

# Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

February, 2010

## February 2010 Events

### Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 4<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 February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm at a location which will be announced later. Please watch your email for the announcement.

The topic will be "Focus on Volunteering" and we'll hear from three of our volunteer projects:

- Jacob's Well Nature Center - Jeff Vasgaard
- Onion Creek, Austin Water Quality Protection Lands - Tom Watson.
- San Marcos Nature Center- Julie King

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](mailto:vp@haysmn.org), or 512-858-1015.



## A Naturalist's View

*This month we hear from Tom Hausler, our Chapter Vice President.*

It is a privilege to be serving as this year's Chapter Vice President. I was in the 2007 Madrone class of Master Naturalist.

I was raised an outdoor country boy. My backyard was a section of land (one square mile) in the Texas Panhandle. I was at home in the wide open range, where the wind always blows to the point that the trees grow at an angle, and you always were looking in front of you for the next rattlesnake. Neighbors were miles apart, so the coyotes, jack rabbits, horny toads, rattlesnakes, prairie dogs and columns of birds flying overhead were a part of my daily life and companions. I think I was born a Master Naturalist and did not know it.

## Board of Directors

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

After leaving the ranch for college, a few years of military service, two computer degrees, marriage, children and living in the big cities for way too many years, I was ready to come back to the country.

I moved to the Hill Country in 1975, when the wildlife still outnumbered the human population. Since that time the population has grown to the point where wildlife is the exception now.

In 2007 I learned about the Master Naturalist program and it sounded like an opportunity to learn and teach others about the Great Outdoors and at the same time help the local wildlife and environment. That is still my current goal.

This year's Program Committee is a great group and hopefully we can provide the Chapter with exciting and educational meetings. HCMNs on the Program Committee are Ben Adair, Karen Archer, Karen Bartell, Randy Garst, Jamie Kinscherff, Brad Krimmel, and Sandy Lucas. Thanks to all of them for their work.

I am also on this year's Training Committee (What was I thinking?), so I am very busy with both groups.

I would ask all of us to volunteer a little more this year and do an extra project or two, to help our

local environment and wildlife. Thanks for your support and continued assistance.

- Tom Hausler



## Featured Project

### *Wimberley Outdoor Educators, Project #809*

Do you remember the spark that fired your interest in nature and the outdoors? It might have been a family member that shared his or her excitement or it might have been an exceptional teacher that opened your eyes to the wonders of nature.

The goal of the Wimberley Outdoor Educators is to expose every child in the Wimberley Independent School District to the natural outdoor locations in the area and provide plenty of opportunities to light that spark.



*Two 6<sup>th</sup> graders view aquatic organisms through a magnifying glass at the Blue Hole. Photo by Jackie Mattice.*

The project's activities take place in the natural areas around Wimberley. Other organizations involved include Keep Wimberley Beautiful, the Texas Stream Team, and the Jacob's Well Education Center.

This school year the 6th graders went to Blue Hole in November, the High School Biology students will go to Cypress Creek Nature Trail in February, the 3rd graders will go to the Patsy Glenn Bird Refuge in March and the 5th graders will go to Jacob's Well in April.

During the field trips, students circulate through science-oriented activities to enhance their understanding of the environment.

Jackie Mattice is the project coordinator. She was in the class of 2008 and first became interested in outdoor education in 1976 when she volunteered for

a group similar to the Wimberley Outdoor Educators in Palo Alto, California. Jackie has a background as a comprehensive high school science teacher and holds a Masters Degree in the Arts of Teaching from Duke University with an undergraduate degree in zoology.



*Ann Connell and Jean McMeans teach 3<sup>d</sup> graders about bird's nests at the Patsy Glenn Bird Refuge. Photo by Jackie Mattice.*

In 2005 David Baker asked Jackie to do a survey of the science educators in Wimberley to determine what they wanted to see included at Jacob's Well when it became an educational center. After meeting with teachers at all levels, she wrote up the report.

Marilyn VanHooser, the Science Chairman at the high school, was especially enthusiastic about having a field trip on the Cypress Creek Nature Trail. Jackie's main problem then became one of finding 5 other people in Wimberley who could run the stations. Martha Knies of Keep Wimberley Beautiful introduced her to people who were qualified to participate.



*Sandy Lucas teaches ecology at the Cypress Creek Nature Trail. Photo by Jackie Mattice.*

The first field trip was in February of 2008 with the Wimberley High School Biology students. It was such a success, that the Biology teachers wanted to make it an annual event. The first Middle School field trip to Blue Hole was held in November 2008. They also wanted the field trip to be an annual

event. In addition, the volunteers were impressed with the students.

The team then decided to call themselves the Wimberley Outdoor Educators.

Starting in 2006, Jane Little and Cara Wernli of the Wimberley Birding Society have organized a group of volunteers to lead the 3rd graders through the Patsy Glenn Bird Refuge behind the Wimberley Community Center. The Wimberley Outdoor Educators decided to join forces with them.



*Margaret Baker shows fossils in limestone to high school biology students at the Cypress Creek Nature Trail. Photo by Jackie Mattice.*

Julie Tuason from the Texas Stream Team has been guiding fourth graders through Jacob's Well since 2003, along with David Baker and some of his volunteers. Barbara Attwell is the new Education Specialist for Jacob's Well and she will be leading the 5th grade students with the help of HCMNs Jeff Vasgaard, Karen Landridge, Jackie Mattice, Sandy Lucas and Margaret Baker.

HCMN became involved in the project in 2008. That year Jean McMeans, Ann Connell and Diane Spicer ran the Geology Station; Dorothy Knight ran the Water Testing Station; and Jane Little and Cara Wernli started the 3rd grade Patsy Glenn Refuge field trip.

In 2009, the following HCMNs participated in the Wimberley Outdoor Educators field trips.

- Margaret Baker ran the Geology Station for the 6th graders and Biology students.
- Linda Lang ran the Cypress Creek Trail Station and the Geology Station.
- Sandy Lucas ran the Plant Station and the Ecology Station.
- Lin Weber ran the Chemistry of the Water Analysis Station and the Water Organisms Station.
- Deb Bradshaw ran the Geology Station.
- Karen Langridge ran the Plant Station.
- Jeff Vasgaard ran the Plant Station.

- Dorothy Knight ran the Water Testing Station.
- Jackie Mattice ran the Water Organisms Station and the Cypress Creek Trail Station and the Chemical Analysis Station.

Currently there are about 20 Wimberley Outdoor Educators. Many of them are people Jackie met while training to be a HCMN.

The Educators are open to new members. The main requirements are an interest in Outdoor Education, a willingness to learn the material for your station, a commitment to help plan the lessons and come to the rehearsals and the stamina to be outdoors all day with the students on the field trip days.

Please contact Jackie Mattice, [jrm44313@yahoo.com](mailto:jrm44313@yahoo.com), to learn more.



## Chapter News

### *HCMN Awarded Grant*

Our chapter was awarded a grant for \$2400 from the LCRA and PEC in November. Heather H. Richardson, Public Affairs Representative, LCRA and Trista L. Fugate, Community Development Supervisor, PEC attended our January Chapter Meeting to present us with the grant.



*Mimi receiving the grant check. Left to right: Heather Richardson, Trisha Fugate, and Mimi Boelter. Photo by Art Arizpe.*

The grant was awarded under the Community Development Partnership Program conducted by the LCRA and PEC. Mimi Boelter applied for the grant in September and Jean McMeans, Randy Lenz, and Janae' Reneaud wrote letters of recommendation supporting the proposal.

The chapter will use the funds to purchase an enVision 3100 Aquifer Simulator and an Enviroscope Watershed/Nonpoint Source Model. The chapter will

use these models as part of our education and outreach efforts.

Many thanks to Mimi and the team for all their work and to the LCRA and PEC for their support!

### *Record Dues Received*

Thanks to all of you that have paid your 2010 dues. We have had a truly record breaking response.

2009 was a best ever membership year with 76 dues paying members; but we outdid ourselves and have 85 signed up, so far this year. And, I'm still getting checks on a fairly regular basis. For anyone who hasn't yet paid the 2010 dues you may write a check made out to "Hays County Master Naturalist" and send it to:

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

Again, thanks so much for your great response.

- Larry Calvert

### *Outreach Committee Needs Volunteers*

Hundreds of people moving to Hays County each week as well as many long-time residents are looking for information about our environment and how to be good land stewards.

As Master Naturalists, we can help them find that information. Last year's EcoDay (organized by Mimi Boelter) and the Emily Ann Butterfly Festival (Karen Hulene Bartell coordinates our presence there), as well as the great work of the Wimberley Outdoor Educators, are examples of how our chapter provides education in our community.

The Outreach Committee is looking for additional opportunities to support a 2010 calendar of direct outreach events through which we can reach a broad audience. We'll be looking for festivals and fairs at which we can have a presence, as well as creating our own events, such as the "Know Your Grasses" and "Wildfire Prevention" tables we've done in front of Wimberley's Brookshire Brothers.

You don't have to be a grass guru or a public speaker to be a big help on this committee! If you can organize materials, help recruit knowledgeable volunteers to be our experts, make signs or write a blurb for the newspaper, we need you. We'll have a planning meeting in late February to get us rolling.

To learn more or to volunteer, contact Susan Nenney (512.289.8166) or [snenney@peoplepc.com](mailto:snenney@peoplepc.com).

- Susan Nenney

### *Training Committee Update*

The talented and dedicated members of the 2010 HCMN Training Committee have been busy making preparations for the start of the new class. The class meeting locations are secured in San Marcos, Dripping Springs, and Wimberley. The speakers, including both old favorites and some new faces, are scheduled. Curriculum materials, Nature Watch presenters, site visit plans, field trip locations, and technology needs are in place. Delicious meals are in the planning stages. The enthusiasm and anticipation levels of the TC members are high. The first class will be February 16 at the Extension Office in San Marcos.

Thirty-five members for the 2010 class have been selected from the fifty applications received. The new class members represent a good balance in locations from the entire county. They have expressed genuine desire to learn more about good environmental stewardship of the Hill Country and willingness to participate in volunteer activities as part of their training. The chapter members will enjoy meeting these new members-in-training and encouraging them to participate in favorite volunteer activities. 2010 promises to be a productive time for the Training Committee and the members of the new class.

- Jean McMeans

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

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

### *Chapter Annual Report*

The Chapter submitted our 2009 Annual Report to the State Texas Master Naturalist organization. The report is a summary of our chapter's activities for the year.

Some highlights:

#### **Members completing TMN Training**

- Total number of volunteers trained in your chapter during the reporting period: 23

- Cumulative total number of volunteers trained through your chapter from your chapter's inception through to the end of the reporting period: 192

#### **TMN Volunteer Service**

- Total number of volunteer service hours conducted in the reporting period: 6669
- Cumulative total number of volunteer service hours conducted from the chapter's inception through to the end of the reporting period: 43,653

#### **Advanced Training**

- Total number of Advanced Training hours obtained by your chapter volunteers throughout the reporting period: 1,196
- Cumulative total number of Advanced Training hours obtained by chapter volunteers from the inception of the chapter through to the end of the reporting period: 9,918.25

#### **Outreach and Education**

- Total number of outreach/education EVENTS1 conducted by the chapter throughout the reporting period: 94
- Of those events above, how many were DIRECT outreach/education events-- meaning there was an actual hands-on or active teaching component for the majority of the event with a captive audience? 92
- How many youth, adults and/or private landowners in total were present for these events? 3,856
- Of the events reported above, how many were INDIRECT outreach/education events? Example of an indirect outreach/education event would be manning a booth or display. 2

#### **NEW Acreage Impacted**

- The total acreage impacted through NEW chapter projects conducted throughout the reporting period. (This includes prairie restorations, wildscapes, landowner management plans/consultations, park enhancements and restorations initiated for the first time during the reporting period) 205

#### **Trail Miles Impacted**

- Total miles of trails developed or improved through NEW trail maintenance or development projects (initiated for the first time) during the reporting period. (You may be as accurate as to the nearest tenth of a mile) 9
- Please list the project/property title(s) and location(s) where this new trail work has been conducted: Hays County 5 Mile Dam Park (San Marcos), Barsana Dham (Driftwood)

#### **New Partnerships Developed**

- List the number of new chapter partnerships initiated during the reporting period. Below, list the new partner and what their partnership provides such as copies, meeting room, instructors, or other tangible or in-kind resources to the chapter at no cost to the chapter). 3
- Camp Jacob Watershed Education Center: board and chapter meeting room
- Citizens Alliance for Responsible Development (CARD): copies, meeting room
- Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit: meeting room and training class room

#### **Donors or Benefactors**

- List new chapter sponsors or benefactors and \$ amounts provided to the local chapter throughout the reporting period.
- Hays County Master Naturalist Memorial Fund \$175.00

### ***2009 HCMN Recertification***

The following is the list of HCMNs achieving recertification at the end of 2009. Congratulations to all!

Ben Adair	Karen Archer
Mary Arizpe	Art Arizpe
Margaret Baker	Richard Barnett
Karen Bartell	Delbert Bassett
Mimi Boelter	Deborah Bowers
Judy Burdett	Larry Calvert
Linda Calvert	Dixie Camp
Steve Carter	Ann Connell
Betty Finley	Ray Franklin
Randy Garst	Ruben Garza
Ginger Geist	LaRay Geist
Tom Hausler	Karen Hayward
Lance Jones	Helane Kennard
Jamie Kinscherff	Brad Krimmel
Walt Krudop	Lana Larsen
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

### ***Hays County Ranch Seed Collecting***

On January 23rd, Tom Watson, Leah Laszewski, Donna Browning with her son, Nick, and Lance Jones collected grass seed at Hays County Ranch.



*Setting the game plan. Photo by Lance Jones.*

The property is owned by the Water Quality Protection Lands for the City of Austin and has undergone several prescribed burns in the last few years. The work day brought a larger-than-expected turnout of volunteers including a trio from Indonesia to sow grass seed.



*Tom Watson and Leah Laszewski collecting seeds. Photo by Lance Jones.*

With so many volunteers, Marty Wise, volunteer coordinator, designated Tom as leader to collect new seeds for later dispersal. The effects of prescribed burns, native grass seeding and good management practices were evident at the ranch.

- Lance Jones

### ***Identification of Hill Country Grasses: A Review at Onion Creek***

On the afternoon of January 30, Tom Watson presented a review of his past advanced classes in identification of Hill Country grasses. Fourteen students were in attendance and were given a second exposure to the features of grasses that one must observe closely in order to make correct

identifications using the manual authored by Loflin and Loflin and other identification aids. Added to the presentation were detailed comparisons of the local species of *Tridens* (Purpletop, etc.) and *Setaria* (Bristlegrasses).

In former classes, attendees were taught the structural features by which to identify the local species of *Paspalum* (Vasey Grass, Dallis Grass, etc.), as well as, the grass flora of our region in general.

Tom continues to offer an introductory field class and advanced identification classes each year in April and October at the Rutherford Ranch House on the Onion Creek Properties. The Spring class is a combination of an indoor lecture followed by hands-on identifications in the field. The Fall class requires the Spring class as a prerequisite and is a hands-on field laboratory to hone identification skills learned in the Spring and to learn the fall grasses. Tom occasionally leads additional field trips for class members to broaden their knowledge of local grasses. This year the Spring class will be offered April 17th again at Onion Creek.

Watch for bulletins for registration which will come in March as the class has enrollment limitations.

- Tom Watson

### ***January Chapter Meeting***

Nyta Brown from the Old Tunnel Wildlife Area presented "Introduction to Bats – Their Habits and Habitats".

Nyta showed many great photographs of several species of bats and also several videos of bats flying, landing, lapping nectar, and even running.

She discussed their food: fruit, nectar, insects, fish, and frogs, their echolocation, their habitats: caves and trees, and their seasonal survival skills: migration or hibernation.

Nyta's presentation was very interesting and well-received. The January Chapter meeting had a great turnout with 58 people in attendance.

### ***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 January 2010 are due by February 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

**Tom Hausler** shares a couple of shots from his BirdCam. He reports these are normal birds for this time of year.



*Golden-Fronted Woodpecker. Photo by Tom Hausler.*



*Scrub-Jay. Photo by Tom Hausler.*

## Rare Mushroom found at Onion Creek

Recently **Tom Watson** found an unusual and rare species of mushroom growing at a spot on the flood plain of Onion Creek. The discovery of this species is first report for Hays County, previously the closest known site being in the city of Austin.



*A group of Texas Star Fungus. Photo by Tom Watson.*

The fungus is known as "Texas Star" (some have a star-shaped top) or Devil's Cigar" (resembles a gag cigar with the end exploded). This member of the Fungi kingdom belongs to a particular division (or phylum) known as the Ascomycota or sac fungi, so

named because these fungi produce their spores in a microscopic sac-like structures on the surface of the mushroom; and, there are millions of them.



It **does** look like an exploded gag cigar! Photo by Tom Watson.

Under the substrate surface, there is an extensive network of thread-like structures called a mycelium which at some point in time gives rise to the fruiting structure (mushroom) that grows up and out of the substrate. At first being cigar shaped, the fruiting body soon explosively splits at the apex to form 5 or 6 radiating arms upon whose surface the spores have formed. As the apex splits, there is a hissing sound emitted and a cloud of spores (cigar smoke?) is released. This happens from Fall through Winter when temperatures are cooler (not a favorite time of year for those of us who are hypersensitive to mold spores).

This species of fungus, *Chorioactis geaster*, has a curious disjunct distribution. It is found only in Texas (Collin, Dallas, Denton, Tarrant, Hunt, Travis, Guadalupe, and NOW Hays counties) and in Japan (from three sites there) where it is known as "kirinomitake". Comparing DNA from the two continents, Japanese scientists have determined that the two populations have been separated for at least 19 million years; thus, could not have possibly been transported by man. Since dust from Asia sometimes falls upon the western USA, some have surmised that the spores may have so been carried across the Pacific. It was first discovered in Austin, Texas in 1893 by a botanist known as Lucien Underwood.

In 1997, Senator Chris Harris filed a bill in the Texas Senate to have *C. geaster* designated as the state fungus. The bill died in the House of Representatives. The demise of the bill is surprising; since, during that very year, the legislature passed through both houses a bill naming *Pleurocoelus* (a sauropod - huge body, long neck, small head) as the state dinosaur.

Since the fungus is rare and this is a first for Hays County, please keep an eye out for it. Should you

spot it, please take a photo of the mushroom and note its location for authentication and record keeping. Please send those items to Tom at [twatson11@austin.rr.com](mailto:twatson11@austin.rr.com).

- Tom Watson

*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

### *Basic Birding for Adults*

#### 3.0 Hours Advanced Training

February 6, 2010 8:30-11:30

Do you enjoy watching birds in your own backyard and find bird interesting and beautiful? Would you like to move beyond casual birding and develop more expertise in looking at birds, categorizing birds, and recognizing common birds—and perhaps even develop bird watching into an engaging hobby?

If so, then this class is for you. It will help prepare your mind for birding by teaching you how to see and what to look for before you go into the field. Avid birders and MLAC Docents Tom and Patsy Inglet will share tools, tips, and techniques that will allow you to build your birding skills. From how to find birds to the tools and clues that will help you identify them, this workshop provides the information and field practice that you need to help you get started in birding.

The class consists of 1.5 hours of instruction and 1.5 hours of guided practice in the field. Bring binoculars and a bird field guide, if you have them; we have some to loan if you don't. Dress for a bird walk in the field: long pants, dull colors, walking shoes, and a hat. You may also want to bring insect repellent and sunscreen. *Come let us help you find your wings as a birder.*

Each session: \$5 for non-members; Free for members

Space is limited.

Admission: Free, but rsvp is required

For more information or to rsvp, [mlac@audubon.org](mailto:mlac@audubon.org)

### *February 2010 Wildland Conservation Education Events*

#### Guided Hikes

**Scenic Views & Hidden Springs (Water Quality Protection Lands- Parkhouse) 2.5 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, February 6, 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**Location:** Located near intersection of Circle Drive and Hwy 290W. Directions sent upon [registration](#).  
**Description:** Did you know the City of Austin owns land for water quality protection? Participants will be guided on a 3.5 mile hike over classic Hill Country terrain, enjoying beautiful views of surrounding wildland and close up looks at varied habitats ending with a visit to a hidden spring. All the while, guides will relate the history of the tract and how it is being managed to benefit water quality and quantity. Due to the length and pace, this hike is intended for audiences 12 and up. Youth must be accompanied by an adult.

**Vireo Habitat Through Time (Balcones Canyonlands Preserve- Vireo Research Area) 3.0 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Sunday, February 7, 1 :00 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**Location:** Near intersection of Pascal Lane and Loop 360. Directions sent upon [registration](#).

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

**Birding By Impression**

**BCP Hike and Lecture Series hosted by City of Austin Wildlands**

**(Balcones Canyonlands Preserve- Double J & T) 3.0 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, February 13, 8 am to 11 am

**Location:** Near intersection of Hwy 71 and RR 620 in Bee Caves . Directions sent upon [registration](#).

**Description:** Get ready for spring migration by honing your birding skills! "Birding by Impression" is a holistic approach to identification that has been employed by indigenous people throughout the world for thousands of years. This technique, sometimes called "right-brained birding," uses the fundamental characteristics of shape, size, structure, behavior, voice, and habitat to identify birds. For ages 15 and up. Youth must be accompanied by an adult.

**Warblers, Wildlands & Water (Balcones Canyonlands Preserve- Reicher) 2.5 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, February 20, 9am to 11:30am

**Location:** Near intersection of Hwy 71 and RR 620 in Bee Caves . Directions sent upon [registration](#).

**Description:** The 2 ½ hour hike will wind through habitat utilized by the golden-cheeked warbler for breeding in spring and early summer. The hike has over a 400' change in elevation and steep inclines and is partially in shaded canopy and will proceed at a moderate pace. Due to the terrain and pace, this hike is intended for audiences 10 and up.

**Wooded Hills on Little Barton Creek (Water Quality Protection Lands – Little Barton) 3.5 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Sunday, February 21, 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Location:** Near intersection of Hwy 71 and Hamilton Pool Rd. Directions sent upon [registration](#).

**Description:** Come see the scenic vistas, fossils, native grasses and plants, and maybe even some water as the guides explain why this unique 928 acre tract is important for the water quality and quantity of our local aquifer. For ages 12 and up.

**BCP's Geologic Past (Balcones Canyonlands Preserve- Cortaña) 3.0 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Sunday, February 28, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Located near intersection of FM 2222 and RR 620. Directions sent upon [registration](#).

**Description:** Explore the geologic beginnings of the BCP on this hike through time. Ann Molineux of

UT's Texas Natural Science Center, non-vertebrate paleontology curator, and Sigrid Clift, Bureau of Economic Geology geologist, will lead this fascinating hike. We'll explore three major geologic formations as we descend into the canyon looking for clues to our ancient past. Ages 12 and up.

**Night Explorations of the BCP (BCP- Vireo)**  
**2.5 Hours Advanced Training Date and Time:**  
**Sunday, February 28, 5 p.m.- 7:30 p.m.**  
**Location:** Located near the intersection of Pascal Ln. and Loop 360. Directions sent upon [registration](#)

**Description:** Enjoy the sights and sounds of the canyonlands as day turns to night during this guided interpretive hike. The almost full moon will create a magical setting for exploring. From frog choruses and coyote yips to a starry sky, we'll tune your senses to the sights, sounds, and smells of the hill country. This 2 hour hike has rocky sections and grassy overgrowth, steep inclines and declines, and will proceed at a moderate pace. Ages 9 and up.

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

Wildland Conservation volunteer and educational events found at  
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/online-registration/ecowebevents.cfm> ✨ ✨ ✨

## Volunteer Opportunities

### *The Great Backyard Bird Count*

It's almost time for the Great Backyard Bird Count! The next count is scheduled for February 12-15.

This is an approved chapter project, #701. You can find more information about the event [here](#) or you can contact [Ginger Geist](#).

### *Barsana Dham Trail Building*

**Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**9:00am-12:00pm**  
**Hays MN Project #909**

For more information, contact Dennis Wagner ([Dennis@UnitedCountryCentralTexas.com](mailto:Dennis@UnitedCountryCentralTexas.com)).

### *Elephant Ear Removal*

**Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 17<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, February 27<sup>th</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

### *Enchanted Rock One of Top Five Views*

Wendee Holtcamp has an article on the Texas Wild Network web page about the top 5 views in Texas, with Enchanted Rock at number one.

"Climb 425 feet up Texas' pink granite dome, a rock that was formed in the Precambrian era more than 1 billion years ago - before life emerged on earth. Known in geological circles as a batholith, this dome was formed from molten magma deep below the earth's crust; the surrounding limestone eroded away over millennia. Twice during history, ancient oceans covered the granite dome, but today Enchanted Rock stands tall above the surrounding landscape at 1,825 feet - and claims the title as the best view in the Hill Country."

You may read the full article [here](#).

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**Local News**

***LCRA Long Range Water Supply  
Planning***

The LCRA is seeking input for their long range water supply planning. Meetings will be held in Austin, Burnet and El Campo. You can also provide input in writing or take an online survey.

You may find more info [here](#).



**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 -- [txforestservation.tamu.edu](http://txforestservation.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)