

# Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

August, 2009

## August 2009 Events

### Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at the Camp Jacob Watershed Education Center at Jacob's Well Natural Area, from 7:00 to 9:00 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 Dixie Camp, [pres@haysmn.org](mailto:pres@haysmn.org), or 512-517-3111, by August 6<sup>th</sup>.

### Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, at the San Marcos Nature Center. The center is located at 430 Riverside Drive in San Marcos. A map is available [here](#). The speaker will be Kelly Eby, an urban forester for the city of New Braunfels. Kelly will do a tree talk and ID walk at the center.

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](mailto:vp@haysmn.org), or 512-773-3668.



## A Naturalist's View

*This month we hear from Walt Krudop, the Chapter head of Volunteer Projects.*

My journey with the Master Naturalists started back in 2000. My wife, Cindy, and I bought our property in Dripping Springs in 1996, and visited it and the Hill Country frequently after that.

In 2000 we went to a home and garden show in San Marcos and there was Billy Kniffen with a Master Naturalist booth and the ever present rainfall simulator. After talking with Billy and learning about the Master Naturalists we were convinced that the MN was something we wanted to be part of.

We knew nothing about the Hill Country ecology and natural resource stewardship but were convinced we needed to know much more to responsibly live and build on our property. We were part of the 2001 class and as we were still living in Houston we traveled to San Marcos for every class except the one on 9/11. We had left Houston not knowing of

## Board of Directors

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<b>TP&amp;WD Rep</b>	Lee Ann Linam

the tragedy in NYC and after hearing the news on the radio we turned around and headed home.

Volunteer work and training kept us busy that year and since we frequently arrived early at the Extension office for the training classes, we often cooked dinner for the class. Cindy and I worked at the Parks and Wildlife Expo that year and met Michelle Haggerty, the state MN program director.

After chatting with her about my background in conflict resolution and organizational development at Shell Oil, Michelle asked if I would be willing to serve on the MN State Advisory Committee. My membership continues on the committee to this day.

My role on this committee has involved a variety of interesting activities such as conflict resolution training, reviewing applications of new chapters, coordinating and drafting the model governance documents for chapters such as the articles of incorporation and bylaws and chairing the exemplary projects sessions at the annual meetings for a number of years.

Back at home, our experience and training at the MN became the foundation for our development and building in Dripping Springs, significantly impacting work such as selective removal of trees, cultivation of native grasses and planting of native flora as well

as the decision to use rainwater harvesting as our sole source of water.

The following year, I joined the Training Committee and was privileged to work with Joe Piazza, a long time super committed leader of the committee, and other hard working members of the committee. For a number of years, I was the videographer, videotaping the class training sessions and coordinating the speaker evaluation process.

Lately, I've been handling the volunteer project coordination for the chapter. It's an interesting job reviewing proposed projects and keeping the project list current.

While working with the Training Committee I took on another project of tracking rainfall across the county. The project was initially begun to teach trainees that collecting rainfall data is important in itself but also important as a naturalist tool recording natural resource phenomenon. The project continues and the results are regularly posted on the chapter website and there are currently about forty chapter members and trainees reporting data on a monthly basis.

Recently, as a result of a recommendation from Brian Davis, I was asked by Karen Ford, our county commissioner, to serve on a Hays County water conservation working group with the goal of "Within ten years we will see rainwater as an ordinary and common potable water supply source, and we will see ALL water supplies used efficiently and conservatively within our county."

The working group is in the early stages and we are looking forward to providing incentives and reducing barriers to the use of rainwater harvesting in the near future.

And where does the future take me on this MN journey? I really don't know but I can tell you that the role that the MN program plays in the natural resource community in Texas is vital to the future and I will continue to help where ever I can.

- Walt Krudop



## Featured Project

### *Hays County Rainfall Project, Project #803*

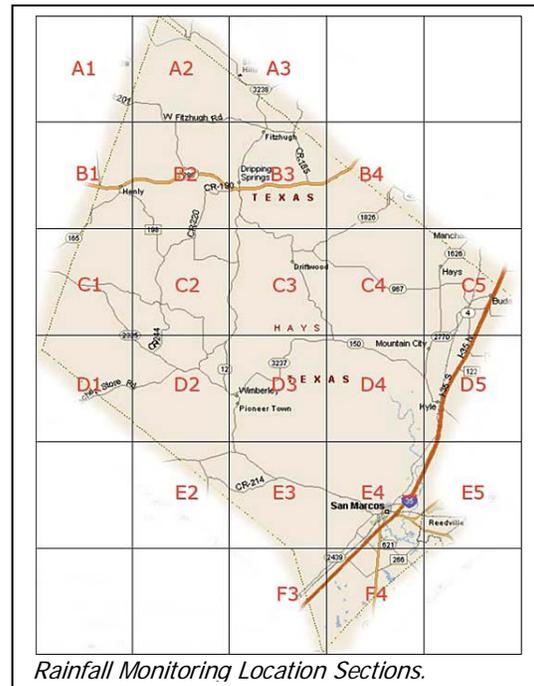
In 2005, our Chapter initiated a project to track and record the rainfall across Hays County. There has been anecdotal information that the rainfall in the

southeast part of the county was higher than the northwest part and we are interested in whether actual data would confirm the observation.

The project is coordinated by Walt Krudop, the head of Volunteer Projects for the Chapter.

Each year, trainees receive rain gauges, provided by the Pedernales Electric Cooperative, during class. In this manner, monitoring stations have been established across the county.

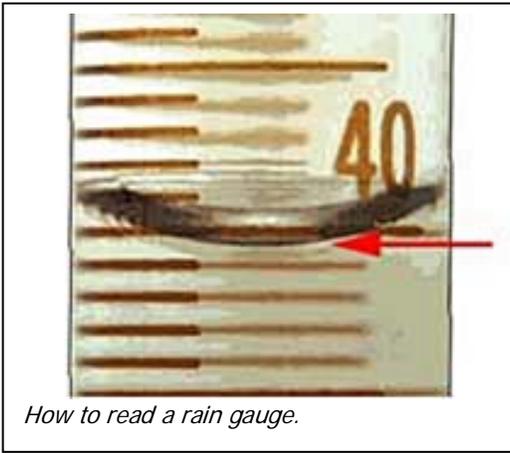
The location of these stations is plotted within the county and data is summarized in thirty five sections, each approximately six miles wide by seven miles high.



Data is collected on a monthly basis and shown in a color coded chart indicating the amount of rainfall in each section. There are currently about 40 chapter members and trainees reporting data on a regular basis.

In addition to the data for each month, a composite page shows the data for each month of the year on a single annual page.

The rainfall data is available on the project's web page, accessible from our chapter's web page. You can find the data [here](#).



*How to read a rain gauge.*

Please make sure you are reading the gauge correctly. As water fills up the measuring tube, a curved surface is formed called a meniscus. This meniscus is formed by the surface tension of a liquid in contact with the sides of the tube. Always read the base of the meniscus when taking measurements.

Please participate in the data gathering! The more monitoring stations we have, the more accurate our view of the rainfall distribution across the county.

Report your total rainfall for each month within the first week of the following month to [Walt Krudop](#) or use the online Rainfall Reporting Form on the project's web page. The composite chart for all months in the year will be available on this page around the 10th day of each month.

- Walt Krudop

## Chapter News

### *New Head of Chapter Historian Committee*

**Dale Shively**, our chapter's Past-President has accepted the position as head of the Chapter Historian Committee.

In addition, HCMNs **Lance Jones**, **Charles Maxcy**, and **Andy Quittner** have signed up to help Dale with the committee's activities.

The Historian committee maintains the historical records of the chapter. Historical records include but are not limited to: Training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, and Chapter Newsletter archives. Also included is keeping track of the chapter's tax info and files, photos, and compiling a scrapbook.

Many thanks to Dale and the committee; please support them in their new role.

## *July Chapter Meeting*

The Chapter meeting was held on July 30<sup>th</sup> with a very good turnout. We were treated to an interesting and engaging talk by Dr. Laurence Meissner of Concordia University Texas on "Central Texas in the Ice Age". The main topic of discussion was his work at the Friesenhahn Cave, near Bulverde. Make sure you visit the cave's web page, [here](#), for more information.



*Dr. Meissner reviews the Central Texas Ice Age environment. Photo by Art Arizpe.*

Dr. Meissner described the Central Texas environment during the late Pleistocene, about 10-20 thousand years ago. The climate was colder and drier than today, the vegetation consisted mostly of grasslands with scattered trees, and the dominant animals were large mammals.

Large mammals whose fossils have been found in the cave include the Columbian Mammoth, the American Mastodon, the Saber-toothed Cat, the Dire Wolf, the American Bison, and the Short-Faced Bear.

Friesenhahn Cave has the distinction of yielding the only complete specimen of Saber-toothed Cat ever found.

In addition, the cave contains fossils of many smaller animals such as mice, voles, lemmings, gophers, turtles and tortoises. Over forty genera of animals have been found. Caves provide a unique environment for the preservation of fossils because they offer protection from weather and light. Most of the bones found are not mineralized and may offer DNA samples.

For all the richness of fossils in the Cave, it is not very large, being smaller than the room in which we met, about 60 feet long by 30 feet wide, with a 10 foot ceiling.



*Saber-toothed Cat (Dinobastis serus) excavated at the cave. Photo courtesy of Concordia.*

Dr. Meissner has been leading the work at the cave for 13 years. Most of it is site-preparation – getting the floor down to an undisturbed layer, so the serious excavation can begin. Sample bores indicate the floor is at least 30 feet deep.

Currently, the Alamo and Lindheimer Master Naturalist chapters provide help at the site and it may be possible for our chapter to help too.

### *Class August Schedule*

<i>Ch. #</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Speaker</i>
15 5	Aug 11	Holy Spirit	Wildlife, Mammals & Habitat  Urbanization & Land Fragmentation	Dr. Baccus  Todd Snelgrove
	Aug 22 Field Trip	LBJ Wildflower Center	Green roofs, native plants, seeds, prairies & restoration	Minette Marr

### *Horned Lizard Update*

I would like to express my thanks to everyone who responded to the plea for food for "Spike," a Texas horned lizard temporarily in residence in Wimberley.



*The infamous Spike. Photo by Lee Ann Linam.*

While I don't normally keep a horned lizard in captivity, I used Spike for about a week in June to train some volunteers in DNA sampling techniques. He also made a very popular appearance at the summer reading program at the Wimberley Village Library.

However, I ran into a little trouble when Spike ate all the food I brought home for him. Texas horned lizards feed almost exclusively on harvester ants in the genus *Pogonomyrmex*, (people also call them big red ants). Harvester ant mounds are characterized by a round, cleared opening 3'-6' in diameter, usually with a single entry hole. When I put out a plea for the locations of harvester ant mounds in the county, we discovered that, while people often report finding the huge, complex mounds of leaf-cutter ants (genus *Atta*), people know of very few active harvester ant mounds in the county any more. I did manage to collect a few harvesters from a single mound that I was invited to visit in the Martindale area and did hear of a few other possibilities, when Dale Shively came to the rescue.



*A Harvester Ant Bed. Photo by Lee Ann Linam.*

Dale had been working out of Port Mansfield and checking his emails, when he looked down at his feet to find himself surrounded by harvester ant beds. When he found out I still needed them, he obtained a Styrofoam cooler and collected several hundred ants and then transported them several hundred miles for Spike. We made the exchange in a parking lot in New Braunfels, with a warning from Dale that the ants, which were previously on the bottom of the cooler, now seemed to have all climbed to the lid. My daughter discovered this for herself, when she peeked into the cooler, only to have a dozen ants escape into the Honda CRV, including one which found a hiding place on the bottom of her thigh!



*A Harvester Ant. Photo by Ann Mayo.*

The ending of the story turned out well for Spike, who enjoyed chilled ants the next several days (refrigeration made them easier for me and him to handle!), before he returned to his native habitat in Bastrop county. On the other hand, I wish we'd found more harvester ants in Hays county. Harvesters can decline for several reasons, including red imported fire ant aggression and human aggression to ants in the form of baits. If you know of any areas in the county that support large numbers of harvester ants, I'd be interested in hearing about it ([leeann.linam@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:leeann.linam@tpwd.state.tx.us)), and, above all, if you're lucky enough to have them, treat them kindly, for the sake of Spike and all his kind!

- Lee Ann Linam

### *A Guide to Freshwater Ecology*

Ginger Geist recommends "A Guide to Freshwater Ecology" as a must-have for all MNs.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has issued a revised publication, "A Guide to Freshwater Ecology", GI-034 (revised).

It's a manual to familiarize individuals with the freshwater environment. This 136-page document can be viewed online (it takes a while to download) at this link: <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/files/gi-034.pdf> [4510661.pdf](http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/files/gi-4510661.pdf).

You may request one free print copy by going to [http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/comm\\_exec/forms\\_pubs/order.html](http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/comm_exec/forms_pubs/order.html) and following the directions. The publication number is GI-034.

### *HaysMN Forum*

Posting has been light on the forum. Perhaps the heat is keeping activity down.

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 July 2009 are due by August 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).

### *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 Selected Certified Forest Steward*

Congratulations to **Tom Hausler**, who was selected by the Texas Forest Service as a Certified Forest Steward for the work completed on his property in Hays County!



Tom's display sign showing the certification. Photo by Tom Hausler.

The Certified Forest Steward program was created to identify and recognize landowners that have implemented key portions of their Forest Stewardship management plan within the past five years. The Texas Forest Service established this program to recognize landowners that manage their land according to sound Stewardship principles.

The program brochure is available [here](#).

### *HCMN's Images Selected For Naturescapes Exhibition*

Congratulations to HCMNs **Art Arizpe, Randy Lenz, Winifred Simon, and Herb Smith**, who each had images accepted for the exhibition.

The Naturescapes contest and exhibition are cosponsored by the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance and Hill Country Photography Club.

Herb Smith, the contest coordinator, reports that the contest was very competitive, with 65 images selected from a record 222 entries by juror Greg Lasley.

Awards will be announced at the opening reception on September 4th. The exhibition will be on display at the San Marcos Activity Center through October 30, 2009.

Make sure you drop by and enjoy the beautiful and inspiring images of our natural areas.

## *Birding News*



Golden-Cheeked Warbler. Photo by Tom Hausler.

**Tom Hausler** reports that on July 4th he saw a Golden-Cheeked Warbler on his water pond.

The photo was shot from about 30 feet away with a Sony DSC-H7 with a Tele Conversion Lens. The warbler was around the yard for a few hours.



## **Calendar**

### *Rainwater Harvest Seminar at Cibolo Nature Center*

**Saturday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, Boerne  
9:00am-12:00pm**

#### **CNC Auditorium and visit to Kight Installation**

John Kight, engineer and rainwater catchment owner, gives the latest technological information and the most practical advice. Learn about design and materials from someone who has done it himself! The Kight home with no well or outside water source is in a traditional development. Their system comfortably supplies delicious water for all household and landscape needs.

CNC Members \$20/person & \$30/couple; non-members \$30/person & \$40/couple.

**Pre-registration required.** Call 830-249-4616. Limit: 30.



### **Advanced Training Opportunities**

*Please watch your email for notices about upcoming Advanced Training Opportunities.*



## Volunteer Opportunities

### *Elephant Ear Removal*

**Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>**

**4:00pm-7:00pm**

**Hays MN Project #408**

The unique and critical habitat of Spring Lake requires a carefully managed habitat conservation program. Volunteers meet the first and third Wednesday of each month to remove the invasive Elephant Ear plant that grows along the banks of the lake. Work begins at 4pm.

For more information, contact Leah Laszewski ([laszewski@yahoo.com](mailto:laszewski@yahoo.com)).

### *Hyacinth Removal*

**Saturday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**9:00am-12:00pm**

**Hays MN Project #408**

The unique and critical habitat of Spring Lake requires a carefully managed habitat conservation program. The San Marcos River Foundation works with Aquarena to provide regular water hyacinth removal the 4th Saturday of every month. Volunteers meet at the Wetlands nursery at 9 AM and work until about noon.

For more information e-mail Diane Wassenich ([wassenich@grandecom.net](mailto:wassenich@grandecom.net)).



## State and National News

### *Texas Teacher Wins National Award*

(Boerne, TX) Cibolo Nature Center children's education coordinator, Mary Gomillion, won a Nature Education Achievement Award from the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History.

The national award will be presented on August 13<sup>th</sup> at a ceremony in Jamestown, NY. Mary will be recognized for her outstanding work with the nature center's Outdoor Classroom, a program teaching conservation of natural resources to K-8 schoolchildren.

Roger Tory Peterson was one of the preeminent naturalists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, author of numerous Peterson's field guides, and a steadfast promoter of environmental education. Considered the "nation's nature center," the Peterson Institute seeks out and

recognizes the work of outdoor educators who are following in his footsteps.

Mary, a former public school biology teacher who believes that "every subject can be taught outside," also received special recognition in the form of the Blanche Hornbeck citation, which places her in the top tier of the award recipients. Hornbeck was Peterson's seventh grade teacher and is credited with encouraging him to explore the world around him. Mary will attend the award ceremony accompanied by her family and says that she is "very excited to represent the Cibolo Nature Center at the national level."

For information about the Cibolo Nature Center please visit [www.cibolo.org](http://www.cibolo.org). The Cibolo Nature Center is located on 100 acres of green space in Boerne, Texas. The organization's mission is conservation of natural resources through education and stewardship. The Cibolo Nature Center is located in Boerne City Park off Highway 46 just west of the Kendall County Fairgrounds.

Contact: Georgia Galey, 830-249-4616

### *It's Now Legal to Catch a Raindrop in Colorado*

From the NY Times –

DURANGO, Colo. — For the first time since territorial days, rain will be free for the catching here, as more and more thirsty states part ways with one of the most entrenched codes of the West. Precipitation, every last drop or flake, was assigned ownership from the moment it fell in many Western states, making scofflaws of people who scooped rainfall from their own gutters. Read full NY Times article [here](#).

## Local News

### *W/W Extension Update - Trail Considerations*

It is getting a little easier to stand and watch the construction of Wonder World Drive Extension at the fence that bisects the trail in Purgatory Creek Park. It helps to know that the trail will be reconnected under the flyway once construction is complete in April 2010; appreciating the amount of heavy truck traffic that won't have to traverse the downtown areas helps too. But what really makes it easy to stomach is the anticipation of having a trail route connecting Purgatory Creek Park to Hunter Road as part of the current construction plans.

A few months ago city council member Gaylord Bose brought forward the trail request SMGA has supported since the idea of the extension was first considered. If you see Gaylord give him a big hug and thank all the council members for supporting the change order.

SMGA members have been working with city staff and the engineering contractor KBR to consider all possible alignments, materials and other details. The location is prone to flash floods. The final corridor is yet to be determined pending approvals for the crossings of the right-of-way by TXDoT. The plan will include construction of a parking area under the shade near the beginning of the new road section at Hunter. Be sure to voice your support and gratitude whenever possible to our city leaders.

Putting that trail segment in place may someday connect the park directly to the San Marcos River. SMGA has long supported getting a trail, or at least a trail corridor, between the river and Purgatory Creek. It is in the transportation master plan, and we hope it is in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan currently being updated. We are working to one day have a branch of the new trail follow the creek underneath Hunter Road as part of its reconstruction. It takes vigilance. Sherwood Bishop, an SMGA board member and chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission, has helped by encouraging developers along the creek to leave room for the trail and to back away from what we all know is a flood prone area.

Kudos go out to Laurie Moyer, Assistant City Manager, Sabas Avila city engineer overseeing the current trail project, and Mike Sexton with KBR the engineering contractor.

- SMGA



## **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)