

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER




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

March, 2008

MARCH EVENTS

Executive Board Meeting

Watch for more info from Susan 

March 27 Membership Meeting *Conserving Local Wildlands* *amid Urban Growth*

CANA HOUSE, REICHER RANCH, 3635 RR
620. 6:30 TO 8 PM

Gail McGlamery, Conservation Program Coordinator for the City of Austin's Wildland Conservation Division will host the meeting and present the program about Austin's Wildlands Conservation Program.

The City of Austin manages more than 30,000 acres of wildlands as a result of citizen-approved bond elections in the 1990s. The lands are dedicated to two programs with separate missions—the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve conserves habitat for eight endangered species while the Water Quality Protection Lands program conserves land to provide for the optimum amount of high-quality recharge into the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer. As Austin and surrounding communities expand, these conserved lands are even more valuable for what they protect yet are also increasingly targeted for public access. Gail's presentation will give you a virtual introduction to these irreplaceable natural resources, their management, challenges on the urban interface, and provisions for educational access.

You can find a map to Reicher Ranch and Cana House at www.cityofaustin.org/water/wildland/location.htm. Please stay on the paved road past the first set of buildings and continue about 1 mile into the property, where the road ends at a building complex. You should drive slowly and carefully. Although the road is paved, is narrow and winding.

Next to Cana House, the meeting place, is a greenhouse that Marion Couvillion refurbished with help from Walt Krudop. It is where we

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
Advanced Training Comm	Betty Finley
Membership Committee	Beth Ramey
Web Master	Herb Smith
Newsletter Committee & Editor	Richard Barnett 512-847-6941 news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	vacant
Host Committee	Margaret Baker
Historian	Laurel Robertson
Volunteer Service	Walt Krudop
AgriLife Agent	Bryan Davis
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam

grow plants for restoration and educational projects. The meet and greet time should give us a chance to walk through the greenhouse and walk a short distance down the trail (also near the meeting room). Golden-cheeked warblers will have returned by March 27. They sing more often in the morning but you never know. If you want to have these special treats as part of the pre-presentation activities, Gail can start her talk at 7:15 and still end at 8:00 pm.

Gail McGlamery earned her B.Sc. in Wildlife & Fisheries from Texas A&M University and has been an environmental educator for over 16 years. Early in her career she worked outside of Texas as a Peace Corps volunteer in Burundi, East Africa, with the national non-profit American Forests, and as a Parks Coordinator with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. Since arriving in Texas in 1996, Gail has worked with Austin's Urban Forestry program, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve and the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District. In her current position with the City of Austin Gail oversees

the education and volunteer programs for Austin Water Utility's Wildland Conservation Division that manages over 30,000 acres. Gail can be contacted at: 512-263-6437; fax: 512-263-1276, www.cityofaustin.org/water/wildland

Dixie Camp ✨

THE PRESIDENTIAL VIEW

People making a difference. That is my theme for this month's news.

As we move into March, I am reminded that spring is on its way. Flora is greening, skunks are on the move looking for love, wrens are building nests, and Hays County Master Naturalists are planning for various advanced training and volunteer activities.

As we continue to refine the Chapter, the Board has recently elected Walt Krudop as Volunteer Service Projects Chair and Betty Finley as Advanced Training Chair. Between these two individuals, all projects and training activities will be reviewed for compliance with state guidelines to ensure we provide the best services to the membership. If you have any questions on whether a training or service event can be approved for hours, please contact Walt or Betty directly. They will also be receiving on-line requests from our web site.

Laurel Robertson, as Chapter Historian, will be drafting the history of the Chapter for inclusion on our website.

Beth Ramey is doing a wonderful job in keeping up with membership records and hours turned in for accounting purposes. By now she is probably wondering what she got herself involved with! Richard Barnett continues to "crack the whip" for information needed for the monthly newsletter, while Dixie Camp has many new ideas on chapter programming events.

Susan Nenny continues to keep all members informed of chapter business and Winifred Simons is still reminding us that chapter dues are needed! We also welcome aboard Margaret Baker as Host Committee Chair and look forward to her assistance.

Jean McMeans and Larry Calvert continue to lead the Chapter Training Committee towards making this year's Training Class a success. From my observations of the first class meeting, I can tell this will be another great class. All committee members are working diligently at planning and mentorship of trainees. I cannot say enough about how impressed I am at their ingenuity, especially

the creation of speaker gift card packs made using photos taken by chapter members. I can see the beginnings of a chapter fund raising event (cards and calendar)!

The point of all this news is to show you that people can, and do, make a difference. In the March 2008 issue of TPWD Magazine, there is an article entitled "Saving the Snowbell" (*Styrax plantanifolius texanus*), which was listed on the endangered species list in 1984. At that time, 39 plants in seven locations were found in Texas. Since then an additional 600 plants have been introduced by one man, David Bamberger. USFWS recovery plans call for at least 10,000 snowbells to get the population up again. In that vein, Bamberger's plants may seem like just a drop in the bucket, but that doesn't deter him. Colleen Gardner, assistant executive director of the Bamberger ranch, states David Bamberger is living proof that one person can make a difference. She states that, "The greatest threat to conservation, to any social change, is apathy. People say, 'I'm just one person and can't make a difference.' Now people can say, 'I can do something.'"

We all can do something and your fellow master naturalists in Hays County are teaming up to make that difference. Currently, we are reviewing the current chapter project list and will be talking more about specific projects for this chapter once this review is complete. That will be fodder for another discussion.

Naturally speaking,

Dale ✨



Members in the News

Herb Smith Appointed to HCA Advisory Board

HCMN webmaster **Herb Smith** was recently appointed to the advisory board of the Hill Country Alliance (HCA). HCA was formed in response to the escalating challenges brought to the region by rapid development. Concerned citizens began meeting in September of 2004 to share ideas about strengthening community activism and educating the public about regional planning, conservation development, and a more responsible approach growth in the hill country. More information about the Alliance

can be found at

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

The Hill Country Alliance announces its 2009 Calendar photography contest with \$1,850 in available prizes, up \$1,000 from last year. The deadline for online entries is May 31st. Full details and the online entry form are available on the Alliance website at <http://www.hillcountryalliance.org>.

February 21 was an exciting day for Herb and his wife Susan Zimmerman. He observed a zone-tailed hawk, an American kestrel, and a very active and vocal pair of red-shouldered hawks that they saw mating a few days earlier. They have not spotted a nest so far, but have high hopes they will find it this year.

Four of Herb's photographs will be on display at the Wimberley Village Library during March and April as part of an outreach program of the Wimberley Valley Art League. Herb's photos of scenes of Cypress Creek are all archival C prints of his digital infrared photos. They feature Jacob's Well, Below Black Log Crossing, Creekhaven Island, and the Falls at Mermaid Lagoon. Herb also has four more photographs, including the first prize winner, on display in the Wimberley Valley Art League gallery in the Wimberley community center. Additional work is on display in the "Through Many Lenses" exhibition at All About Image in Wimberley. ✨

Monitoring Lone Man Creek

MCMN Member **Larry Geist** has formed a group of local residents to monitor water quality in the Lone Man Creek watershed. The watershed includes Smith Creek and rises from springs just east of RR-12. Geist says that the monitoring stations will be included in the water quality database of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority. ✨

Chapter News

February 21 Chapter Meeting Amphibian Decline and the Year of the Frog

Lee Ann Linam, our TP&WD Representative, confirms that this is still the "Year of the Rat" in China. The American Zoological Association, however, has designated

2008 as the "Year of the Frog" to draw attention to the rapid worldwide decline of amphibians.

Of 5918 amphibian species, Linam says 32% are threatened and 43% are in decline. We don't have enough data to be sure of what is happening to the remaining 23%. Texas has 42 species of frogs and toads. The Houston Toad is classified as endangered and four species are threatened. The six Texas salamanders are all considered endangered.

Linam cites numerous explanations for amphibian decline, including habitat loss, pollution, disease, displacement by invasive species, agricultural chemicals, heavy metals, acid rain, chlorofluorocarbons, UV radiation, pharmaceutical substances, diseases, lethal malformations, and climate change. All are known to be harmful to organisms with soft, moist skin, and many probably compound the effects of others.

Linam points out why the decline in amphibian numbers and diversity is a matter of practical and economic concern. Amphibians contribute mightily to the diets of fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals. They are valuable subjects for scientific research and potential sources of powerful chemicals, especially toxins. Amphibians are indispensable for insect control and as indicators of environmental health. Finally, they have roles in human cultures.

Linam suggests several practical ways for Master Naturalists to protect amphibians. We can participate in TPWD's Texas Amphibian Watch; create ponds and other amphibian habitat; use pesticides sparingly; install toad houses; and be wise in the use of fossil fuels. We can contribute to amphibian research by joining the annual Texas Frog and Toad Survey; adopting a frog pond to monitor malformations and nocturnal calls; and joining the Cricket Frog Watch.

TPWD's website supplies free information about the Texas Amphibian Watch, and it offers a CD with recordings of frog calls. Linam says that learning frog calls is the best way to identify frogs and toads because of their nocturnal and elusive habits.

The frogs and toads in Lone Man Creek at Susan Nenny's home remained silent when the meeting adjourned to the creek to listen for frog calls. February 21 was a dry, cool, moonlit night—a much better night for snipe. ✨

New Committee Appointments

The Board has approved President Dale Shively's nomination of **Margaret Baker** as Chair of the Host Committee. Thanks, Margaret.

Betty Finley is the newly appointed chair of the Advanced Training Committee. All requests or suggestions for advanced training approval should be sent to her at bettyfinley@yahoo.com IN ADVANCE of the event. She will review and forward them to the Board with her recommendation. ✨

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 February, 2008 are due by March 7. Please email your reports of Volunteer Service hours and Advanced Training hours to Beth Ramey, preferably by using the friendly report forms on our website at www.haysmn.org. ✨



CALENDAR

(The dragonfly logo ✨ identifies official HCMN events)

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

March 3: **Record the Ribbit Day**.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008 Class Meeting, **Geology of Texas**, Dr Carter Keairns. Texas Agrilife Extension, San Marcos. ✨

March 15 & 19. **Artists & Artisans Festival**, LBJ WildflowerCenter. For more info, please check <http://www.wildflower.org>.

Tuesday, March 25, 2008 Class Meeting. **Ecosystems Concepts & Management**, Dr. Steve Windhager. **Ecological Regions of Texas**, Minette Marr. TAE. ✨

Saturday, March 29, **Worm Wrangling** training in conjunction with Emily Ann Theater and Wild Connections. For more info contact Karen Hulene Bartell, 512-894-0105 hulene1@austin.rr.com ✨

Tuesday, April 8, **Texas Archaeology**. Dr. Britt Bouseman. **Identifying Hill Country Birds & Habitat**, Jane Little & Cara Wernli. Holy Spirit Episcopal. ✨

Saturday, April 12 & Sunday, April 13: **Canyon Gorge Field Trip & Hill Country Geology**, Dr Carter Keairns. ✨

Saturday, April 19, **Wimberley MN Earth Day** celebration in conjunction with the Emily Ann Butterfly Festival. For more info on ATC and Volunteer Hours see below and contact Karen Hulene Bartell, 512-894-0105 hulene1@austin.rr.com ✨

Tuesday, April 22. 2008 Class Meeting, Freeman Ranch. **Nature Walk**, 4:00 to 6:00 pm, Dr. Barron Rector. **Impact of Man, Interpretation, Land Management**, Dr. Barron Rector. ✨

Tuesday, May 6. 2008 Class Meeting. **Forest Ecology & Management**, Eric Beckers. **Plants & Identification Using**

Keys, Dr Marianne Reese & Sarah Holland.
Holy Spirit Episcopal. ✨

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

Saturday, May 17. 2008 Class Meeting,
Freeman Ranch. **Insects & Butterflies**, Dr.
Chris Nice. Freeman Ranch, 9:00 am to 1:30
pm.

Tuesday, June 17. 2008 Class Meeting,
Aquarena Center. **Aquifers and the Birth of a
River. Wetlands, Riparian Areas, &
Restoration**. Dr. Ron Coley, Minette Marr. ✨

July 4. **Independence Day Parade**,
Wimberley.

Tuesday, July 15. **Water Resources in
Texas & Hays County**, Ms. Velma Danielson.
Holy Spirit Episcopal. ✨



ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Conserving Migratory Species in the International Arena

SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 6:00 T 7:00 PM.
City of Sunset Valley – City Hall, 3205 Jones
Road

A free lecture with Dr. Craig Farquhar. No
registration required.

In the twenty years since the Black-capped
Vireo (*Vireo atricapilla*) was listed as federally
endangered much has been learned about its
biology, conservation and management.
However, most of this knowledge comes from
the U.S. portion of its range, now reduced to
parts of central and southwestern Texas, and a
few small populations in south-central
Oklahoma. Recent work has shown this bird to
breed much farther south than previously
known. Collaborating effectively with biologists
in foreign countries, in this case Mexico, has to
be part of a successful conservation strategy for
organisms with cross-border ranges. This
presentation will discuss the recent advances in

the biology and conservation of this species in
light of our work in Mexico, and elucidate the
needs for collaborative efforts with countries
outside the U. S.

Craig Farquhar, Ph.D. is an avian ecologist
employed with the Texas Parks and Wildlife
Department (TPWD), Austin, TX. He currently
coordinates the Cooperative Endangered
Species Conservation Fund (Section 6) program
at TPWD, and works on conservation biology of
endangered Black-capped Vireos (*Vireo
atricapilla*) and Golden-cheeked Warblers
(*Dendroica chrysoparia*).

Rainwater Harvesting

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 1:30 TO 5:00 PM
3 hours ATC

PEC Auditorium, 201 S. Ave. F, Johnson City
Featured Speaker: **Billy Kniffen**, County
Extension Agent, Menard County.
Information will be presented regarding:
collecting rainwater for potable and non-potable
uses; systems installed in Blanco County;
suppliers of rainwater harvesting products and
services.

Mr. Kniffen, formerly our Hays Co. Extension
Agent, is recognized as the leading advocate
and expert on rainwater harvesting in the A&M
Extension Service and plays a leadership role in
launching that program for the Service.

Following the presentation, a review of local
systems presented by Preserve Our Water and
introduction of installers and product suppliers
offered. Next, weather permitting, will be a
short field trip. The new system at the Johnson
City High School will be the first stop, where
JCISD Superintendent David Shanley will
discuss the project. The final stop will be a
short drive west on Hwy 290 to the Mary
Moody Ranch, where the residential system will
be presented by Mrs. Moody and C.A. Cowser of
the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

This free program is co-sponsored by the
Texas AgriLIFE Extension-Blanco County, LCRA,
Nature Conservancy of Texas, Natural
Resources Conservation Service, Pedernales Soil
and Water Conservation District, and Preserve
Our Water.

Butterfly Day and Earth Day

Prepare for Earth Day and Butterfly Day
events on Saturday, March 29 by helping with,

Worm Wrangling in conjunction with Emily Ann and Wild Connections. Volunteers tour the native butterfly farm, Wild Connections (<http://www.wild-connections.com/butterflyhouse>), learn how to handle the larvae and butterflies, and place the larvae in special containers for other volunteers to raise into butterflies. (ATC Project 602, **1 hour ATC**. HCMN Project 801)

Meet with the group either at the EmilyAnn Theatre at 8:30 am and carpool to the Wild Connections butterfly farm, or meet or at the Nutty Brown Café at 8:45 am and then caravan to Wild Connections in Dripping Springs.

On Saturday, April 19, join the fun at the Emily Ann Theatre's Butterfly and Wimberley MN Earth Day. We need volunteers to staff our booth and meet the public during two shifts: 9:00 am to noon and noon to 3:00 pm.

(HCMN Project 602) The nature walk and birds of prey discussion are eligible for AdvanceTraining hours.

For more information or to sign up for any of these activities, contact Karen Hulene Bartell 512-894-0105 hulene1@austin.rr.com ✨



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Coastal Expo

March 6-8, 2008, Johnson Park, Marble Falls, TX. March 13-14, 2008, Edinburg Municipal Park, Edinburg (Adjacent to the Edinburg Scenic Wetlands at the World Birding Center).

TPWD's Coastal EXPO brings the coast to local communities and schools throughout the state. Coastal Expo is a fun, family-oriented event with activities for all ages! Visitors see and touch crabs, sea stars, and other coastal animals; view a glass-bottom stream; solve a mysterious fish kill; learn what washes up on the Texas coast; fish for live catfish; and participate in other great activities. In the process, they learn about Texas coastal ecosystems, why they are important, and how to protect them.

If you are available and interested in sharing your passion for nature and would like to volunteer at one of these events, please contact Rolando Esparza, Texas Parks & Wildlife

Department, 3000 South IH 35 # 320, Austin, TX 7870, tel. 4512-912-7107, Rolando.esparza@tpwd.state.tx.us, or Kris Shipman, tel. 512-912-7037, kris.shipman@tpwd.state.tx.us to sign up. ✨

2nd Annual San Marcos River Springs Fest

APRIL 5 AND 6

A celebration of the San Marcos River held at Rio Vista Park, San Marcos. 10 am to 6:00 pm on Saturday and 10:00 am to 4:00 pm on Sunday.

We need volunteers to lead, organize, and staff our HCMN information booth. Last year our table was across from the River Pub on the grassy area. We talked to people and passed out literature. For contact information and to volunteer, please contact Susan at sec@haysmn.org. ✨

2nd Annual Aquarena Earth Day Festival

SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2008

San Marcos Springs. Sponsored by The River Systems Institute, National Association of Environmental Professionals, and Aquarena Center.

The purpose is to raise awareness of nature's virtues, the role of community members in the environment, and have fun! And of course spread the word about Hays County Master Naturalist, how we can help.

We need volunteers to lead, organize, and staff our HCMN information booth. . For contact information and to volunteer, please contact Susan at sec@haysmn.org

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/dragonflyda>

ys/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

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>

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. Golden Corydalis and pink evening primroses are in flower. Bluebonnet plants appear sparser and smaller than usual, while stickyweed is luxuriant.

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.

AgriLIFE Blog Debut

Dr. Jim Cathey and Dr. Shawn Locke invite you to visit <http://www.wild-wonderings.blogspot.com> and learn about projects and activities of Texas AgriLIFE Extension's Wildlife and Fisheries unit.

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

Western Monarchs in Decline?

Monday, February 25th, 2008 at 12:41 pm by Monarch Watch. Filed under [Western Monarchs](#)

The *Ventura County Star* recently ran an article by Zeke Barlow "[Plight of the butterflies](#)" with the subtitle "Reign of the monarchs is in decline, but no one knows reason for the drop in population". The reasons offered for the decline varied from drought to parasites to loss of habitat. No doubt it will be difficult to sort out the various causes and it may not be possible to assign a specific reason, or reasons, for the decline due to our incomplete knowledge of where the monarchs that populate the coastal California overwintering sites breed.

Nevertheless, the article caused me to rush off to my favorite climate site ([Climate at a Glance](#)) to check on the temperature and moisture over the 1990 to 2007 period--the interval for which there is good data on the

total numbers of monarchs at the Pismo Beach overwintering site. The precipitation and temperature data shown in the two figures below represent the Western Region that consists primarily of California and Nevada. The data for California alone is similar.

First, there is a negative trend in the data with an average decline in precipitation of .25 inches per decade. This decline may not seem like much but it can have a profound impact of vegetation over time. Second, precipitation has been below average 6 of the last 8 years and only average the other two years. The monarch population has been in steady decline through this period.

Temperatures have increased 1.40° F per decade since 1990 in the West Region and have been higher than normal for 8 years in a row. Comparing the numbers of monarchs recorded each year with the temperature records shows a correspondence between the mean summer temperatures and the number of monarchs the following fall/winter. In general, when the temperatures are below normal the population increases in size and when it is above normal it decreases in size. Cool years include 91, 95, 97 and 98 all with high or increasing numbers. Hot years include 92, 94, 96 and 99-07.

The population increased slightly in 93, the coolest year in the period and then declined again in the hot year that followed. The high monarch number year of 90 can't be evaluated properly because we don't know the size of the population from the previous year.

Why might high summer temperatures and droughts have a negative effect on the number of overwintering monarchs?

Here are some key words: metabolism, nectar availability, host plant quality, life span, realized fecundity. Got it? High temperatures and drought result in a higher metabolism, lower nectar availability, reduced host plant quality, shorter lifespans and an overall reduction of realized fecundity (eggs/lifetime).

In Minnesota, the summer of 2006 promised to be the biggest migratory monarch population in 10-15 years, but the population crashed due to high temperatures and a drought in July and early August that coincided with the egg laying that produces the migratory generation.

How about the temperature and moisture impacts on plants? The key words in this case are: germination, establishment, growth, flowering, seed production, and disease resistance. You get the picture. Generally, long-

term droughts lead to a reduction in the population sizes of many perennial species, such as milkweeds and nectar producing flower species, and leads to changes in the composition of plant communities with annuals replacing perennials.



Local News

Start Shooting now for Naturescapes!

Master Naturalists are invited to enter the 4th annual Naturescapes Photography Contest co-sponsored by the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance and the Hill Country Photography Club.

We have expanded the contest this year to include photographs taken in natural areas throughout Hays County, and have eliminated categories. Suggested subjects include scenery, wildlife, plants, people and pets.

We hope that the contest and exhibit will increase public awareness of how much our natural areas enrich our lives, and how important it is to preserve them. A \$200 prize will be awarded for Best in Show, and up to four \$100 Awards of Excellence will be presented for the next most outstanding photographs. Additional Awards of Merit will be presented at the discretion of the contest juror, Laurence Parent.

Deadline for entering photos is July 21st. The exhibition in the San Marcos Activity Center Walkers Gallery will run September 5 through October 31, 2008, with an awards reception on the opening night.

More information can be found at <http://hcphotoclub.org/naturescapes.html>.

Tree Folks Benefit Tree Sale

MARCH 1, 9:00 AM TO 1:00 PM
Sunset Valley Farmers' Market, Austin

Hundreds of native shade and ornamental trees in various sizes and hundreds of bare root fruit trees.

Arborists and foresters will answer all of your tree questions and give out free copies of their new, full-color "Tree Growing Guide for Central Texas". Delivery service will be available in case you buy more than you can fit in your car!

Wimberley Butterfly Watch

Butterfly diversity and numbers began to increase in the second half of February with the appearance of the first flowering shrubs. Texas Mountain Laurel and Hill Country Redbuds are just coming into bloom: Eastern Tiger Swallowtails can't be far behind.

	2-10	11-20	21-29
Pipeline Swallowtail			x
Black Swallowtail		x	x
Checkered White			
Southern Dogface	x		x
Cloudless Sulphur	x		x
Little Yellow			x
Sleepy Orange	x	x	x
Dainty Sulphur	x	x	x
Great Purple H'streak	x		x
Dusky Blue Groundstrk			x
Henry's Elfin			x
Juniper Hairstreak		x	x
Gray Hairstreak	x	x	x
Reakirt's Blue			x
American Snout		x	
Gulf Fritillary	x		x
Variiegated Fritillary	x	x	
Red Admiral	x	x	x
American Lady	x	x	x
Painted Lady			x
Common Buckeye			
Northern Cloudywing			x
Juvenal's Duskywing			x
Checkered Skipper	x	x	x
Fiery 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 – txforestservice.tamu.edu/
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – www.usace.army.mil/
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – www.fws.gov/
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Partners

Austin Nature Day -- <http://www.austinnatureday.org/>
 LBJ Wildflower Center -- <http://www.wildflower.org>
 San Marcos Nature Centre -- <http://www.smgreenbelt.org>