

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

April, 2009

April 2009 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, April 16th at St. Stephens Episcopal Church, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. The church is located at 6000 FM3237 in Wimberley. A map is available [here](#). The meeting is open to members and the public.

If you have any questions or items for the agenda, please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org, or 512-517-3111, by April 13th.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23rd, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. The meeting will be held at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit at 301 Hays Country Acres Road, which is about 2.5 miles east of Dripping Springs on Hwy 290. A map is available [here](#).

The speaker will be Scott Gardner who has been the Manager of the C.L. Browning Ranch for the past six years and has devoted his career to the promotion of stewardship in the central Texas ecosystem. A graduate of Texas State University with a B.S – Geography degree in Natural Resource Management, his job on the Browning Ranch involves the development of methodologies that analyze scientific information in a manner that provides a useful base of knowledge from which to build a sound model for land stewardship in the Texas Hill Country and elsewhere.

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at the chapter meeting or suggestions for topics/speakers, please contact Ben Adair, vp@haysmn.org, or 512-773-3668.



A Naturalist's View

This month we hear from Larry Calvert, the Chapter Treasurer.

I am the Hays County Master Naturalist Chapter Treasurer. I had the good fortune to assume this position from Winifred Simon who had done a super job for years prior to my replacing her. I'll have to admit there is not a lot of glamour or "field" Master Naturalist work that's part of the assignment, but I have a new appreciation for how this office integrates with all of the other committee work. I

Board of Directors

President	Dixie Camp
Vice President	Ben Adair
Secretary	Mary Arizpe
Treasurer	Larry Calvert
Past-President	Dale Shively
State Representative	Tom Watson
Training Committee	Mimi Boelter
Advanced Training Comm.	Betty Finley
Membership Committee	Beth Ramey
Web Master	Herb Smith
Newsletter Committee	Art Arizpe
& Editor	news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	Susan Nenney
Host Committee	Jean McMeans
Historian	Dorothy Knight
Volunteer Service	Walt Krudop
AgriLife Agent	TBD
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam

think it is important as Treasurer to enable the committee work.

My wife, Linda, and I were invited to Chapter meetings prior to enrolling in a class. At the time we were Houstonians that visited our property often. We've owned our property since 1995 and it had an Ag exemption when we bought it. The chapter visit encouraged us to switch to a wildlife exemption. We thought that with Master Naturalist training we would be able to maintain the wildlife exemption better. It wasn't until we moved here full-time in 2005 that we were able to enroll in the class. We are both members of the 2006 Falcon class.

I'm retired and this allows me to spend lots of my time applying my Master Naturalist skills to our place. The training has been invaluable in guiding our stewardship. Our property is typical of the Hill Country and has many erosion "opportunities". Because of this natural need, I have focused much of my attention on erosion control and riparian restoration. Next most interesting to me are the varied habitat enhancement opportunities that exist around our place.

Last year I had the opportunity to be on the Training Committee for the 2008 class. It was lots of fun working closely with other Master Naturalists and helping the class find the joy of being a Master Naturalist. In addition to the committee and officer-

type work my volunteer work has been quite varied. It includes water monitoring, building and using a Brown-Headed Cow Bird trap, trail construction and maintenance, weather monitoring, feral hog trapping, and some landscaping projects.

One of the truly unique learning opportunities I have enjoyed are the Training Class site visits. We took advantage of most of the ones offered with our class. It was after a few, that I started to see that there was so much more that could be learned in the field. Seeing how others were applying their skills also gave me ideas for how to better do Master Naturalist work. This learning was amplified when as part of the Training Committee I went on all of the site visits with last year's class. We have the good fortune to live among a whole neighborhood of Master Naturalists so we often do site visits of sorts while visiting with them. I strongly endorse any opportunity you have to see how others apply their skills as a way to hone your skills and have more fun doing it.

- Larry Calvert



Featured Project

Worm-Wrangling, Project #801 *EmilyAnn Theatre Earth Day,* *Project #602*

The Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) caterpillar starts life as a tiny, pin-head sized egg, and hatches out about 3-5 days later. For the next 10-15 days, the caterpillar will eat constantly, grow exponentially, and then pupate or turn into a chrysalis. The adult butterfly emerges about 10 days later and will live for about 3-5 weeks.

This month's featured projects are the related Worm-Wrangling and EmilyAnn Theatre Earth Day. These projects are a partnership between the HCMN, Wild-Connections Butterfly Farm and Nature Center, and the EmilyAnn Theatre.

Karen Hulene Bartell is our chapter contact. Karen was in the 2005 HCMN class and has a doctoral degree in Environmental Geography from Texas State University. Karen is also a founder of the Texas *H₂Oasis* (www.texasH2oasis.org), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, whose goals include providing environmental education, restoring and managing land and water resources and creating animal and wildlife refuges.

Wild-Connections, which opened in 2004, is a 56 acre farm dedicated to educating children about the wonders of nature. Julie Goodin is the owner and

she holds the Worm-Wrangling event in the farm's main house which contains the education facility, gift shop and office and is also the original homestead cabin, built in the 1860s. You can find out more about them at their web site: www.wild-connections.com.

The EmilyAnn Theater sponsors the Annual Butterfly Festival. The Festival is in its 11th year and will be held on April 18th. You can find out more at this page: www.emilyann.org/butterflyday.htm.



A Painted Lady, photo courtesy Wikipedia.

This year's Earth Day Event marks the fourth that the chapter has held in conjunction with the EmilyAnn Butterfly Festival. Karen started the event in 2006 and as she was looking for a place to hold the event, Ann Rolling graciously invited the chapter to join the EmilyAnn Butterfly Festival.

The HCMN involvement has grown to include the annual Worm Wrangling, the Grassland area at EmilyAnn, and, of course, the Earth Day event. The event includes the rain simulator demonstration, seed-ball-making demonstrations, the Nature Walk and children's coloring of butterfly pictures. This gives the HCMN a presence in the community, providing enormous opportunities for outreach to answer questions and invite people to join our organization. About 5,000 people attended last year.

Worm-Wrangling consists of preparing about 1800 Painted Lady caterpillars for their metamorphosis into butterflies just in time for the Butterfly Festival. A heaping teaspoon of food is applied to the sides of a small plastic cup and then a single caterpillar is placed into each cup. The Wrangling is done entirely by volunteers and the HCMNs are a key factor.

The food is an artificial diet, consisting of mallow and other plant ingredients. It takes a total of 4 kilograms to feed the 1800 caterpillars. The Painted

Lady is one of the few species that does really well on an artificial diet which is the main reason for using them in the project.



Julie Goodin demonstrates cup preparation.

After the Wrangling, the cups are placed in small cages, about 20 per cage, and distributed to area classrooms, allowing the students to observe the caterpillar's daily growth and eventual transformation.



HCMNs preparing cups.

The cages then go to the EmilyAnn Theatre and are released at the Festival, throughout the day, at about 30 minute intervals.

This year's Worm-Wrangling is past, but the Earth Day event is upcoming. Please contact [Karen Hulene Bartell](mailto:Karen.Hulene@haysmn.org), 512-894-0105, if you are interested in helping.

Chapter News

Training Committee

The Speaker Contact position is still open. This is a good opportunity to help train a new group of Master Naturalists and to work with a great team! Please refer to the [Operating Handbook](#) for a description of this position and contact [Mimi Boelter](#) if you are interested.

Class March Schedule

April 7	Lutheran Church	Texas/Hill Country Weather Identifying Hill Country Birds & Habitat	Troy Kimmel Dr. Don Connell
April 21	Freeman Ranch 4:00-9:30	Nature Walk 4-6:00 - range management, water, Impact of Man, Interpretation & Land Management	TBA
April ~ Sept	Hays County	Site Visit Classes: Rangeland Management & Stewardship	Agri-Life Ext. Agent, Ann Connell, Diane Spicer

March Chapter Meeting

The March Chapter meeting was cancelled due to a scheduling problem. Please watch this space and your email for details on the next meeting.

HaysMN Forum

With spring here, recent entries ask whether the purple martins have arrived, spotting of screech owls, monarchs and mourning cloaks.

To join the HaysMN Forum, simply go to the haysmn.org web site and look for the Forum application in the menu.

Please let Herb Smith, web@haysmn.org, know if you have any questions or suggestions. Better yet, use the Forum to discuss the Forum.

Reporting Reminder

Reports for March 2009 are due by April 7th. Please submit your reports of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours by using the friendly report forms at www.haysmn.org.

Newsletter Items

Have you read a good book lately? Submit a short review and share with the chapter! Have some neat photos of a volunteer or training activity? Let us see them! Do you have news about yourself or another HCMN? Send it in!

Please send your comments, news items, and photos to news@haysmn.org.



Members News

Ray Franklin

After the much-needed March rain, HCMN Ray Franklin was interviewed again for an article and video segment on KEYE 42, an Austin TV station. If you missed it, the March newsletter has links to his first interview.

Ray provides an update on the recent rain and its effect on his rainwater collection system.

You can read the full article [here](#). The video segment is available [here](#).

Thanks to Ray for raising awareness of the problem and representing the Master Naturalists!

Margaret Baker



Photo courtesy Jackie Mattice.

HCMN Margaret Baker is shown above at a Wimberley Outdoor Educators learning station helping WISD students. The Wimberley Outdoor Educators partner with the HCMN and the Texas Stream Team. Their goal is to expose every child in the WISD to the natural outdoor locations in the Wimberley area.



Calendar

(The dragonfly logo identifies official HCMN events)

San Marcos Nature Center

The San Marcos Nature Center is holding their annual Wildflower Festival on April 18th. Please contact Julie Hulbert King, the Nature Center Coordinator, 512-393-8448, for more information.

Hill Country Alliance

"Water Resources and Related Issues for the Texas Hill Country" by Raymond Slade -

Monday, April 6 at 7:00pm in Austin.
The Texas Hill Country bounds vast areas of natural beauty and natural attractions which includes abundant wildlife, rolling hills and valleys, caverns, and wooded areas. Additionally, the area is rich in history and diverse culture, and contains an abundance of springs, beautiful streams, and clear groundwater. The beauty and value of this area are drawing many visitors and much urban development to the area—development which greatly threatens the vulnerable resources that define the beauty and value of the Hill Country. [Details](#)

Water 2.0: New Ideas for a Secure Water Future. Join The Environmental Defence Fund Friday, April 17th in Austin to explore innovative ways to keep our water supply viable into the foreseeable future. Don't miss this one!! [Find out more](#)



Advanced Training Opportunities

Know the Hill Country Grasses – Introduction to Identifying Local Grasses

This workshop is approved for 7 hours of advanced training.

Want to know those native grasses that you encounter along the highways, in the fields, and in your flowerbeds? This class will help you identify the more common grasses of the Hill Country in the vicinity of Austin and surrounding towns. You will be introduced to the typifying features of grasses, economically the most important of plant families. You will learn how to use structural features to analyze and identify local species and how to distinguish grasses from similar plant families, such as the Rushes and Sedges. This will

be a lecture (only ca. 1 1/2 hr) and field class in which you get hands on experience while enjoying the great outdoors. For those who have deeper interest in identifying grasses, this class will provide an introduction to material emphasizing the spring grasses. This fall a second class will follow for attendees of the spring class in which the grasses of the fall season will be covered.

Class Date and Time: Saturday, April 25, from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm (1 hour off for lunch)

***Note: in case the class fills, another will be offered on the following Sunday, April 26th given sufficient enrollment.

Class Location: Austin Water Utilities' Water Quality Protection Land in northern Hays County approximately 30 minutes from downtown Austin accessed from FM 967. A detailed map will be sent upon registration.

To Register: Email Cappy Smith, cappy.smith@ci.austin.tx.us or call 512-263-6437. Class is limited to 15 adults and you must pre-register by April 15th. Please include: Participant Name, Email, Weekend Phone Number.

Initial registration is being offered to Wildland Conservation Division (WCD) volunteer land stewards, property guides, and volunteers with the Hays County Master Naturalist group until April 10th at which time it will be offered to a wider audience. Those interested should respond promptly.

What to Bring: a sack lunch & drink, drinking water, and a pencil & notepad. A loop (2 or three folding lenses – 10X) will be handy. Radio Shack has the best loop for the money, costing about \$8 if you want to purchase one there otherwise you may order from scientific supply houses online. Also if you have a copy of "Grasses of the Texas Hill Country" by Loflin & Loflin please bring it with you so you can get some practice using the book and learn to use it more efficiently. The loop and grass book are NOT required but they will enhance your learning experience.

This class is sponsored by Hays County Master Naturalists and Wildlands Conservation Division of Austin Water Utilities and conducted by Tom Watson, a retired Botanist, Master Naturalist, and WCD Land Steward.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

The following is approved for 4 hours of advanced training.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center will be training volunteers to help in its on-site Research Area studies, where plots are burned or mowed at different times of the year to examine the effects on plant communities. Participants will learn to identify plants and estimate the percentages of different species of plants occurring in the research plots. Every experience level is welcome. The 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 work at least two four-hour field sessions. Training is optional for those who have volunteered in the past.

Training is available on any day between Wednesday, April 15 and Saturday April 18. Training on Wednesday or Friday will be from 2 till 6pm, on Thursday or Saturday from 9am till 1pm. Surveys will begin on Tuesday, April 21 and continue Tuesdays through Saturdays until completed, usually about three weeks. Volunteers can choose to work on morning (9am to 1 pm) or afternoon (2 to 6 pm) shifts, or work all day. This will be the first opportunity for volunteers to work on spring surveys since 2006. We are looking forward to examining the ecological condition resulting from the latest round of burning and mowing, coupled with an extreme drought.

For more information, or to sign up for one of the training sessions, contact Holly Zafian at hzafian@wildflower.org or call 512-232-0109.

Wimberley Earth Day Celebration

Master Naturalists who attend the Wimberley Earth Day Celebration on April 18th and take the guided Nature Walk will receive 1 hour advanced training.

Wildfires, Wildlands, and You – A Free Community Event

The following is approved for 4 hours advanced training.

This event will be held on April 4th, from 11 am to 3 pm at the Austin Nature and Science Center in Zilker Park.

Blaze a trail to this family-friendly event to answer your burning questions about wildfire and what you can do to protect your home from wildfire.

Participate in a variety of lectures, demonstrations, and information stations to learn more about these

issues. Hear lectures about the latest research on wildfires and wildfire protection, wildfire ecology, and the Wildland Urban Interface. Take part in a home ignition zone evaluation and learn how simple changes around the home can make a big difference in protecting it. Experts will discuss Firewise landscaping choices. Meet wildland firefighters and see first-hand the specialized equipment needed to fight wildland fires.

Please contact Cappy Smith, Conservation Program Coordinator, City of Austin- Wildland Conservation Division, 512-263-6437, for more info.

Conservation in the 21st Century

This lecture is approved for 1.5 hours of advanced training.

The 11th Annual Grosvenor Distinguished Lecture will be held at 7:30pm on Tuesday, April 7th, in the Evans Auditorium on the Texas State University campus. This year's lecture, "Conservation in the 21st Century," will be given by Patrick F. Noonan, founder and Chairman Emeritus of The Conservation Fund, former President of The Nature Conservancy, and Vice Chairman of the National Geographic Education Foundation.

Judy A. Behrens
Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education
Texas Alliance for Geographic Education
Texas State University-San Marcos
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666
512-245-1823 (phone)
512-245-1653 (fax)

Wildland Conservation Educational Events

Onion Creek Exploration (Water Quality Protection Lands) **4 Hour Advanced Training**

Date and Time: Saturday, April 4, 9 am to 1 pm
Location: Near intersection of FM 967 and FM 1626.
Directions sent upon [registration](#).

Description: This 4-hour guided hike will explore the highs and the lows of Onion Creek, with a focus on the riparian areas and karst features. Onion Creek never fails to amaze people, whether it is running with water or displaying its geology with a dry creek bed. Participants will learn about our prescribed burning program and our efforts to restore the creek side woodlands. This hike will proceed at a moderate pace and does not follow a specific trail, but rather a cross-country route anchored by

specific points of interest. Participants should be in good physical shape to keep up with group. For ages 18 and up. Limited to 20 individuals.

Vireo Habitat Through Time (Balcones Canyonlands Preserve) **2.5 Hours Advanced Training**
Date and Time: Sunday, April 5, 8am to 10:30 am
Location: Near intersection of Pascal Lane and Loop 360. Directions sent upon [registration](#).

Description: While long considered a birder's paradise, this preserve has something for both the novice naturalist and the expert. Vireo preserve's unique history has marked its landscape in interesting ways. Guides will discuss the preserve's history and how it is expressed in today's natural communities. This hike will pass through rich shrublands, golden-cheeked warbler habitat, and grassy hillsides while offering some of the best scenic views of Austin. For ages 12 and up.

A Morning with the Birds of the BCP (Balcones Canyonlands Preserve) **3 Hours Advanced Training**
Date and Time: Saturday, April 11, 8 am to 11 am
Location: Near intersection of FM 2222 and Jester Blvd. Directions sent upon [registration](#).

Description: Join this early morning birding hike on some of the more remote areas of the BCP. Bring your binoculars and be ready to hike over some rugged terrain. You may even catch a glance of the endangered golden-cheeked warbler, which will be nesting at this time. Our expert guides will discuss the features which make this property exemplary warbler habitat. For ages 15 and up. Limited to 15 individuals.

Wildflower Walk (Water Quality Protection Lands) **2 Hours Advanced Training**
Date and Time: Saturday, April 11, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Location: Near intersection of Slaughter Lane and FM 1826. Directions sent upon [registration](#).
Description: If each spring you wonder what the name of our local spring-blooming plants are, this hike is for you. Tom Watson, a retired botanist, will guide you along a beautiful section of Slaughter Creek, on one of the City of Austin 's Water Quality Protection Lands. While discovering and learning how to identify a wide array of native grasses, shrubs, wildflowers and trees growing along the creek, participants might hear a red-tailed hawk hunting nearby and enjoy the calming sounds of the flowing creek. For ages 18 and up. Limited to 20 participants.

Canyonland Habitats (Balcones Canyonlands Preserve)
Date and Time: Saturday, April 18, 8 am to 10 am **2 Hours Advanced Training**

Location: Near intersection of FM 2222 and Loop 360. Directions sent upon [registration](#).
Description: Enjoy an introduction to the ecology and management of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve during this hike in habitat golden-cheeked warblers utilize for breeding in the spring and summer. The trail has some sloped segments and a few scrambles over boulders but is overall an easy loop in mostly shaded canopy. For ages 12 and up.

To register:

www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/onlineregistration/ecowebevents.cfm.

Earth Day Hike at the Spring Lake Preserve

The following is approved for 2 hours advanced training.

Earth Day Hike at the Spring Lake Preserve
10 a.m. to Noon, April 25, 2009
Texas Rivers Center, 921 Aquarena Springs Drive,
San Marcos, TX 78666

Hike is sponsored by the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance and will be led by Master Naturalists concluding in time to visit the Earth Day exhibits at the Aquarena Center.

<http://www.smgreenbelt.org/SMNaturalAreas.htm#SpringLake>

<http://www.aquarena.txstate.edu/RSI/Earth-Day.html>

About 251 acres of undeveloped parkland that sits just above the headwaters of the San Marcos River. About half of the property is in the Edwards Aquifer Recharge zone, and all of the property is part of the Sink Creek watershed. San Marcos Springs and Spring Lake are rare ecological jewels among Texas water resources and support 5 endangered species. The area supported ranching and hunting for many years, but has recently been left largely undisturbed with the exception of some natural-surface trails. Spring Lake Preserve contains the typical meadows and woodlands found in the Edwards Plateau, with a wide variety of flora and fauna, including Mexican buckeye and large mammals.



Volunteer Opportunities

Wildland Conservation

Wildfire Wildlands and You education event

Date and Time: Saturday April 4, from 11am to 3pm

Location: Austin Nature and Science Center , 301 Nature Center Dr .

Description: Wildfire, Wildlands and You is an all ages community event designed to raise awareness of wildland fires in the wildland urban interface. We need numerous volunteers for activities too varied to mention here. Some involve staffing children's activities while others center around adult education. Click [HERE](#) for more information. To volunteer contact daniel.dietz@ci.austin.tx.us or call 263-6443.

Sowing native grass seeds at Tabor Tract

Date and Time: Sunday April 5 from 1pm to 4:30pm.

Location: Near intersection of Bliss Spillar and FM 1626 in Manchaca. Directions will be sent upon registration.

Description: Help us sow native savanna grass seeds on the 175 acres that we burned in March. Yippee for native savanna systems and for optimizing the water quality and quantity over the aquifer recharge zone! To volunteer contact daniel.dietz@ci.austin.tx.us or call 263-6443.

Chimney swift tower construction

Date and Time: It's a two step process; choose one or both of these times Saturday April 11, 8:30am to 12:30pm AND/OR Sunday April 12, 11am to 4pm.

Location: Reicher Ranch, near intersection of RR 620 and HWY 71 in Bee Caves . Directions sent upon registration.

Description: We are installing a chimney swift tower at our Reicher Ranch office complex and could use your assistance in getting it off the ground. Click [HERE](#) for more information. To volunteer contact daniel.dietz@ci.austin.tx.us or call 263-6443.

Juniper removal (Savanna Grassland Maintenance) – Slaughter

Date and Time: Saturday April 18, TWO SHIFTS, come for both or one... 9am to 12:30pm and 1pm to 4pm.

Location: Slaughter Creek tract, near intersection of Slaughter Ln and FM 1826 in SW Travis County. Directions will be sent upon registration.

Description: Earth Day volunteer activity! Help us maintain a native open savanna by removing small juniper saplings which are beginning to grow in this area. Click [HERE](#) for more information. To volunteer contact daniel.dietz@ci.austin.tx.us or call 263-6443.

[Staffing booth at Earth Day festival](#)

Date and Time: Saturday April 18. Choose one of two shifts 8:30 to noon or noon to 3:30

Location: Republic Park in downtown Austin

Description: Help staff our booth at the Earth Day festival. Show our watershed model to both children and adults to show how important our wildlands are to our water quality. Training for the watershed model will be provided on the day of the event. Click [HERE](#) for more information. To volunteer contact daniel.dietz@ci.austin.tx.us or call 263-6443.

[Sowing native grass seeds at Tabor Tract](#)

Date and Time: TWO MORE DATES, choose one or both. Sun April 19 from 9am to 12:30pm, Sat April 25 from 9am to 12:30pm

Location: Near intersection of Bliss Spillar and FM 1626 in Manchaca. Directions will be sent upon registration.

Description: Help us sow native savanna grass seeds on the 175 acres that we burned in March. Yippee for native savanna systems and for optimizing the water quality and quantity over the aquifer recharge zone! To volunteer contact daniel.dietz@ci.austin.tx.us or call 263-6443.

San Marcos Nature Center

Hi everyone!

A few times a year we get requests for field trips from an entire grade level at the public schools. So, that means about 150 kids! We have a request from a second grade class and a kindergarten class to come out to the nature center. About 75 kids would be here at a time, and then the next group of 75 kids would come. I'm trying to set up several stations so that the kids can

rotate through in relatively small groups. The kindergarten class would like to come out on April 24, from 9:00am to 2:00pm, and the second grade class would like to visit on May 5 at about the same time. Please let me know if you would like to help or if you'd like to teach at a station. Even though these groups are somewhat beyond our staffing ability, we really would like to expose as many kids as possible to conservation ideals and environmental education! I'll buy lunch!!!

Thanks,

Julie Hulbert King

San Marcos Nature Center Coordinator

City of San Marcos Parks and Recreation

Office: 512-393-8448

Cell: 512-738-1247

Please Note New Email: jking@sanmarcostx.gov



State and National News

Texas Master Naturalist Program Hits 1 Million Service Hours

The Texas Master Naturalist program has reached 1 million volunteer service hours. This major milestone marks the 10th anniversary of the program, which began in Texas but has since given rise to a growing national movement. The Texas Master Naturalist program began in 1998 as a joint effort between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service (formerly Texas Cooperative Extension) to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and areas within communities throughout the state. The program provides an opportunity for concerned adult citizens of all ages to learn about the natural environment and seek ways to better their communities.

The 1 million hours of service were achieved by more than 5,306 volunteers in 39 recognized local chapters throughout Texas. In the past 10 years during which these service hours were achieved, Texas Master Naturalists were on hand to help with resource recovery after natural catastrophes such as hurricanes and droughts. Volunteers were also ready to serve when the economy took a turn for the worse, making the value of their donated time even more precious.

The monetary worth of the 1 million hours of service is valued at approximately \$19.58 million. In addition, the impact of the Texas Master Naturalist volunteers has been seen in more than 90,000 acres of land across Texas.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
NestWatch Program

Got Nest Boxes? If you do, you have a front-row seat on the miracle of birth and renewal in the bird world. If you don't, now is the time to set one up. You can also help scientists learn more about bird families and how they might be affected by climate change.

You're invited to **register your nest box** (or boxes) with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's [NestWatch](#) program (www.RegisterYourNestbox.org). It won't cost you a thing but it does yield valuable information about breeding birds and how their natural rhythms may be changing.



Local News

5th Annual Naturescapes
Photography Contest

Calling all photographers! Here's your chance to share your creativity and to showcase the natural beauty of Hays County.

The 5th Annual Naturescapes Photography Contest and Exhibition, sponsored by the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance and the Hill Country Photography Club is accepting entries starting April 1st. The deadline is July 6th. More information is available here: hcphotoclub.org/naturescapes.html.

Disaster Declaration

"Hays County Judge Liz Sumter's office has issued a disaster declaration due to the severe drought that county officials say has had a major economic impact on the county's agriculture. The declaration is the first step in the process to request assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture."

"Like much of the state, we're in a severe drought situation that shows no sign of dissipating soon and our agricultural producers are facing a difficult economic situation because of it," Sumter said. "This declaration paves the way for Governor (Rick Perry's) Office to declare Hays County an agricultural disaster area and request aid for agricultural producers from the USDA in the form of low-interest loans."

The full article is available [here](#).

- Austin Business Journal



Links to Chapter Sponsors and Partners

Sponsors:

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

Agencies of Interest:

Bamberger Ranch -- bambergerranch.org
Native Plant Society of Texas -- www.npsot.org
San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance -- www.smgreenbelt.org
San Marcos River Foundation -- www.sanmarcosriver.org
Texas Outdoor Women's Network -- 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 -- www.nrcs.usda.gov
Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority -- www.gbra.org

Partners

Austin Nature Day -- www.austinnatureday.org
LBJ Wildflower Center -- www.wildflower.org
San Marcos Nature Center -- www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature_Center.html
Gorge Preservation Society -- www.canyongorge.org