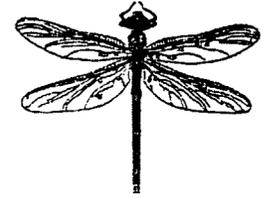


Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

February, 2008

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Executive Board Meeting

The HCMN Board will meet Thursday, February 7, 6:30pm at 820 Red Hawk Road (Susan Nenney's home). Discussions will continue on chapter organization. ✨

February Chapter Meeting

Amphibian Decline and the Year of the Frog

FEBRUARY 21

Leap into the Leap Year with our first chapter meeting of 2008.

Lee Ann Linam, our TP&WD Representative, is the featured speaker and the department's expert on amphibians. Location: 820 Red Hawk Road, Wimberley. Susan Nenney's home

6:30 pm social gathering

6:45 program

7:30 Frog Listen along Lone Man Creek (weather permitting)

Iced tea and coffee will be served.

Alternative beverages and snacks okay.

Flashlights recommended. Questions? E-mail Susan here or call 289.8166 (cell)

Directions: (from Wimberley: go 4 mi. west on FM 3237. Turn rt. onto Red Hawk Road, go left over the dam, right at the next fork to stay on Red Hawk. (MN signs will be posted.) Note: 820 Red Hawk is *beyond* 1000 Red Hawk. ✨

THE PRESIDENTIAL VIEW

Recently I was reminded of what a great organization the Texas Master Naturalist Program (TMN), and especially Hays County's Chapter, is when the TPWD Commission met on 24 January 2008. Michelle Haggerty presented an overview of the Texas Master Naturalist Program to commissioners and the new TPWD Executive Director, Carter Smith.

HAYS COUNTY MASTER NATURALISTS

Board of Directors

President	Dale Shively
Vice President	Dixie Camp
Secretary	Susan Nenney
Treasurer	Winifred Simon
Past-President	Tom Watson
State Representative	Tom Watson
Training Committee	Jean McMeans
Membership Committee	Judy Telford, interim
Web Master	Herb Smith
Newsletter Committee & Editor	Richard Barnett 512-847-6941 news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	vacant
Host Committee	vacant
Historian	Laurel Roberts
Volunteer Service	Walt Krudop
Extension Agent	Bryan Davis
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam
OTHER:	

From a TPWD perspective, the Master Naturalist Program is administered through the Wildlife Diversity Branch of the Wildlife Division and in partnership with Texas Cooperative Extension. It has positive impacts on Texas natural resources and saves millions of dollars through volunteer efforts. The TMN program is part of the implementation strategies of the *Texas Wildlife Action Plan* and the *Land & Water Conservation Plan*.

Michelle explained that the, "Texas Master Naturalist program trains and manages chapters of certified volunteers who become stewards for habitat and natural resources near their communities. Volunteers function as outreach specialists to build awareness regarding native species, ecosystems and conservation management to ensure the long-term sustainability and enjoyment of our Texas natural areas and resources now and into the future. The organization, celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, has made significant gains to further the mission and goals of both TPWD and Texas Cooperative Extension and currently has 41 chapters involving more than 4,500 Master

Naturalist volunteers who have dedicated over 635,000 hours of service related to natural resource community projects, habitat management, education and outreach valued at more than \$10.1 million. Additionally, TMN serves as the model for a growing national program. As stated by a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer, this program truly is the demonstration that 'bit-by-bit builds to bunches-each fact learned builds knowledge; each activity added together creates change.' "

These statistics are the result of each chapter reporting their training hours and volunteer service and emphasizes why reporting hours are important and what they are used for.

Michelle did a great job in getting continued TPWD Commission support for the program overall. Bob Cook, out-going Executive Director stated, "The Program succeeds from not just people out having fun, but from on-the-ground results ..." Commission Chair Holt and Commissioner Martin also were very encouraging. Martin would like to work more closely with Michelle to build more chapters and said this was a "wonderful program."

After listening to this presentation, my enthusiasm for the Hays County Master Naturalist chapter was rekindled again. With the support of the TPWD Commission, the great leadership of Michelle and other staff, and your dedication, we will continue to be an important operating force in Hays County for years to come.

See you at the February Frog Leap meeting, our first Chapter meeting of 2008.

Dale



Members in the News

The Hays County Master Gardeners have elected **Judy Telford** as their Secretary for 2008.

The Wimberley View highlighted **Herb Smith's** role and contributions to the Wimberley Valley Art League in an illustrated article.

John Cassidy has recertified for 2007



Chapter News

Volunteer Services Projects Chairman

The Board has approved President Dale Shively's nomination of Walt Krudop as Volunteer Services Projects Chairman. Thanks, Walt. ✨

HCMN Picture Trail

Walt Krudop has launched a new web site for displaying photography of HCMN activities and projects.

To VIEW photos on the site, just click on <http://www.PictureTrail.com/hayscntymn>. You can view all the photos but cannot edit or change anything. Anyone who knows the web address can access this.

The simple instructions to upload photos are:

- 1) Go to <http://www.picturetrail.com>
- 2) Then click on Member Login.
- 3) Once you log in, click on "Upload Pics".

The detailed but pretty straightforward instructions showing screenshots for each step is shown in the attached instruction document. For the Member Login, please check with Walt.



Annual Dues Time!

It's that time of year. Send in your HCMN Dues for 2008 now and get the year started off on the right note. Mail your check for \$15.00 (we've had a slight increase) made out to Hays County Master Naturalist to: Winifred Simon, 600 Red Hawk Road, Wimberley, TX 78676. ✨

Reporting Reminder

Reports for January 2008 are due by February 7. Please email your reports of Volunteer Service hours and Advanced Training immediately to Beth Ramey, preferably at recordscom@haysmn.org. ✨



CALENDAR

(The dragonfly logo  identifies official HCMN events)

February 7, Executive Board meeting, 6:30 pm, at Susan Nenny's house, 820 Red Hawk Road, Wimberley.

February 15-18, 2008. **Cornell-Audubon Bird Count**

February 16. **Texas Watch**, Water Quality Monitoring Training, Texas State University. 8:30 am -3:30 pm. More info below.

February 21-23: **Taking Pride in Texas:** Conservation at work in your community. 2008 Statewide Land Trust Conference, Austin. For more info, please contact Cheyenne Pitts cpitts@texaslandtrustcouncil.org of the Texas Land Trust Council.

February 21: **Amphibian Decline and the Year of the Frog.** Chapter meeting at Susan Nenny's home. Details above. 

February 23. **Habitat Conservation, Citizen by Citizen.** Native Plant Spring Symposium, LBJ Wildflower Center, Austin. Review habitat preservation, plant conservation and invasive species management programs in Texas. Explore resources that can make a positive difference toward ecological sustainability in your region.

Early registration is \$65 per person until January 31. After January 31 it is \$75 per person. Full details and online registration can be found on the Spring Symposium web page: <http://www.wildflower.org/springsymposium/>

February 23: **Sea Turtle Saturday 2008**, Houston Zoo. For more info or to learn how you can help Save the Sea Turtles, please contact Tracie Teague, 979-709-6699, ibteague@yahoo.com

March 1: **Annual River Cleanup**, San Marcos.

Saturday, March 29, **Worm Wrangling** training in conjunction with Emily Ann Theater and Wild Connections

Saturday, April 19, **Wimberley MN Earth Day** celebration in conjunction with the Emily Ann Butterfly Festival.

May 15-18, **Dragonfly Days 2008.** Estero Llano Grande State Park and Valley Nature Center (Weslaco). More info below



ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

“Cooperative Stewardship: What’s in it for YOU, What’s in it for Texas?”

TOWMA CONFERENCE, FEB 1-2, KYLE

Across Texas, a seismic shift in land ownership is transforming the landscape. Bigger ranches are giving way to ranchettes, resulting in loss of open range and fragmentation of wildlife habitat. One solution is landowners banding together for common benefits, the focus of the Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Association annual conference February 1-2.

The conference includes presentations about land management practices and tools to help attendees become better stewards of natural resources. A common theme is the advantage of managing resources cooperatively and what landowners can accomplish by working together. Speakers include Bob Turner, former state legislator and current rural issue legislative specialist, Carter Smith, newly appointed executive director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Keynote speaker Sen. Glenn Hegar, a member of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, will discuss legislation affecting water and wildlife management on private lands. Other speakers include Matt Wagner, TPWD wildlife diversity program director; Doug Mason, Oakridge Ranch Wildlife Management Association predator control manager and co-founder of TEAM HOGS hunger relief program; and Jenny Sanders, Texas Wildlife Association conservation programs coordinator. Linda McMurry of TPWD will moderate a panel of experts discussing cooperative management tools and success stories. Also participating are Texas Cooperative Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Hunters Harvest, Texas Farm and Ranch Conservation Council and others.

On Friday evening, Texas Old Town will cook up a Texas-style BBQ Cowboy supper with live traditional country and western music from the Texas Old Town Wranglers. Those who come early can browse items to be auctioned off after dinner. Guest speakers begin after breakfast at 8:30 a.m. Saturday morning.

TOWMA is a statewide organization that brings together regional wildlife management associations throughout Texas to achieve common goals and objectives. TOWMA facilitates the formation of new wildlife management associations by sharing "Best Practices" and re-usable templates to help organizations avoid "re-inventing the wheel." TOWMA monitors legislation affecting landowners, communicates issues to members, and provides input to legislators who pass laws affecting wildlife and land use. TOWMA's Web site includes a clickable map to find wildlife management associations across Texas, a technical library of articles on wildlife conservation topics, and many other resources.

Visit www.towma.org for detailed program and to register. Visit www.texasoldtown.org for directions. Pre-registration by January 25 strongly encouraged.

Texas Watch Training

On Saturday, February 16th from 8:30-3:30, Texas Watch will hold a water quality monitoring training at Texas State University.

This training will teach participants how to collect water quality data. Texas Watch uses TCEQ and EPA approved methodologies to monitor and assess water quality parameters including transparency, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity, and temperature. Upon successful completion of the course, participants will be 'Certified Water Quality Monitors.'

For interested individuals, an additional bacterial monitoring training will be provided from 3:30pm to 5:00pm on the same day.

For more information or to sign up, please contact Heidi L.N. Moltz, Statewide Volunteer Coordinator, Texas Watch - River Systems Institute Doctoral Candidate - Aquatic Resources, Texas State University, San Marcos. Phone: 512-245-3461, hm1079@txstate.edu

Dragonfly Days 2008

MAY 15-18

Estero Llano Grande State Park and the Valley Nature Center (Weslaco) will host

Dragonfly Days 2008. Since this event began in 2000, a combination of illustrated talks and field trips have acquainted visitors from Texas and other states with the rich dragonfly and damselfly fauna of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. This event serves as an introduction to these fascinating insects; you need no background beyond an interest in natural history to attend. Information on the festival including a schedule of talks and a registration form may be obtained by visiting:

<http://www.valleynaturecenter.org/dragonflydays/2008/dragonfly2008.html>

For more info, please contact: Estero Llano Grande State Park, Contact: Jennifer Owen, 956-565-3919:

Jennifer.Owen@tpwd.state.tx.us,

www.worldbirdingcenter.org/sites/weslaco/ Or

Valley Nature Center, Contact: Martin Hagne, 956-969-2475

info@valleynaturecenter.org

www.valleynaturecenter.org



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Birding Contest for Schools

The National Biodiversity Parks (NBP) has recently launched the National Schoolyard Birding Challenge. The event is part of the NBP's Fledging Birders Program. The contest has been designed to promote awareness of local bird life for youth through the use of an interactive format.

The Challenge is a monthly birding contest open to students in all public and private schools in the contiguous United States. Student participants will work together to observe, identify, and record various species found on their school grounds. The main objective is to get more young people outside and exploring nature through a birding portal.

Sharing birds with youth is an invaluable service to the birding community, and, hopefully, an investment for the future of birds in North America.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.fledgingbirders.org/challenge.html>

The Great Backyard Bird Count
New HCMN Volunteer Project #701
FEBRUARY 15-18, 2008

Get ready to "Count for the Record!"

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count, February 15-18, 2008. Sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, this annual four-day event engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

IT'S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3, 4!

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes during February 15-18, 2008. Count birds at as many places and on as many days as you like; it doesn't have to be in your backyard—just keep a separate list of counts for each day and/or location.

2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time, and write it down.

3. Enter your results on the [Great Backyard Bird Count web site!](#)

***4. Turn your hours in to HCMN - Project 701.**

Participants who want to hone their bird watching skills can learn more from the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, which offers identification tips and access to photos, sounds, maps, and natural history information on more than 500 bird species. Other resources helpful are the pocket size Sibley's **Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America** (or Western NA - Texas is in both) or Kaufman's **Birds of North America**. Don't forget the Hays County Bird Checklist which homes in on birds by season. (Available for \$1.00; PO Box 398, Wimberley, TX 78676) Or team up with a friend.

For beginners, looking up a few of our most common birds ahead of time may be helpful. Start here for more information about the event: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>; Click on "What is the GBBC" or "How to Participate" for details. Remember: count one bird, learn one bird, and you are off to a new adventure. "We often fail to notice how rich our surroundings are, but counting birds, even for just 15 minutes, is not only educational—it can provide a lasting source of enjoyment, turning a daily walk into a treasure hunt." GBBC

CONTACT: Ginger Geist

***Wildscape Garden,
San Marcos Nature Center***

HCMN PROJECT #405

Light frosts ended the flowering of the lantanas and other late bloomers. Next spring's wildflowers are sprouting, and so are chickweed, red henbit, and other opportunists.

Sow thistles, black medicago, and pecan and elm seedlings thrive regardless of regular weeding and a dry winter.

We welcome contributions of seeds or seedlings of annual and perennial wildflowers to improve the diversity of our garden. Indian paintbrush, phlox, larkspur, Zexmenia, gayfeathers, standing cypress, and even Texas prickly poppy would be welcome, but we have not been able to grow them from seed.



CONTACT: Richard Barnett,
news@haysmn.org.



State News

***State's Agricultural Agencies
Change Names, Renew Missions***

College Station – Two state agricultural agencies that have served Texans for a combined 224 years are beginning 2008 with new names and renewed missions.

Texas AgriLife Research is the new name for the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, which annually conducts more than \$150 million in agriculture and life sciences research in such areas as improving food and fiber production, enhancing human and animal health, and conserving water, soils, wildlife and other natural resources.

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service is the new name of Texas Cooperative Extension, which provides Texans in all 254 counties with non-biased, research-based education programs and services in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H and youth development, family and consumer sciences, and community economic development.

"We are making these changes to better communicate the life-sustaining and life-changing impacts that both AgriLife Research and AgriLife Extension deliver to the people of Texas and beyond," said Dr. Mark Hussey, director of AgriLife Research.

Both agencies remain members of The Texas A&M University System, with the same

commitment to their partners, clients and mission.

"But we also want to tell our story to a larger audience and a changing state population, attract new resources and build new partnerships, while strengthening our existing ones," Hussey said. "In this way, we hope to better serve the people of this great state."

The name changes are part of a re-branding initiative launching this year after two years of study and planning. These efforts were led by former vice chancellor Dr. Elsa Murano, who was named president of Texas A&M University on Jan. 3.

"The re-branding efforts are centered on one foundational message: 'Agriculture is Life!'" Hussey said. "The central idea is that life itself is the core value that our agencies seek to sustain and enhance. "People usually don't realize how much we all depend on agriculture and the life sciences. Discoveries and innovations in these fields directly impact the quality of the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the homes we live in, and, more and more, even the fuels we pump into our vehicles."

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"This is more than a name change, or even a new logo design," said Dr. Ed Smith, director of AgriLife Extension. "These new brands will impact not only our marketing materials and signage, but also the way we position and prioritize our programs and work with our federal, state and county partners to serve the state of Texas. It is vitally important to tell our story and that people connect our agencies to the tremendous impacts they have on the state."

One of the drivers of the re-branding initiative was a market study that showed that the work of the research and extension agencies was not widely known across the state of Texas. "We hope to help people better understand the vital role that agriculture and life sciences still play in improving the prosperity of their lives," said Smith. "We believe that if they come to know us better, they will see that connection more clearly, even

within a state population that is now 85 percent urbanized."

AgriLife Research, established in 1887, employs a team of 425 scientists on the campus of Texas A&M University and at 13 centers across the state. Research has made many innovative advances over the years, including development of the Texas 1015 onion and the TAM Mild Jalapeno pepper, which revolutionized the U.S. salsa industry. Current major research includes the efficient use and conservation of water resources, the development of fruits and vegetables with higher levels of disease-fighting compounds, and the adaptation of crops and other agricultural products for making biofuels. AgriLife Extension, established in 1915, provides Texans with continuing education programs and services. More than 900 professional educators team with some 90,000 volunteers to serve families, youth, communities and businesses throughout the state. Some 600,000 children annually participate in Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

Monarch Watch Blog Debut

The Monarch Watch program has introduced its official Monarch Watch Blog for 2008: <http://www.MonarchWatch.org/blog>.

Texas Monarch Watch 07: Unusual Migration & Hotter Than Normal Fall

Friday, January 18th, 08 at 8:54 am by Monarch Watch

Tagging has shown that the timing and pace of the migration is generally quite predictable. The pace of the migration was normal this year as the butterflies advanced from 50 degrees latitude in the north to about 40 degrees in the middle of the country.

Then the migration appeared to slow. The slowdown corresponded to a prolonged high-pressure system, with hot temperatures over the central portion of the country from late September through most of October.

As you know I've given myself the responsibility of trying to interpret monarch numbers on a year-round basis. This task is not difficult and most of the time I can articulate at least a general description of the relative size of the population and can usually explain why the

numbers might be up or down. It's pretty general stuff and subsequent events usually show that I'm not too far off the mark. There are challenges however, and this fall presented one such challenge. Monarch numbers appeared to be above normal once again in the past, although not as numerous as in 06. Further, it was clear that the numbers of butterflies originating from the upper Midwest were greater than in 06. Yet there were signs that the population coming through the central portion of the country was below the long-term average for this region. The progression of the migration through both the central portion of the country and along the coast was unusual.

In addition to a slowed migration as mentioned above, relatively low numbers of monarchs were reported from southern Minnesota through Oklahoma, with few exceptions.

As this was happening, I was speculating that the monarchs were there but just weren't being seen or reported. Due to the numbers of observers, much of the migration moves through the Midwest unreported in most years so this speculation seemed reasonable. The number of observers in Texas is much greater and I was expecting large numbers of monarchs to be reported as they moved through that state. It didn't happen.

In addition, the number of monarchs moving along the Gulf Coast from east Texas to Corpus Christi was one of the largest seen in decades.

Our understanding of what happened this fall was greatly enhanced by The efforts of Mike Quinn. Mike is an Invertebrate Biologist at Texas Parks & Wildlife and he has established a substantial network of professional and amateur naturalists that report monarch sightings during both the fall and spring migrations. Mike also marveled at the unusual nature of the monarch migration through Texas and the numerous observations and reports led him to post a summary of the sightings to <http://monarchwatch.org/>, a Monarch Watch discussion list. Mike's summary and analysis is represented below. The only note to add is that Monarch Watch received reports that large numbers of dead monarchs had washed ashore at Galveston and other locations along the coast or were seen flying over the Gulf, emphasizing the hazards of coastal travel.

Texas Fall Monarch Flyway Analysis

Compiled by Mike Quinn

Each fall, the majority of Texas monarch sightings consistently fall into what we call the Central and Coastal Flyways. The Central (and larger) Flyway is generally most active from early to late October. Conversely, the Coastal Flyway is generally active from mid October to mid November.

Question: are these flyways real and if so, why are they not synchronized?

Recapping the fall 07 monarch Migration. Monarchs start heading south in late August.

By the first week in October, monarchs start crossing the Red River. The monarch front appears somewhat asynchronous at this time.

By mid October, monarchs pour through the Central Flyway. This Major monarch migration corridor generally extends from I-35 to Midland.

During the third week of October, the monarch flow appears to shift to the southeast. At this time, monarchs occupy portions of the Central and Coastal Flyways.

By the last week of October, monarchs are primarily restricted to the Coastal Flyway. The Coastal Flyway is more variable than the Central Flyway and is generally active from mid October to mid November. The relative lack of monarch watchers across the southeastern U.S. contributes to the mystery of the origin of the coastal monarchs, but they likely started in the northeast.

If so, then the greater distance traveled from the northeast might account for the asynchronous timing of the Coastal Flyway, versus monarchs traveling a shorter distance from the Midwest and using the Central Flyway.

If the Coastal Flyway is populated by monarchs originating from the northeast, a potentially significant contributing factor to the delayed flight along this flyway may be the fact that winds rarely blow from the NE to the SW.

Therefore, butterflies traveling such a route would encounter more cross winds than monarchs flying through the central flyway. Some monarchs overwinter along the Gulf Coast. Is it possible that the impetus to continue migrating is lost due to the lateness of their arrival?



Local News

Wimberley Butterfly Watch

Butterfly diversity and numbers were predictably infrequent and low in January.

	1-10	11-20	21-31
Checkered White			
Cloudless Sulphur		x	
Orange-barred Sulphur			
Large Orange Sulfur			
Little Yellow			
Sleepy Orange	x		
Dainty Sulphur	x		
Gray Hairstreak			
Red Admiral	x	x	
American Lady	x	x	
Painted Lady	x	x	
Common Buckeye	x	x	
Checkered Skipper	x		

If you spotted something we missed, please email your editor at news@haysmn.org



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/

Agencies of Interest:

Bamberger Ranch -- <http://www.bambergerranch.org/workshops.htm>
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 – txforestservation.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 – .nracs.usda.gov/

Partners

Austin Nature Day --

<http://www.austinnatureday.org/>

LBJ Wildflower Center -- <http://www.wildflower.org>

San Marcos Nature Centre --

<http://www.smgreenbelt.org>