

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

December, 2009

December 2009 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, December 10th 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, or 512-517-3111, by December 7th.

Chapter Meeting

There is no chapter meeting in December. We hope to see you again at the next meeting on January 28th, 2010. Please watch your email for details.

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at the chapter meeting or suggestions for topics/speakers, please contact Tom Hausler, vp@haysmn.org, or 512-858-1015.

Have a happy New Year!



A Naturalist's View

This month we hear from Art Arizpe, the Chapter Newsletter Committee Chair and Editor.

One of my favorite tasks when working on the newsletter is writing the article for the featured project. I choose the projects on a semi-random basis, but my intent is to provide some publicity and exposure for each project and to inform the HCMNs about the many volunteer opportunities available to them.

Over the course of the year, we've covered a dozen varied and unique projects. For each one, I learned a bit about the people leading it, and their backgrounds, interests and motivation. It's a real treat to work with each project leader and their enthusiasm is contagious. I've also learned about each project's goals and objectives and how each activity supports the Master Naturalist mission.

The chapter is very lucky to have so many dedicated people willing to contribute the extra effort required to organize and lead each project.

Board of Directors

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

It's clear that the chapter is involved in many diverse activities and they all provide plenty of opportunities for obtaining volunteer hours. The projects are of all sorts and sizes. Some are large and highly organized. Others are small and informal. Some activities happen at regular times during the month and others as needed. It's nice to have so many choices when looking for volunteer opportunities and to be able to find one that fits your interests and schedule.

I want to thank everyone that has helped with getting each newsletter issue out. Contributions have included columns, articles, photos, interviews, etc. Your help is invaluable and makes each issue better by providing better coverage than I could alone.

I know you are all very busy, but please keep the newsletter in mind as you go about your chapter activities. Drop me a short note or a set of photos after your next site visit, field trip, class, or work project. Don't worry about the grammar or wording – I can help you with that part. What's really useful is to share your experience with the chapter.

- Art Arizpe



Featured Project

Jacob's Well Natural Area, Project #603

Once considered a sacred area by the Native Americans, Jacob's Well is a natural spring and is believed to be the longest underwater cave in Texas. It is the primary source of water for Cypress Creek which flows through Woodcreek and Wimberley and then into the Blanco River.

WVWA, is also a coordinator. You can find out more about the WVWA at their [web page](#).

Jeff Vasgaard is the HCMN contact for the project. Jeff was in the class of 2009 and has an Agricultural Engineering and Materials Science background. He lives near the area and has been a frequent visitor. This led to a natural interest and earlier this year, when he learned that part of a recent county grant to the area was based on having public access and outreach, he proposed and received approval for a chapter project that would support those objectives.



Jacob's Well. The bubbles are from two scuba divers. Photo by Art Arizpe.

The Jacob's Well Natural Area is located at 221 Woodacre Dr. in Wimberley. The Natural Area consists of 55 acres owned and managed by the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association. A map is available [here](#).

The WVWA is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the region's water quality and quantity by promoting sustainable watershed management through education, conservation, and land protection. Matt Heinemann is the Program Director of the Jacob's Well Natural Area and is a coordinator for this project for the WVWA. Barbara Atwell,

In October, to support the public education and outreach goals, the center and trails opened to the public on Saturdays, from 10 am to 12 noon. Initial outreach efforts include tours of the center and trails, guided by volunteer docents. The docents discuss the importance of habitat restoration and native species, the aquifer and water conservation, and what people can do to have a positive impact on the area.



Downstream along Cypress Creek. Photo by Art Arizpe.

HCMNs have met several times with the WWA coordinators to develop a docent training plan. The HCMNs participating so far are Jeff, Margaret Baker, Karen Langridge, Jackie Mattice, Becky Northcut, and Andy Quittner. Each HCMN has been assigned a project to research and develop such as plants & habitat, geology, aquifer, history & native inhabitants. HCMNs are needed to serve as docents and the formal tours start in December.

HCMNs can also participate in habitat restoration which involves removal of impervious ground cover (which is mostly complete) and identifying and marking native plant and wildlife for the benefit of the public. HCMNs are also needed to identify and manage the invasive species and to help develop a long-term habitat management plan.



Jeff Vasgaard working on a trail. Photo by Art Arizpe.

Other activities at the center include science and research. There is on-going research and exploration of the well, monitoring of water quantity and quality, and studying the effects of land development on the well and aquifer. There is a USGS monitor station at Jacob's Well. You can see the real-time data [here](#).

For recreation goals, the center has public campsites, trails, and managed access to the well.

There are many volunteer opportunities open to HCMNs at this interesting and unique natural area. This is a great chance to have a direct impact on the area's water quality and help protect this invaluable natural resource. Please contact Jeff Vasgaard, jvasgaard@verizon.net, if you are interested in helping at Jacob's Well.



Chapter News

Class of 2009 Graduation and Gala

The Class of 2009 Graduation and Gala was held on November 20th at the Wimberley Community Center.

The Gala was a rousing success, combining the 2009 Class Graduation and the regular Chapter Gala. The event was well-attended with a lively social time, a great dinner, the graduation, chapter award presentation and election of officers.

Mimi Boelter led the graduation ceremony as each graduate walked on stage to receive his or her certificate, shirt, mug and pin. Congratulations to the Class of 2009, the Dire Wolves!

The Class of 2009

Deborah Bradshaw	Jack Breese
Donna Browning	Ida Bujan
Bob Burke	Trent Carmichael
Todd Derkacz	Corrine Dundon
Warren Ely	Patty Koeninger
Jaynellen Ladd	Karen Langridge
Randy Lenz	John Meeks
Al Ohm	Jean Ohm
Andy Quittner	Janaé Reneaud
Kathy Rogers	Wayne Schurter
Melinda Seib	Jeff Vasgaard
Dennis Wagner	Dwanna Zyla
Lou Zyla	



The Dire Wolves. Back row left to right: Jeff Vasgaard, Lou Zyla, Donna Browning, Karen Langridge, Melinda Seib, Deb Bradshaw, Randy Lenz, Dennis Wagner, Warren Ely, Todd Derkacz, John Meeks, Wayne Schurter. Front row left to right: Jack Breese, Al Ohm, Jean Ohm, Corinne Dundon, Janae Reneaud, Trent Carmichael, Andy Quittner. Not pictured: Jaynellen Ladd, Bob Burke, Kathy Rogers, Ida Bujan, Patty Koeninger, and Dwanna Zyla. Photo by Art Arizpe.

During the Awards segment, the Chapter recognized many members for their efforts.



Social time. Photo by Art Arizpe.

The first group to be recognized was the HCMNs who completed the recertification requirements by the date of the Gala. Recertification requires completion, during the calendar year, of at least 8 hours Advanced Training and 40 Hours Volunteer Service.

Each HCMN received the Salamander 2009 Recertification Pin.

Important: This list is incomplete because we have until the end of the calendar year to complete the requirements. These are the HCMNs that completed their recertification requirements by the date of the Gala.

2009 Recertification Awards

Ben Adair	Karen Archer
Mary Arizpe	Art Arizpe
Margaret Baker	Richard Barnett
Karen Bartell	Delbert Bassett
Mimi Boelter	Judy Burdett
Larry Calvert	Linda Calvert
Dixie Camp	Ann Connell
Betty Finley	Ray Franklin
Randy Garst	Ginger Geist
LaRay Geist	Tom Hausler
Karen Hayward	Lance Jones

Helane Kennard	Jamie Kinscherff
Brad Krimmel	Walt Krudop
Leah Laszewski	Jane Little
Sandra Lucas	Charles Maxcy
Vicki Maxcy	Jean McMeans
Susan Nenney	Beth Ramey
Marianne Reese	Dale Shively
Herb Smith	Diane Spicer
Bonnie Tull	Terry Tull
Tom Watson	Lin Weber
Cara Wernli	Susan Zimmerman

Note: Apologies to Jamie Kinscherff. Due to a clerical error, Jamie was not recognized at the Gala. His name is in the list above.



A great turnout! Photo by Lance Jones.

The next group to be recognized was the HCMNs who achieved cumulative volunteer hour milestones. Each HCMN received a Dragonfly Pin.

- 250 hours, Bronze
 - **Terry Tull**
 - **Beth Ramey**
- 500 hours, Silver
 - **Larry Calvert**
 - **Jean McMeans**
 - **Leah Laszewski**
- 1000 hours, Gold
 - **Ray Franklin**
- 2500 hours, Polished Silver
 - **Tom Watson**

Important: This list is incomplete because we have until the end of the calendar year to report volunteer hours. These are the HCMNs that achieved their milestones by the date of the Gala.

The next group received the Tenure Recognition for Outstanding Service.

- **Delbert Bassett** – 5 years (2008)
- **LaRay Geist** – 5 years (2007)
- **Ginger Geist** – 5 years (2008)
- **Ray Franklin** – 5 years (2009)

Mimi Boelter received the the 2009 Outgoing Training Committee Chair Award.

Jean McMeans received the 2009 Outstanding Volunteer Training Committee Award.



Larry Calvert receiving his award from Dixie Camp. Photo by Art Arizpe.

Larry Calvert received the 2009 Outstanding Volunteer Chapter Award.

Ray Franklin received the Significant Contributions to the Chapter Award.

Many thanks to the 2009 Graduation and Gala Committee for putting on such a great event: **Mimi Boelter, Linda Calvert, Larry Calvert, Cara Wernli, Jane Little, Susan Nenney, Jean McMeans, and Jim McMeans.**

New Officers Elected

Congratulation to the new Chapter Officers who were elected at the Gala!

The 2010 Chapter Officers are:

- President **Dixie Camp**
- Vice President **Tom Hausler**
- Secretary **Becky Northcut**
- Treasurer **Larry Calvert**

Please join us in thanking them for serving in these roles and help them in any way you can.

HCMN 2010 Chapter Dues

We have had a wonderful response to the request to pay your 2010 Master Naturalist dues for 2010 by January 1, 2010. There were a number of you that paid earlier and more paid at the Gala. (Wasn't the Gala a blast! We missed you if you were not there!). Thanks for your great response. Getting the dues in lets us budget for 2010 accurately. For those of you that missed the Gala opportunity and have not yet gotten to this task; please send a check to the following:

Please make your check out to "Hays County Master Naturalist" for \$15 and mail it to:

Larry Calvert - Treasurer
650 Red Hawk Rd.
Wimberley, TX 78676

- Larry Calvert

2010 Training Committee Chair

Jean McMeans has accepted the position of 2010 Training Committee Chair. Many thanks to Jean and please support her as she undertakes the monumental task of preparing another class of Master Naturalists.

The Application for the 2010 MN Training Class will be available on the web on December 11th.

2010 Training Committee

Please welcome next year's Training Committee:

Jean McMeans - Coordinator
Mimi Boelter - Assistant Coordinator
Karen Langridge - Speaker Contact
Leah Laszewski and Lin Weber - Registration and Attendance
Helane Kennard - Secretary
Lance Jones, Deb Bradshaw, Donna Browning - Site Visit Coordinators
Randy Garst and Tom Hausler - Logistics and Documentation
Vicki and Charles Maxcy - Meals

Chapter Committees

The Chapter's Host Committee Chair is still open. Perhaps you would be interested in serving on or chairing this committee. Please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org.

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

Financial Audit Successfully Completed

Lee Ann Linam, Mary Arizpe, and I were able to complete the audit on November 19th and we are happy to report that all is in order.

Larry, thank you for getting the information to us in a timely manner and for all your hard work throughout the year.

- Ben Adair

Outreach Contacts 2009

Event	Person	Direct outreach contacts
Earth Day	Karen Bartell	264
Property management	Gerin	1
School event	Boelter	(children) 200
Eco Day	Boelter	150
MN site visits	Boelter	137
Hill Country Water Celebration	Wernli, Little	25
Eco-Fest	Little	6
Eco-fest booth	Nenney, McMeans et.al	35
Geists*	Consultations via Extension	92
Builders Fair	Nenney, McMeans et.a.	100
TMN state meeting	Nenney, McMeans	24
TOTAL		1032

* This # does not include their direct outreach reported under #402. Also site visit #806 which Walt told us to use for the training class visits. We did two of these not included in the above numbers.

- Susan Nenney

Onion Creek WQPL, Project #426: Workday November 8th

Our work day turned out to be a soggy one. We assembled at the gate on Highway 967, ca. 5 miles East of the Salt Lick Restaurant and 3 miles East of Buda, at 8:30 am. Those volunteers attending were Art & Mary Arizpe, Deb & Nick Bradshaw, Ruben Garza, Debi Bowers, and Tom Watson.

By the time we drove from the gate to the work site on the flood plains of the creek, it had began to drizzle lightly. The work site is an area where the

Hays County Master Naturalists have been working off and on over the last four years to restore the native ecosystem (riparian habitat) which existed prior to modification for cattle ranching.

The objectives are to remove the encroaching Ashe Junipers and to plant native trees and shrubs grown from seeds collected along the creek. To date, approximately 2 acres of junipers have been felled and native plants are vigorously returning to the cleared area. Native tree saplings were planted further downstream in 2008 but survival was poor due to the extreme drought of that year.

Once at our destination, the volunteers set about the task of cutting juniper saplings that had sprung up after the larger junipers had previously been felled. Most of the crew went about downing the small saplings while Tom and Ruben took down larger trees along the stream banks and stumps that had re-sprouted in the treatment area.

Although we were able to work for only about 2 hours, all of the saplings and re-sprouted trees were removed and the crew moved down stream to fell other saplings along the floodplain. The eventual goal is to remove all Ashe Junipers along the flood plain on the North side and replacement with native shrubs and trees to restore the habitat as it may have been over 100 years ago.

While we would have liked to work longer, the intensity of the rain that ensued was such that we were soaked to the bone; however, we removed a significant amount of invasive plants. I said that as soon as we need more rain, I will schedule another workday!

- Tom Watson

HaysMN Forum

Recent postings concern more grass identification and identification of the wood-boring longhorn beetle, swarming over a mesquite.

Other discussions cover melanistic deer, and reports of fewer cardinals and other birds at feeders.

The forum is a great learning resource. Be sure to check it out.

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.



Soaked to the bone! Photo by Ruben Garza.

Reporting Reminder

Reports for November 2009 are due by December 7th. Please submit your reports of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours by using the friendly report forms at 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, 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.



Members News

This section is to provide updates to the chapter about what you've been doing. Perhaps you went on an interesting field trip and took some nice photos. Basically, anything that you'd like to share.

Please send your news items to news@haysmn.org.



Calendar

Thursday, December 10th, Chapter Board Meeting



Advanced Training Opportunities

The Sustainable Sites Initiative

December 1st from 11:30 – 1:00pm

1.5 hours of Advanced Training

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Auditorium

Cost: Free

Presented by: Steve Windhager, Ph.D.

The Sustainable Sites Initiative is an interdisciplinary effort by the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the United States Botanic Garden to create voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction and maintenance practices.

The central message of the Sustainable Sites Initiative is that any landscape—whether the site of a large subdivision, a shopping mall, a park, an abandoned rail yard, or even one home—holds the potential both to improve and regenerate the natural benefits and services provided by ecosystems in their undeveloped state. While there are existing standards for sustainable structures there are no comprehensive guidelines for those who want to create and measure sustainable landscapes. The Sustainable Sites Initiative Guidelines and Performance Benchmarks 2009 is intended to be a tool for those who design, construct, operate and maintain landscapes, including but not limited to planners, landscape architects, engineers, developers, builders, facility managers, horticulturists, governments, land stewards and organizations offering building standards.

Contact: info@sustainablesites.org for more information.

Cibolo Nature Center

140 City Park Rd.

Boerne, TX 78006 (830) 249-4616

<http://www.cibolo.org/calendar/18>

December 5th, 2009

[Winter Sparrows and Wrens workshop](#)

5.0 hours of Advanced Training

Presenter is Byron Stone, expert birder and sparrow specialist from Austin.

Time: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Location: CNC Auditorium and Park



Volunteer Opportunities

Wildland Conservation Division

[Wildland Conservation Volunteer Stewardship Days](#)

[Sowing native grass seeds at Onion Creek Management Unit](#)

[Date and Time:](#) Saturday, December 12, TWO SHIFTS, come for both or one... 9am to noon and 1pm to 4pm

Location: On FM 967 between Buda and Driftwood. Directions will be sent upon registration.

Description: Help us sow native grass seeds to aid in restoring the native savanna system which optimize the water quality and quantity over the aquifer recharge zone! Click [HERE](#) for more information and to register.

Cappy Smith
Conservation Program Coordinator
City of Austin - Wildland Conservation Division
3621 S. FM 620 Rd., Austin, TX 78738
512-972-1687 cell: 512-483-1972 fax: 512-972-1665

Barsana Dham Trail Building

Friday, December 4th, 11th, & 18th, 2009

9:00am-12:00pm

Hays MN Project #909

For more information, contact Dennis Wagner (Dennis@UnitedCountryCentralTexas.com).

Hyacinth Removal

Saturday, December 26th

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).



State and National News

A Vulnerable Landscape Karst is essence, on-going evolution of Trinity Aquifer

Many locals, if asked to describe the Kendall County terrain, would look at the horizon saying, "Well, it's hilly, of course." On the other hand, a geologist or a hydrologist might study things for a bit longer before replying, "Clearly this is a karst landscape."

- The Boerne Star

The Boerne Star has an interesting article, by Elena Tucker, about the local geology, karst, and aquifers. You can find the entire article [here](#).



Local News

LCRA Reopens the Tap as Drought Wanes

From the Hill Country Alliance: "In another signal of how much the Central Texas drought has eased, the Lower Colorado River Authority on Wednesday released customers from mandatory watering restrictions in place since August. Read the full Statesman.com article [here](#)."



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