

# Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

April, 2011

## Chapter Events

### *Chapter Board Meeting*

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, at the Camp Jacob Watershed Education Center at the Jacob's Well Natural Area, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. 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 Jeff Vasgaard, [pres@haysmn.org](mailto:pres@haysmn.org), by April 5<sup>th</sup>.

### *Chapter Meeting*

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, at the AgriLife Extension Office, 1253 Civic Center Loop in San Marcos. A map is available [here](#).

## **BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ!!!**

This month's speaker is Jack Neff, Director of the Central Texas Melittological Institute. His presentation will be on native bees in Central Texas.

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at the chapter meeting or suggestions for topics/speakers, please contact Brad Krimmel, [vp@haysmn.org](mailto:vp@haysmn.org).



## **A Naturalist's View**

*Mary Arizpe has served as Chapter Secretary and is currently the Advanced Training Committee Chair.*

I'm not a birder, but I know there are several very experienced bird experts in the chapter. I'm always impressed by their knowledge and ability to identify birds from a verbal description. This month's chapter meeting gave me a chance to expand my limited bird knowledge.

Charles Irvine discussed Whooping Cranes and the environmental challenges they face. I was aware of Whooping Cranes being an endangered species, but beyond that my knowledge was sparse. Charles helped fill it in. I learned they are large birds, standing nearly 5 feet tall. It was interesting to hear that they mate for life and once mated, the pair is rarely more than 50 feet from each other. They typically raise one chick at a time. I also learned about their diet and

### *Board of Directors*

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their population trends and the environmental threats they face. All this is in a little over an hour's time and I earned AT credit!

I remember being overwhelmed by the amount of material covered in the Training Class. There is just so much to learn! The chapter's AT opportunities provide a way to refresh our initial training and to continue to learn.

The chapter's goal is to provide a variety of AT opportunities at our meetings to make it easy to achieve your 8 hour annual requirement. The AT Committee also reviews and approves AT opportunities offered by other organizations.

As the AT Committee Chair, I think it would be good to review the process for obtaining approval for non-chapter training. First, all AT must be pre-approved. You can find the request form on the chapter [web page](#). We use several criteria when reviewing the request. Does the opportunity promote continued learning and development of MN skills? Does it provide knowledge and skills needed to work on volunteer projects? Does it provide an opportunity to focus interests in a specific topic? Does it build on the core curriculum covered during the training class? Does it provide information on natural resource management issues applicable to Texas?

If you have any questions about this or need help in determining the eligibility of an AT opportunity, please feel free to email me at [atcom@haysmn.org](mailto:atcom@haysmn.org).



## Featured Project

### *EmilyAnn Theatre Project #602*

Located in Wimberley, the EmilyAnn Theater was founded by Ann and Norm Rolling in 1998 to celebrate the life of their daughter who was killed in a car accident. They held the first Butterfly Festival and released 3 butterflies that year. Each year since, the Festival has grown and this year over 2,500 Painted Lady butterflies will be released. You can learn more about the history of the EmilyAnn Theatre at their [web page](#).

In 2005, our chapter helped prepare caterpillars for the Festival. In 2006, Karen Hulene Bartell applied for and received approval to create a formal chapter project at the EmilyAnn Theatre. Melinda Seib, who is also on the EmilyAnn Theatre's Board of Directors, is now our chapter contact for the project. Melinda was in the Class of 2009 and is a professional artist. She has owned land in Hays County since 1987. She became interested in HCMN after a fire swept through her property and destroyed 90% of her trees. She called the Ag Extension service for help and met several HCMNs.

The project has grown in scope since then and now includes several activities associated with the Butterfly Festival:

- **Caterpillar Camp**
- **Cages for Classrooms**

- **Butterfly Festival**

Caterpillar Camp includes an hour of Advanced Training, in which volunteers learn about the life cycle of butterflies, their caterpillar's diet, and learn how to handle and prepare the caterpillars so they can grow and become butterflies. In 2010, the Caterpillar Camp team prepared over 2000 caterpillars and placed them into cages.

Last year, the Cages for Classrooms team delivered 40 cages to pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. They also made presentations to 800-1000 students on the life cycle of butterflies and the care of the caterpillars. In addition, 67 cages were delivered to individuals and other groups throughout Hays County, reaching over 100 adults and children. These cages provided awareness, education, and outreach to the public.

At the Butterfly Festival / Earth Day Event, volunteers work at the HCMN booth, where they operate the rainfall, aquifer, and watershed simulators, hand out brochures, answer questions about joining MNs, take contact info, demonstrate how to make seed balls, and help setup/tear-down the booth. Volunteers also conduct nature hikes along the EmilyAnn trails, for the public and advanced training hours for MNs, and to provide education and outreach to the public.

The Prairie Restoration project is a year-round activity and provides several more volunteer hour opportunities including trail building and selective clearing to promote grasses, plant and animal species identification, and creating signs to promote public education. The Prairie Restoration is a long-term effort and it will be exciting to see it progressing.

The Butterfly Festival is on April 16<sup>th</sup>, so please contact Melinda Seib, [mjseib@msn.com](mailto:mjseib@msn.com), if you'd like to help or learn more about this project.



*Dr. Chris Nice explains the butterfly life cycle at Caterpillar Camp. Photo by Art Arizpe.*



*Preparing caterpillars. Photo by Art Arizpe.*



*HCMN Booth at the Butterfly Festival. Photo by Melinda Seib.*



## Chapter News

### *7<sup>th</sup> Annual Naturescapes Photography Contest and Exhibition*

Get your cameras ready! The chapter is joining the [Hill Country Photography Club](#) in sponsoring the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Naturescapes Photography Contest and Exhibition.

The unique beauty of the natural areas within San Marcos inspired the first Naturescapes Photography Contest. The contest now includes photographs taken in greenspaces and natural areas throughout Hays County.

Goals of the contest and exhibit include increasing public awareness of the importance of protecting our natural world and giving photographers at all levels of experience a chance to capture, share, and receive recognition for beautiful and inspiring images. Suggested subjects include natural scenery, wildlife, plants, and people and pets in the natural environment.

Entries will be accepted starting May 1<sup>st</sup>. Visit the contest web page, <http://hcphotoclub.org/naturescapes.html> to learn more.

### *Hays County Invaders*

It was a full classroom on February 26<sup>th</sup> at the Hays County Extension Office when Travis Gallo taught the Texas Invasives class with a little help from Minnette Marr from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Twenty-four of the 30 students were Master Naturalists, ready and willing to learn more about the non-native plants that are becoming invasive. New with this class was an introduction to invasive insects and animals that are threatening the balance of the Hill County ecosystem. The local satellite of the state program is called the Hays County Invaders.

Students learned to identify the plants, document them and enter the data into a database that is accessible nationally and tracks the spread of the invasives. Hays County Master Naturalists were introduced to invasives by Tom Watson who worked to document and remove chinaberry trees at the Onion Creek properties of the Austin Water Quality Protection Lands.

Only one month later and students have already recorded 118 observations and logged 19.6 volunteer hours. Several are involved in work around the county to remove the invasives, including major projects with the San Marcos River Foundation and the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance.



*Sean Welch, almost overwhelmed by Elephant Ears. Photo by Lance Jones.*

Sean Welch, Judy Burdett and Leah Laszewski spent the morning of March 19<sup>th</sup> removing alligator weed, water hyacinth and elephant ears near the Rio Vista section of the San Marcos River. Working from shore and in canoes and kayaks they collected enough bins to fill the bed of a pickup truck to overflowing.

Dick McBride, Charles and Vicky Maxcy and Lance Jones prepared for a major invasive removal in conjunction with a Bobcat Build at the Lower Purgatory Natural Area. Texas State will involve students in community projects on April 9<sup>th</sup> around San Marcos. Minnette Marr, HCMN and a local resident and plant conservationist, assisted the Greenbelt Alliance with planning for the workday. Directed by stewardship committee chair, Charles O'Neil, the process included recording invasive *ligustrum* (glossy privet), establishing photo points to document before and after records and replacement native plants.

Both projects combine the knowledge learned from the Master Naturalist program, the Texas Invasive class and guidance from professionals. The desired result in both projects is an improvement to both the quantity and quality of the water, improved recreational opportunities and education of the public about the dangers of invasives.



*At the end of a long morning. Photo by Lance Jones.*



*Minnette Marr, planning the attack. Photo by Lance Jones.*

- Lance Jones

## *On the Trail*

### **Canyon Lake Gorge Field Trip for MN Trainees**

Sh-h-h! Canyon Lake Gorge has been described as "one of the best kept secrets of the Lone Star State" and Central Texas' Master Naturalists might like to keep it that way! The Independence Day flash flood of 2002 resulted in an oak and cedar covered valley located adjacent to the Canyon Lake spillway being stripped of all soil and vegetation. In a matter of weeks, the power of raging water created the mile-long gorge that usually takes nature eons to make. That bittersweet moment when lives were threatened, people panicked, and homes were destroyed, is now transformed into a bucolic setting with ponds, waterfalls, exposed dinosaur tracks, fossil remains, and delicate limestone formations. It is a natural geologic wonder worthy of anyone's most-spellbinding list.

On March 20<sup>th</sup> HCMN trainees and their guests donned Reeboks and hiking boots for an eye-popping, mouth-gaping, Sunday afternoon of shock and awe. Most attendees were seeing the

gorge for the first time and were astounded by the mind-boggling beauty. They couldn't stop clicking cameras and continued to grapple for just the right words. Here's what some of them had to say:

**Sara Ryan:** The biggest surprise was the size of the gorge. The amount of earth that was moved in the area that we explored was unbelievable. To be able to see "underground" springs unveiled was fascinating and to understand the geology of how many are present resulting in the cave formations. To be able to see the layers of the earth beneath us was fascinating to see first-hand.

**Eva Gomez:** I truly enjoyed the tour. It was amazing being that close to the rock formations and surrounded by the natural beauty of the area. The guides were very knowledgeable and seemed to enjoy conducting the tour. I liked how the route was laid out. You walked a little then stopped and had a discussion about interesting points of that area. The guide would explain the hows and whys of different spots along the gorge. It was wonderful experiencing such a natural beautiful area that is right in our backyard. I plan to tell everyone about the Canyon Gorge and the great tour that is available for all to enjoy. The pictures don't do justice to the natural beauty but they come close!



*Looking for fossils at the Gorge. Photo by Lucille Kirkham.*

**Marilyn Brister:** The trip showed the power of nature. We could see the fractures, faults, and fossils and imagine how the ground under us might be. It helped me visualize the aquifer and how the plants that grow on it relate to what is underneath the surface of the ground. We had a wonderful, knowledgeable guide. Thank goodness it was a cloudy day. I was a little concerned about how strenuous it would be, but I made it just fine.

**Susan Kimmel-Lines:** Two thoughts wandered through my mind as we hiked through the Canyon Gorge. One was from a PBS television advertising campaign that first appeared in 2000 and reminded us to, *"Stay Curious."* The second was a quote by the English poet, William Wordsworth, reminding us to *"Let Nature be your teacher."* Surely there is no better place to put both of these quotes to use than at the Gorge. Every turn and drop in the elevation offered a different perspective of the awesome power of the water flooding the land, gouging the bedrock and stripping the soil, uncovering the traces, the fossils and footprints of the ancient creatures and the ancient landscape.

**Jean McMeans** (Training Committee): I find it so interesting to watch the change in the plant life each year. When I first went in 2005, the area was still very desolate. Now, there are many more plants - some good; some invasive. The experience that you get going from the top to the bottom is very different from going from the bottom to the top. It is an amazing location that really demonstrates the power of water.

**Ruth Freeman** (Guest): The Canyon Gorge field tour was an awesome example of the natural forces of water, exposing 150 million years of history. Our enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide, **Jaime Kinscherff**, made the historical tour through the ages a fascinating trip, examining minuscule sea life to the dinosaur tracks and new plant vegetation since the 2002 flood event. It was a memorable experience and well worth the trip.

**Linda Webb** (Class of 2006): Our guide **Jaime** dedicated the day's tour to **Dr. Bill Ward** who had been an inspiration to him personally and a devoted geologist to the area before his recent death. This was my second trip to the Gorge and I enjoyed it every bit as much as the first. Those in the "other" group also appreciated their wonderful guide **Barry Brupbacher**.

- Lucille Trail Kirkham

### *Alarm on Lone Man Creek*

Ginger Geist reports a recent incident on Lone Man Creek, which turned out well, but was a cause for concern until it was resolved.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, a neighbor spotted 20 or so dead fish at the first low water crossing upstream of the dam on Lone Man Creek. He contacted Louis Parks who took the first photo and forwarded the event onto more neighbors. Several other HCMNs live on this stretch of the creek, so they jumped into action.



*Dead catfish in Lone Man Creek. Photo by Louis Parks.*



*Stephen Twidwell taking a water sample.*

That evening they emailed Gordon Linam who contacted Stephen Twidwell who is a Pollution Biologist with the TPWD [Kills and Spills Team](#). Stephen responded the next morning and collected a few fish to review in his lab. He also conducted field measurements on the creek water. The water quality report showed no problems.

Based on existing information of no catfish in that section of Lone Man Creek, Stephen deduced it was stocking or dumping. As 2 B&B renters walked by, they added that they had seen a man and boy dump what looked like dead catfish off the dam into the creek over the weekend.

Gordon says it is not legal for individuals to stock fish into Texas public waters. (Guess that's dead or alive).

### *March Chapter Meeting*

Charles Irvine is an environmental attorney involved in litigation to protect the Whooping Cranes at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The Whooping Cranes spend their winters at the Refuge and the current litigation concerns the fresh water flows into the bays surrounding the crane habitat and their impact on the cranes food supply and population. Charles also has a background in conservation biology so he is uniquely qualified in this area.

His talk was titled "Environmental Challenges Facing Whooping Cranes" and covered the whooping crane characteristics, behavior, diet, migration and history relating to their endangered status. Whooping cranes are large birds, standing nearly 5 feet tall, they mate for life, are territorial, and make a twice-a-year migration of about 2400 miles through a 70 mile-wide corridor between Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada and the Texas coast.

In 1800, there were approximately 1500 cranes in the world, all in North America. By 1941, due mainly to wetland loss, hunting, and egg collecting their numbers had declined to 21. Due to conservation efforts and being now protected, the population at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge now numbers about 290.

### *Activities at Jacob's Well Natural Area*

Tom Toporowski of the Wimberley Birding Society will host a Birding Walk at the Jacob's Well Natural Area on Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am. Advanced Training approval is pending so watch your email for the official announcement.

### *Chapter Host Committee*

The Chapter's Host Committee Chair is still open. Perhaps you would be interested in serving on or chairing this committee. Please contact Jeff Vasgaard, [pres@haysmn.org](mailto:pres@haysmn.org).

You may find a description of this committee in the [Chapter Operating Handbook](#), Section B, on our web page.

### *HaysMN Forum*

The forum is a great learning resource. Be sure to check it out. To join the HaysMN Forum, simply go to the [haysmn.org](http://haysmn.org) web site and look for the Forum application in the menu.

Please let Herb Smith, [web@haysmn.org](mailto: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 2011 are due by April 7<sup>th</sup>. Please submit your reports of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours by using the friendly report forms at [www.haysmn.org](http://www.haysmn.org).

As a reminder, 8 hours of Advanced Training and 40 hours of Volunteer work are required each year to recertify. You have until the end of the year to complete these hours.

If you are uncertain about your status, please contact Beth Ramey, [hourshaysmn@gmail.com](mailto:hourshaysmn@gmail.com), and she can send you a report.

### *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](mailto:news@haysmn.org).

### **Members News**

#### *Tom Hausler*

The wildlife around the water trough has been busy. With no water in the creeks I get a good variety of wildlife every night. Nightly visitors include raccoons, Gray Fox, Ringtail Cats, deer, possum and a surprise now and then.



*Ringtail. Photo by Tom Hausler.*



*This section is your opportunity to update the chapter about what you've been doing. Perhaps you went on an interesting field trip and took some nice photos; basically, anything you'd like to share.*

Please send your news items to [news@haysmn.org](mailto:news@haysmn.org).



## **Advanced Training Opportunities**

*Butterfly Festival Nature Walk*

*Project 602, EmilyAnn Theatre*

**Saturday, April 16th:** Advanced Training at the EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly Festival – Approved for 1 hour.

**Opportunity:** Nature Walk at the EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly Festival.

For more information, contact Melinda Seib at 830-833-4852 or [mjseib@msn.com](mailto:mjseib@msn.com), or Mimi Boelter at 830-833-4235 or [mboelter@txwinet.com](mailto:mboelter@txwinet.com)

### *Texas Invasives Class in New Braunfels*

More people signed up for the Hays County class on February 26<sup>th</sup> than there were seats available.

It's being offered in May in New Braunfels. More info at [http://www.texasinvasives.org/invaders/workshop\\_results.php](http://www.texasinvasives.org/invaders/workshop_results.php)

**Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup>:** Comal County Invaders

**Location:** Comal County Extension Office, 325 Resource Drive (New Braunfels, TX)

**Trainer:** Travis Gallo

**Time:** 9am - 4pm

**Notes:** Please bring GPS and digital camera if available.

**Local Host:** Diane Schaule/Comal County Invaders



## Volunteer Opportunities

### *Butterfly Festival*

### *Project 602, EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens*

**Saturday, April 16th:** HCMN Volunteer Project 602 (EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly Festival/Earth Day) – up to 6 hours.

**Opportunity:** Two shifts are available: 9:30am to 12:30pm and 12:30pm to 3:30pm, for both the demonstrations and the booth duty.

**Demonstrations:** Rainfall Simulator, Watershed Model, Aquifer Model

**Booth Duty:** Talk to people about the Master Naturalist program, take contact info, and help set-up or tear-down the booth.

For more information, contact Melinda Seib at 830-833-4852 or [mjseib@msn.com](mailto:mjseib@msn.com), or Mimi Boelter at 830-833-4235 or [mboelter@txwinet.com](mailto:mboelter@txwinet.com)

### *Wildflower Center Vegetation Surveys*

### *Project 406*

The Wildflower Center will be conducting our spring vegetation surveys this April and, as usual, we need a lot of help. It's a great way to learn to identify our central Texas plants, spend time with fellow nature enthusiasts, and to contribute to some important research in the process.

Some of you have volunteered for surveys in the past, but for those who have not, we will be examining the effects of different land management strategies (prescribed fire, mowing) on the plant community. Every experience level is welcome and we work in small teams, with staff members nearby at all times. We encourage new participants to attend one three-hour training class and commit to at least two field sessions.

If you would like to volunteer, just let me know which training and/or work sessions you would like to attend. We meet in the volunteer room in the Administration building at the start of each work or training session. For a map of the Wildflower center go to <http://www.wildflower.org/map/>

Surveys will begin Tuesday 04/12/11 and will run Tuesdays through Saturdays until we are finished, usually 2.5 to 3 weeks. Morning shifts are 9:00-1:00 and afternoon shifts are 2:00-6:00.

If you are interested in attending a training session, the schedule is below:

04/1: 1:00-4:00

04/2: 9:00-12:00

We will provide plant identification guidebooks, pencils, water, snacks and kneeling pads. You may want to bring/wear long pants, closed toed shoes, water bottle, sunscreen/insect

repellent, hand lens, knee pads or a portable stool.

Let me know if you have any questions and I hope to hear from you all!

Unfortunately our training week is already underway, so it's unlikely many of your members will be able to do a training session. However, we are happy to have master naturalists on the survey even without a training session. I apologize for the tardiness of the announcement.

Michelle

Michelle Bertelsen  
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## State and National News

### *Video: Two Mountain Lions in Big Bend*

The [Texas Wild Network](#) has a nice amateur video of two mountain lions in Big Bend. You may see the video [here](#).



## Local News

### *LCRA Drought Information Page*

LCRA has created a Web page to provide easy access to information and an e-newsletter to provide the latest drought news. The Web page includes many helpful drought and weather-related links, as well as current lake levels and forecasts for lakes Travis and Buchanan, the region's water supply reservoirs. It can be viewed at [www.LCRA.org/droughtupdate](http://www.LCRA.org/droughtupdate). You can also sign up for the e-newsletter on that page.



## Links to Chapter Sponsors and Partners

### *Sponsors:*

Texas Master Naturalist -- State Website -- [masternaturalist.tamu.edu](http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu)  
Texas AgriLife Extension -- [texasextension.tamu.edu](http://texasextension.tamu.edu)  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department -- [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/)

### *Agencies of Interest:*

Bamberger Ranch -- [bambergerranch.org](http://bambergerranch.org)  
Native Plant Society of Texas -- [www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org)  
San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance -- [www.smgreenbelt.org](http://www.smgreenbelt.org)

San Marcos River Foundation -- [www.sanmarcosriver.org](http://www.sanmarcosriver.org)  
Texas Outdoor Women's Network -- [www.townsanmarcos.org](http://www.townsanmarcos.org)  
Texas Cooperative Extension -- Sea Grant Program -- [texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu](http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu)  
Texas Forest Service -- [txforestservice.tamu.edu](http://txforestservice.tamu.edu)  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -- [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -- [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)  
U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service -- [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)  
Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority -- [www.gbra.org](http://www.gbra.org)

### *Partners*

Austin Nature Day -- [www.austinnatureday.org](http://www.austinnatureday.org)  
LBJ Wildflower Center -- [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)  
San Marcos Nature Center -- [www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature\\_Center.html](http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature_Center.html)  
Gorge Preservation Society -- [www.canyongorge.org](http://www.canyongorge.org)