

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

February, 2009

February 2009 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The February 5th board meeting will be held at the Wimberley First Baptist Church, 501 Old Kyle Road in Wimberley ([map](#)) from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. The meeting is open to members and the public.

If you have items for the agenda, please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org, or 512-517-3111, by February 3rd.

Chapter Meeting

The February chapter meeting is scheduled for Thursday, the 26th. The location and speaker will be announced later.

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 section has traditionally been devoted to a message from the chapter president. Starting with this issue we'll be hearing from other board members and chapter leaders, beginning with Ben.

Hope this message finds you well and ready for the upcoming year of chapter activity. As you may know, I became a Master Naturalist with the class of 2007. I sought out the education, contacts, and experiences offered through the Master Naturalists class to better understand wildlife management programs and exemption status to apply it to my church volunteer efforts.

My Master Naturalist relationships and experiences have far exceeded my expectations. I appreciate the dedication and effort the Training Committee, the Extension office, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, presenters, and the chapter have put in to creating such a rich and informative program. In 2008, I participated in chapter activities and focused on the wildlife program administration at the church.

This year, I was asked to help out in the management of the chapter. I accepted because I want to give back to a program that has done so much for the county and its communities. It is a

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

privilege that I am able to serve you this year and will strive to do my best.

This year's program topic suggestions touch on current issues, seasonal events, and field visits. I will tie in current events and issues whenever possible with chapter meeting presentations. Here is a short list of topics we will cover:

- Land Fragmentation (covered in Jan mtg.)
- Pollination
- Solar Energy
- Green building
- Biodiversity/Invasive Species (Yes, I am sure a cowbird discussion will happen!)

Field Trips under consideration include:

- Cibolo Nature Center near Boerne, TX
- Kerr Wildlife Mgmt Area
- Honey Creek WMA

Also, it may go without saying that we all look forward to the 2009 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Expo.

This is not a complete list; just a sample. We are always open to suggestions. Please contact me at vp@haysmn.org if you would like to make a suggestion or participate on the Program Committee.

- Ben Adair



Featured Project

Habitat Restoration at Aquarena, HCMN Project # 408

The beauty of a colony of Elephant Ears, *Colocasia esculenta*, along a central Texas riverbank, is undeniable. The damage they are doing, unfortunately, is also undeniable. It was their beauty that brought them here in the first place in a misguided attempt to enhance nature.

The Elephant Ears, a West Indies native, found such a welcoming environment here that they quickly became one of the worst invasive plants ever. They have no local predators and can spread at an alarming rate affecting nutrient recycling and altering delicate ecosystem structures. By drinking in a huge share of water, trapping silt and choking and shading out natives, they diminish the biological diversity of waterways and riparian areas to the point of disaster.



Volunteers with quite a haul!

This project is affiliated with the River Systems Institute at Texas State University-San Marcos. You can find more information here: [River Systems Institute](#) and [San Marcos Springs](#).

Removal of the "ears" is an ongoing project that also creates an opportunity to talk with visitors to the wetlands about non-native species and their impact. It's also a great time to promote the HCMN program! The goal is not to eliminate the ears entirely – that's considered impossible. Instead, the aim is to get control over some particularly sensitive wetlands along the boardwalk and reintroduce

appropriate native plants from the River Center Restoration Nursery such as soft rush, arrowhead, spike rush and others.

Over the years the project has had several starts and stops. The current effort began in the spring of 2007 with a group of MNs who worked twice a month from May until October.

An area along the boardwalk was thoroughly cleared by going back often and removing any new sprouts and this year it still looks pretty good. The team wants to continue monitoring that section and begin a new area, to be chosen by Ethan Chappell of Aquarena.

After a winter hiatus, the team will begin working again on March 4th and on every first and third Wednesday from 4 pm until darkness, fatigue or other responsibilities interfere. An hour or two at the end of a workday leaves Saturdays free for other pursuits and projects and over time will help to make a difference.



Ethan Chappell with a couple of large specimens.

The team is always looking for help! Training is available on-the-job and all tools, gloves etc. are provided. Footwear should be old, water proof and it will get muddy. Please email [Leah Laszewski](#) if you'd like to participate.



Chapter News

2009 Training Class

Our first class will be held at the Agri-Life Extension Office in San Marcos on February 17th. The Training Committee received 47 applications and accepted 35 into the class. The letters of acceptance were sent from the Agri-Life Office in the 3rd week of January.

The Training Committee members are excited about the number of applicants and are looking forward to

working with them to certify another group of Master Naturalists.

Training Committee

There are two openings on the Training Committee:

1. Field Trip and Site Visit Coordinator
2. Speaker Contact

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 descriptions of these positions and contact [Mimi Boelter](#) if you are interested. Thank you!

Hays CAD a Sponsor

Last year, the chapter helped the Hays County Appraisal District conduct a Wildlife Management Workshop for land owners. Kay Beth Williams was responsible for the workshop and also worked to secure a donation of \$200 to the chapter.

A chapter sponsor is defined as a donor or benefactor and is reported in our annual report to the Texas Master Naturalist state organization. These donations help the chapter financially and help promote our efforts.

Many thanks to the Kay Beth and the Hays CAD folks!

January Chapter Meeting

Dr. Jim Gallagher with the Uvalde Texas AgriLife Extension office was our guest speaker. He delivered an informative presentation on land and ownership fragmentation.

Land fragmentation refers to breaking up contiguous areas with the same land cover and land use into smaller portions. When small portions of a landscape are converted to different cover types or land uses it can increase landscape diversity and benefit some species. So although counter-intuitive, not all land fragmentation is bad.

When large amounts of a landscape are converted, however, the remaining fragments may not be large enough to support populations of plants and animals, or basic ecological functions.

Ownership fragmentation is the division of rural lands into smaller parcels that remain in rural use. Such parcels may be too small to support traditional farming, ranching and forestry uses, and often results in landscape fragmentation as well.

Fragmentation impacts can include loss of open space, localized loss of agricultural production, higher demand for public services, and a reduction in effective wildlife habitat.

Dr. Gallagher also discussed the impact of edge effects and the pros and cons of habitat corridors. Several graphs and charts showed how scientists measure and track the effect of fragmentation on populations.

Adding to the lively presentation was a visual demonstration, with the help of four HCMNs, of the basic concepts.

HaysMN Forum

A recent discussion was about putting up bluebird nest boxes and the availability of seamless stovepipe for a predator guard.

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 (web@haysmn.org) know if you have any questions or suggestions. Better yet, use the Forum to discuss the Forum.

Reporting Reminder

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

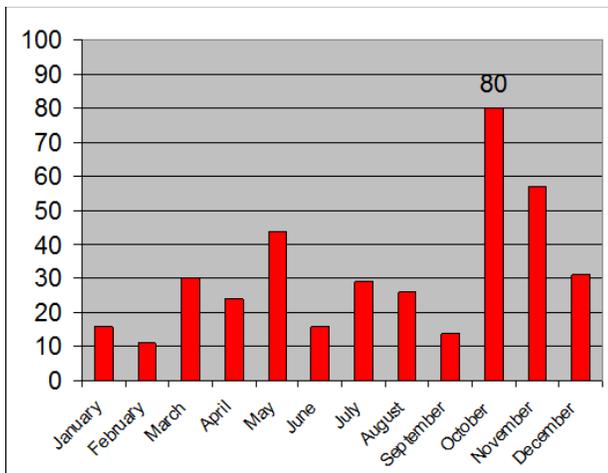
Membership Committee

Beth Ramey has some helpful guidelines and tips to make our hours reporting process go smoothly.

- Report promptly to reduce confusion. If I get reports fairly quickly after the event, I can ask questions and get information while the details are fresh on everyone's mind.
- Report completely. I get a lot of reports that don't have all the info - missing dates, Advanced Training topics, Volunteer Project numbers. I can't enter them until I have all the data.
- The state's database is picky and I need to get the data just like the forms ask.
- I need your e-mail. If I do have a problem, I need to be able to send you an e-mail to get the data.
- Volunteer hours: if you have multiple hours over a long period for the same project, I would appreciate one entry for each month. That way I

can use the last day of the month for a date and have a fairly accurate tracking.

- Report early so you know your status and have lots of time to react if a class or event is cancelled. The bulk of events take place in April through June and things really slow down at the end of the year.
- I'm happy to provide an hours report upon request. Just send an e-mail and I will run a report the next time I am working on entries. It's a great way to see your status.
- Have problems with the on-line forms? I have an Excel spreadsheet you can use. My only request is that you send them to me at least once a quarter.
- Advanced Training - It's **really** important that you get approval from Betty Finley **before** the event. Some things won't qualify and you need to know that before you take the class.
- If you are active in another group (Wimberley Birding Society, NPSOT, etc.), Betty and I would like to have a designated calendar submitter - someone who keeps us in the loop on the Advanced Training possibilities for these groups. We don't know about all of these things and would love some help. If you are interested in helping, let us know.
- Each Advanced Training event is a separate entry. I need each event/topic submitted separately. For example: Last year's Eco Days; each topic was one Advanced Training event.



2008 hours reports by month

All this detail is useful for the board to make determinations about attendance, interest and make decisions about future events. The more accurate my data, the better our decisions will be.

As you can see from the graph, I get bombarded in the final few weeks of the reporting year! October 31 was the cutoff.

- Beth Ramey

Annual Dues Overdue!

A gentle reminder – please send in your HCMN 2009 dues. Mail your check for \$15.00 made out to Hays County Master Naturalist to:

Larry Calvert
101 FM 3237, Suite F
Wimberley, TX 78676

As of January 22, Larry has received dues from 54 chapter members.

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!

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



Members News

Jamie Kinscherff

The January issue of Texas Co-op Power magazine includes an illustrated article on the Canyon Lake Gorge, pages 22-23.

The man in the large photo is HCMN's own Jamie Kinscherff, who is the Trail Boss for the Gorge and conducted the reporter and photographer into the Canyon.

Member Activities



HCMNs Susan Zimmerman and Herb Smith with a new Caracara friend at a talk by the Eagle Lady.



Calendar

(The dragonfly logo  identifies official HCMN events)

Texas the State of Flowing Water

The one-hour video documentary "Texas the State of Flowing Water" will air at 8 p.m. Central time, Thursday, Feb. 12 on all Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) stations in Texas. It is the fourth in an award-winning series of water resource documentaries produced by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and broadcast in partnership with PBS stations.

A companion website, [Texas the State of Water](#), features a preview of the documentary, links to additional information, and after the show airs, the complete program presented via streaming video and a complete written transcript.

Texas Land Trust Conference

The 2009 Texas Land Trust Conference will be held February 19-21 in Austin. More information can be found [here](#). There is a charge to attend.

The conference is of interest to landowners, conservation leaders, land trust board staff, appraisers, tax and real estate attorneys, range managers, government employees, and representatives of other land-use related industries.



Advanced Training Opportunities

Wildland Conservation Educational Event

Saturday, February 7 - 9:00 am to 1:30 pm.

Advanced Training 4.5 hours

[Wooded Hills on Little Barton](#)

The inaugural hike on this 930 acre Water Quality Protection Land property will explore dense woodlands, open hilltops, and the banks of Little Barton Creek. Some backcountry – off trail walking will be required. Will the creek be dry, or will it have water? There is only one way to find out.

Saturday, February 7 - 10:00 am to noon.

Advanced Training 2.0 hours

[Streams and Salamanders \(BCP hike and lecture series\)](#)

The first lecture of the 2009 Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Hike and Lecture Series. The BCP not only protects endangered species, but also helps

maintain the health of our local creeks and streams that either originate or flow through the preserve. Join aquatic ecologist Mateo Scoggins and biologist Nathan Bendik and hear about stream ecology, the Jollyville Plateau Salamander and much more.

To learn more about these events, or to register, please visit the calendar on the WCD [web page](#). All events are free of charge.



Volunteer Opportunities

GBBC is here!

PROJECT #701

The Great Backyard Bird Count takes place February 13-16, 2009. The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are calling on everyone to "Count for Fun, Count for the Future!"

Volunteers take part by counting birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

The data help researchers understand bird population trends across the continent, information that is critical for effective conservation. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists, a new record.



State and National News

Native Prairies Association of Texas Radio Interview

NPAT board member Jason Spangler was interviewed about native prairies and native plants on radio station KUT (Austin's NPR radio station) which aired on January 9th.

To listen to the KUT interview online, go to the 9:00 minute mark of [this mp3 on KUT's site](#) (about 4.5 minutes long).

They discussed how native tallgrass prairies and savannas are the native ecosystem for much of central Texas, how tallgrass prairies are the most endangered large ecosystem in North America, how using native plants in landscaping can increase water quality and quantity, the future potential for cellulosic ethanol and native grasslands to supply fuel for our society and restore native prairie, and other related topics. They also interviewed several other folks about grassland birds, water quality, and cellulosic ethanol.

Birds in Art/Art in Birds Contest

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is holding a "Birds in Art/Art in Birds" contest. Here's your chance to be creative. Go outside and look for *art* in birds. It could be a broken down nest in winter, a song recording, video of a bird perching on your window, something that makes you pause, look twice, laugh, cry. Get creative. Take photos, do some painting, write a story, create a sculpture.

You can find more information [here](#).



Local News

Water Conservation

"Dangerously low water levels in the San Marcos River are threatening the wild rice, the endangered species responsible for protecting river flows, and will likely require mandatory water-conservation measures in the very near future."

- SMGA, January 26

Texas State University to give most of Spring Lake back to nature

"The University will partner with the US Army Corps of Engineers to transform the Spring Lake peninsula to a more natural state."

- Newstreamz.com, December 20

Read the full article [here](#).

Aquifer concerns near critical stage

"San Marcos Springs flow shows signs of trouble; EAA Stage 1 rules may not be far off"

The Edwards Aquifer Authority, in an effort to delay the need for mandatory restrictions on pumping from the aquifer, is urging water users across the region to heighten conservation measures to help counter the effects of a continuing drought."

- San Marcos Daily Record, January 17.

Read the full 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 Centre -- [www.ci.san-](http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature_Center.html)

[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