ June 13, **2006 Class Session 8.** Meet @ **Aquarena Center.** Wetlands – Doyle Mossier; Restoration Nursery - Dawnelle Malone; Glass Bottom Boat Ride; Hillside Nature Walk - Bryan Davis, Ray Franklin, & Tom Watson

June 17. **Backyard Habitat Planning & Certification Workshop.** San Marcos Nature Centre. 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under “Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre.”

June 21, 10:00 – 11:00 am. Summer Events at Wimberley Village Library. HCMN volunteers with hand-on activities for children. Contact Judy at jt01@txstate.edu

✧ June 24, 9:00 am to noon. **2006 Class Session 9. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Field Trip:** 9-12 - Minnette Marr, Millennium Seed Project; Dr. Steven Windhager, tour research plots

✧ July 11, **2006 Class Session 10.** Trees – Robert Edmondson; Ch 16 & 5. Texas Weather – Troy Kimmel

July 20. **Cactus Gardening** Workshop. San Marcos Nature Centre. 6:00 – 8:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under “Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre.”

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Cibolo Nature Center Trip **Prairie Management and Monitoring Workshop**

Cibolo Nature Centre, Boerne Saturday, April 15. 9:30 - noon. Please see page 1.

Overabundant White-tailed Deer in Texas:

Impacts on People, Communities, and the Land
Texas State University, San Marcos May 18, 2006, 7:45 am to 5:00 pm.

White-tailed deer are a valuable natural resource providing enjoyment for thousands across Texas and are very adaptable to life near people. However, when deer numbers escalate and they become overabundant, deer threaten wildlife and plant diversity as well as causing economic, health and safety concerns. Some Texas communities are currently confronting these issues and others soon will be. Attendees will learn about the experiences of communities and hear from nationally recognized experts currently working with overabundant deer issues.

- * How did we get this many deer in Texas and what does the future hold?
- * Impact of overabundant deer populations
- * Current management tools
- * What has and has not worked
- * Overabundant deer as a planning issue
- * Building consensus among stakeholders

Early registration fee - \$35 * Good until April 1. After April 1st, registration is \$50. Registration is limited. Fee includes all refreshment breaks and lunch on day one. Pre-registration by May 1st required for a guaranteed lunch! Limited sponsorships available.

To register Contact Helen Holdsworth at the Texas Wildlife Association, 1-800-TEX-WILD or 210-826-2904, x. 120

Project WILD Aquatic Training

TPWD is sponsoring a “Project WILD Aquatic” workshop at Westcave Preserve. The workshop will focus on how to teach aquatic resources and wildlife to school kids.

The training will introduce fun, hands-on, easy-to-use educational activities appropriate for education in our schools. The material is suitable for grades K – 12 and is aligned to the TEKS. Participants will receive 6 hours of SBEC and TEEAC credit if desired. Master Naturalists will earn Advanced Training credits. The number of AT hours depends on the length of the workshop.

This is a great opportunity for those interested in working with youth to take up educational outreach as a volunteer activity. Once trained, the

Board of Directors and our Extension Agent will help you make connections with local schools of your choosing.

The workshop dates are to be announced soon. For further information please email john@westcave.org or phone (830)-825-3442.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Spring Vegetation Survey at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

SURVEY STARTS WEDNESDAY APRIL 19

Learn the Native Grasses and Wildflowers While Conducting Scientific Research. Hone your plant identification skills while contributing to research on Central Texas ecosystems. Every spring and fall we train volunteers to collect data from our on-site research area, where plots are burned or mowed at different times of the year to examine the effects on plant communities. All experience levels are welcome: the plant surveys will be conducted in small teams, with staff members nearby at all times. **New participants in the surveys will attend one four-hour training class, and commit to at least two four-hour field sessions.** Training is optional for those of you who have volunteered in the past.

Training: You may take the training on any one of four dates, and takes about four hours. In the training we will present a brief overview of the research, and you will learn how to collect the data and receive a crash course on plant identification. **Training dates are: Thursday, Sunday, (April 13,16) at 1 pm ; or Friday, Saturday (April 14, 15) at 9am.** Again, you need to attend only one of these sessions. **Please e-mail or call to let us know which training session you would like to attend.** We will meet in the library, which is across the breezeway from the receptionist in the Administration Building. Dress for light hiking. We will provide water, but you may want to bring a hat, sunscreen, and something to take notes with. You may sign up to work specific survey periods at this time, so you might also want to bring your calendar or appointment book.

The plant ID portion will focus on field identification of plants frequently encountered in the survey, and will largely take the form of a nature walk. Former volunteers who remember the data collection techniques, but would like a refresher

course on plant identification may attend only that part of the orientation. The plant ID portion will be in the last 2 hours of the training session (11:00 am for morning sessions or 3:00 for afternoon sessions). If you show up only for the ID portion, you may need to find us on the grounds. We will leave a map with the receptionist or in the volunteer break room, but the best method may be to have a staff member call us on the walkie-talkie.

Surveys begin on Wednesday, April 19 and will continue on Wednesdays thru Sundays until we finish, usually about three weeks.

You may choose between a morning shift, 9am to 1pm; an afternoon shift, 2pm to 6pm; or both if you are feeling frisky. Tell the admissions person that you are coming to work on the survey: they will wave you in for free. **You may park in the employee parking lot**—go to the back of the visitor lot, and enter past the signs that say “No Parking” and “Authorized Parking Only”, or you may use the visitor lot. We will usually meet in the volunteer room of the Administration Building, behind the Receptionist’s desk. If we are not there, ask the receptionist. If you are late, it may be difficult to locate us in the field.

For more information or to sign up for one of the training sessions, contact Jeannine Tinsley at jtinsley@wildflower.com or 292-4100 x 213.

Margaret's Nature Trail, White Wings Ranch

HCMN PROJECT # 601

You may remember that last summer off RR12 near San Marcos a snake fatally bit a woman from Wimberley. It turns out that she was both a member of the Unity Church and very much a nature enthusiast. She bequeathed a small amount to the church for the creation of a nature trail on the 43 acres that is owned by the church. The money is to go for signage, a tri-fold brochure, interpretive material etc.

Pastor Mindy Audlin and her husband Shawn have made great headway in the actual layout and construction of the trail. Joe Piazza, myself and a few other Master Naturalists went for a visit and were well impressed with the progress thus far. They have asked for our help to complete the construction of the trail and ID the plants along the route. They have also asked us to help in the design and writing of an interpretive tri-fold brochure about the trail and Hill Country ecosystems. We have

talked about planting a native grass garden and a butterfly garden. Once the trail is complete, besides helping maintain it, we are to be available to give guided walks to interested folks.

Unity Church has learned from their insurance company that they can allow non-members access to the trail and they want to open it up to the public for educational and outreach programs. This would include school groups and scouting groups as well.

The area where the trail has been located is very diverse, going from grasslands dotted with various trees and forbs to a lovely riparian zone with the associated flora and fauna. Its length is about 1/2 mile, with spots to sit and enjoy views along the way.

-- Jamie Kinscherff, HCMN Contact;

Jamie@kinscherff.com

Ringtail Ridge Trail

HCMN PROJECT #424

Starting March 4th and every Saturday during March and April San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance's trail crew will meet at 8:30 am at Ringtail Ridge, where work is underway to extend the primary hike and bike trail. Untrained? Unskilled? No problem: training happens with short briefings on site and one minute sessions while work progresses. Reading sources are available for those who want to know more about design and construction. If you can make only a few of the sessions, that's fine. We work for 2 hours and then go for the coffee shop. Bring strong gloves and eye protection if you have them. Contact tobe@austin.rr.com or <http://www.smgreenbelt.org/NewsEvents.htm>.

Wildscape Garden, San Marcos Nature Center

HCMN PROJECT #405

March showers came to the rescue of our bluebonnets. Although confined to a smaller area than last year, their hue lives up to its reputation and reminds us of the inspiring vistas that bluebonnets bring us in good years. Gaillardia, poppies, and lizardtail guara are also in flower. Sunflowers, passion vines, and tropical milkweed will follow soon.

As usual, there's no stopping invasive dandelions, sow thistles, wild geranium, medicago, red henbit, bermudagrass, and similar plants. We

have to pull up these aggressive invaders to control them.

We welcome contributions of seeds or seedlings of annual and perennial wildflowers to improve the diversity of our garden.

Jacob's Well

HCMN PROJECT #603

Documentation in progress. Please watch this space for more information.

STATE NEWS

Texas Monarch Watch

MARCH 17, 2006 – TEXAS MONARCH WATCH UPDATE

(1) Status of the Spring 2006 Migration

Monarchs are on the move across the eastern half of Texas! (Interestingly, the spring migration primarily occurs east of IH-35, unlike the fall migration, which occurs primarily west of the same interstate.) Journey North's Monarch-tracking map even shows nine Monarchs from across southern Arkansas!

It's not uncommon to see single Monarchs on occasion through the winter in Texas, but starting around March 12 there was a near explosion of double-digit Monarchs per location from Dallas, to Austin, to Port Lavaca, to across southeast Texas, with one to two were seen in various locations across southern Arkansas! Usually the leading edge of the spring migration crosses the Rio Grande around March 15, so the northern migrants are indeed early. Journey North Map of the Spring 2006 Monarch Migration (large file): <http://tinyurl.com/qjb9n>

Here is a collection of reports from around the region:

On March 13, 2006, Dale Clark, of the Dallas County Lepidopterists' Society, reported seeing at least a dozen monarchs in Dallas – mostly females. Eggs were found on *Asclepias viridis* and *A. asperula*.

The week of March 12th, James McDermott of Kaufman (~20 miles SE of Dallas) reported dozens of Monarchs with many females laying eggs on new

milkweed plants.

On March 13, The Aschens, longtime Monarch sentinels at Port Lavaca (~75 miles north of Corpus Christi) report that four and a half hours after bringing home egg-free Tropical Milkweed (*A. curassavica*) plants from a local distributor, they noticed 20 to 30 Monarch eggs per plant! Checking the milkweed plants in their yard, they found more than 80 more eggs, plus a few early instar larvae. The eggs were laid on leaves just sprouting!

March 12-14, Charles Bordelon, VP/Editor-in-Chief Texas Lepidoptera Survey, made a 3-day collecting trip from Harris to Sabine Co. He reported hundreds of northbound Monarchs across southeast Texas in Angelina, Harris, Jasper, Montgomery, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Jacinto, and Tyler counties.

March 13, 2006, Jim Edson, of the Univ. of Arkansas, reported Monarchs from across south Arkansas. Arkansas Monarch Watch:
<http://tinyurl.com/kwevn>

I was curious as to how to interpret these last two reports give the significant year-round Monarch population on the Upper Texas Coast. (See UTC Monarch reports below). Had some the 100s of Monarchs spread across SE Texas and the early spring Monarchs in southern Arkansas originated from along the UTC and not traversed all the way from central Mexico?

I asked Dr. Chip Taylor, of Monarch Watch, to speculate on what environmental conditions such as increasing day-length might trigger some of the Upper Coastal monarchs to head north, i.e. to join the migration from Mexico as it passes through the region.

Chip said the primary environmental stimulus inducing Monarchs to migrate either north or south is, respectively, the increasing or decreasing angle of the sun above the horizon. He speculated that the only UTC Monarchs likely to be induced to join the spring northbound Monarchs would be those who were just then emerging from their pupal stage, and not the adult butterflies that overwintered in the area.

Here are two Monarch reports from Harris and Galveston Counties that give a picture of the UTC population:

Mike Rickard is a longtime resident lepidopterist in Houston. He recently wrote: I walk 3 miles daily through the neighborhood, missing only 15 days last year when the weather was too stormy. Every day that was remotely warm and/or sunny enough for butterflies to be on the wing I saw at least one monarch. I never had noticed that they seem to be year-round residents here.

Butterfly and native plant enthusiast Trudy Belz lives in Texas City (Galveston Co.) where she is the caretaker of a city garden. Last year they planted 1000 Tropical Milkweed (*A. curassavica*) and Butterflyweed (*A. tuberosa*) plants. She reports that they are now in a "heavy cycle of reproduction with eggs and all instars plus many more than usual fresh adults."

One day last week, Trudy observed something she found unusual. In less than a 1/2 mile she saw four separate monarchs crossing the road in a dedicated flight from west to east, exactly the opposite of the fall migrants.

Please send me the details of *your* observations on the state of the Monarchs' migration through your area. Please include the date(s), county, and nearest town and send it to me at:

<mailto:Mike.Quinn@tpwd.state.tx.us> or by phone at 512-912-7059, Toll Free: 800-792-1112 ext. 7059

I will fwd first sightings to Journey North:
<http://www.learner.org/cgi-bin/jnorth/jn-sightings>

(2) Monarch Magnets

In my own Monarch surveys across south Austin this week, I routinely found Texas Mountain Laurel to be a premiere Monarch magnet! Reasons why I think this beautiful native plant attracts so many Monarchs includes its early bloom period coinciding with the Monarchs' spring movements; its large showy and fragrant flowers; and significantly, its height of 9 to 15 feet which allows it to stand out in the typical Central Texas landscape.

Texas Mountain Laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*)
photos and info from the City of Austin:
<http://tinyurl.com/evnmu>

Please let me know of any nectar plants you find particularly attracting to Monarchs. I will forwards your findings on to the Monarch Watch (Univ. of Kansas) for possible inclusion in their Monarch Waystation Program:
<http://www.monarchwatch.org/ws/>

(3) Monarch Overwintering Population Estimate

During the last two weeks of December 2005, the overwintering Monarch colonies occupied 5.92 hectares in Mexico. This was up from a low of 2.19 occupied hectares in December 2004. Bar Graph showing annual overwintering Monarch population estimates from Mexico:

<http://tinyurl.com/rxugf> - Journey North

Eduardo Rendon of WWF-Mexico and his colleagues at the Reserva de la Biosfera Mariposa prepared this report on this winter's Monarch population (report is in Spanish): <http://tinyurl.com/og6zg>

The Monarch density (the number of butterflies per hectare) is thought to increase through the winter as they form more compact colonies. Actual Monarch densities are not known, but at the time of the annual colony measurements (in late December), the density estimates range from 10 to 50 million butterflies per HA. Using the high end of the range, the December 2005 population could have been nearly 300 million butterflies strong!

Thanks all for your continued support, data collection and reporting!

Written and Compiled by Mike Quinn, TPWD
Invertebrate Biologist
Mike.quinn@tpwd.state.tx.us - Phone: 512-912-7059

Local News

Wimberley Butterfly Watch

Butterflies observed regularly on mild days during March included Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Pipevine Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, Southern Dogface, Little Sulphur, Sleepy Orange, Dainty Sulphur, Gray Hairstreak, Juniper Hairstreak, Great Purple Hairstreak, Variegated Fritillary, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, American Lady, Checkered Skipper, Funereal Skipper, Dun Skipper, Sachem, and other skippers.

Migrating Monarch butterflies arrived in Wimberley on March 12, and their progeny are thriving on Tropical Milkweed in the gardens of Emily Ann Theatre. The first caterpillars have reached the third instar stage.



Local Watershed Planning in Plum Creek Watershed

Texas Cooperative Extension (TCE) and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) are partnering with local citizens to protect and improve water quality in Texas' watersheds by helping to develop and implement watershed protection plans. Watershed protection plans are designed to restore and/or protect surface waters impacted by nonpoint source pollution by implementing best management practices. Plum Creek, which runs through Hays and Caldwell Counties, has been selected for development of a watershed protection plan based on water quality data for bacteria and nutrients.

Public action is the best means for addressing local water quality problems and concerns. Local stakeholders like you will help identify potential sources of pollution and then select and promote implementation of practices to improve water quality. Key local partners supporting the process include the Guadalupe Blanco River Authority, Plum Creek Conservation District, Caldwell-Travis SWCD and Hays County SWCD. The ultimate goal of the program is to develop and implement a plan that protects water resources in the region now, and into the future.

To kick-off the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership, three public meetings will be conducted to introduce the program and encourage local citizen involvement. We encourage all interested individuals to attend one of the meetings to learn how to get involved in solving these important water quality issues. Refreshments will be available at 6:00 pm and meetings will start at 6:30 pm at the following locations:

April 10, 2006, Courthouse Annex, 1400B FM 20 East, Lockhart, TX 78644

April 25, 2006, Tobias Elementary School, 1005 East FM 150, Kyle, TX 78640

April 26, 2006, Luling Primary School, 118 West Bowie, Luling, TX 78648

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact Nikki Dictson with TCE at 979.458.3478 or n-dictson@tamu.edu, or Brian Koch with TSSWCB at 979.532.9496 or bkoch@tsswcb.state.tx.us. For further information, please visit <http://pcwp.tamu.edu/>.

Links to Chapter Sponsors and Partners

Sponsors:

Texas Master Naturalist - State Website - masternaturalist.tamu.edu
Texas Cooperative Extension – agextension.tamu.edu/
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – www.tpwd.state.tx.us/

Partners:

Bamberger Ranch -- <http://www.bambergerranch.org/workshops.htm>
LBJ Wildflower Center -- www.wildflower.org
Native Plant Society of Texas – www.npsot.org/
San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance -- <http://www.smgreenbelt.org>.
San Marcos River Foundation – <http://www.sanmarcosriver.org>.
Texas Outdoor Women's Network - <http://www.townsanmarcos.org/>
Texas Cooperative Extension – Sea Grant Program – texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu/
Texas Forest Service – txforestservice.tamu.edu/
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – www.usace.army.mil/
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – www.fws.gov/
U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service – .nrcs.usda.gov/