

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

February, 2011

February 2011 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 3rd, at the Camp Jacob Watershed Education Center at the Jacob's Well Natural Area, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. A map is available [here](#). The meeting is open to members and the public.

If you have any questions or items for the agenda, please contact Jeff Vasgaard, pres@haysmn.org, by February 2nd.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, February 24th, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, at the AgriLife Extension Office, 1253 Civic Center Loop in San Marcos. A map is available [here](#).

Board of Directors

| | |
|--|--|
| President | Jeff Vasgaard |
| Vice President | Brad Krimmel |
| Secretary | Becky Northcut |
| Treasurer | Larry Calvert |
| Past-President | Dixie Camp |
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| Training Committee | Jean McMeans |
| Advanced Training Comm. | Mary Arizpe |
| Membership Committee | Beth Ramey |
| Web Master | Herb Smith |
| Newsletter Committee & Editor | Art Arizpe news@haysmn.org |
| Outreach Committee | Cathy Delwiche |
| Host Committee | Vacant |
| Historian | Dale Shively |
| Volunteer Service | Art Arizpe |
| AgriLife Agent | Richard Parrish |
| TP&WD Rep | Lee Ann Linam |

Bring bugs, live or dead, or photos, for an interactive presentation on insects!

The speaker will be Valerie Bugh, a local naturalist specializing in the arthropods of the Austin area, with interests in taxonomy and photography. She runs the Fauna Project at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, leads insect discovery walks, provides insect/spider identifications, gives talks to local organizations, and has published a pocket guide to "The Butterflies of Central Texas." Visit her website at www.austinbug.com.

"Give me your bugs, your flies, your mystery critters yearning for IDs ..."

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



A Naturalist's View

Jamie Kinscherff is a contact for the Canyon Gorge project and served for many years on the Training Committee.

We humans are diurnal creatures – we are most active during the day, so the night is often a mystery to us. Some creatures are crepuscular, they are most active at twilight –dawn and dusk. Examples would be rabbits, some rodents, many jungle cats, house cats and songbirds

to name a few. The low light makes it easy to hide or hunt, and temperature is cooler. Naturalists often enjoy the outdoors at twilight.

Nocturnal creatures are most active after dark. Raccoons, mice, voles, opossum, coyotes, bats, owls are all night creatures, even in cities. Listen and you'll notice that the night is not quiet at all. Insects of all sorts are looking for love by making special sounds or flashing lights. Mosquitoes are out for blood, but only the females. They are attracted by heat and moisture and can determine a difference of 1/100th degree. If you are the one who always gets bothered by them it's because your body is just a bit warmer. Most insect sounds are higher than our range of hearing otherwise the night might be a torment of sound. Many flowers, especially cacti, bloom at night and have special pollinators including bats and moths. Most birds migrate at night to avoid easy predation, and perhaps use the stars for navigation.

Eyes are shaped like balls filled with clear fluid. Light comes through the pupil, the lens focuses the light on the retina in the back of the eye which has two kinds of light sensitive cells called rods that help us see in dim light, and cones that help us see in bright light. Nocturnal creatures have more rods than we do and they also have an adaptation called a tapetum which is a sort of mirror behind the retina that reflects light back at the rods and cones for a second time thereby giving their eyes two chances to collect the light. When we look at an animal with this feature at night their eyes appear to glow in the dark. To night animals the color red is like no color at all. Why? A chemical called rhodopsin is in rod cells and will reflect red light instead of absorbing it. This chemical allows rod cells to pick up dim light in all other colors. When light hits their rod cells some of it is absorbed by the rodopsin and it is converted into two other chemicals that send a message to the brain that creates a dim light picture. Because nocturnal animals have so many more rods than we do, this allows them to "see in the dark". Many zoo animals are kept in red light at night so we can check on them but they are not bothered by the light.

Enhanced hearing is also an important tool for the night. Many animals have ears that can move independently- rabbits, deer, mice for example. Owl ears are not like ours. One is offset from the other and their face it acts like a speaker cone catching sound and transmitting it to their ears. This allows them to track and kill prey so easily in low light. Many bats, of course, use eco-location and rely exclusively on sound to catch prey.

Fireflies are soft-shelled beetles that use bioluminescence to attract mates. Fueled by a chemical reaction, each species has its own flash pattern. Females don't fly much at all. Sitting on a blade of grass they await the signal of the male and will flash in response. Ninety percent of sea creatures can glow - and we are learning how and why.

Take time to go out and explore the darkness, turn off the lights and look at the stars, for each of us is indeed made from them.

- Jamie Kinscherff



Featured Project

Blanco Watershed Water Quality Monitoring Project #802

The Blanco Watershed Water Quality Monitoring project is part of the [Texas Stream Team](#) (TST), administered by Texas State University, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The TST supplies or pays for the kits and the E. coli chemicals and incubators. The [Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority](#) supplies or pays for the chemicals for the kits. Over 1400 volunteers collect water quality data throughout the state. This project was first featured in the [January 2009 HCMN Newsletter](#). Please refer to that article for more background information.

The TST has an annual volunteer day and holds quarterly state partner meetings which any volunteer can attend. Please visit their [web page](#) for more information. Locally, the TST conducted a 24 hour test at the Blue Hole in Wimberley last summer.

Volunteers must attend a one-day class held by the TST twice a year, in the spring and fall. The next one in San Marcos is on February 5th. Training consists of 3 phases. Phase 1 is in the classroom for about 3 hours. Phases 2 and 3 are held in the field to provide hands-on experience in gather samples and conducting the measurements and each lasts about 2 hours.

So what's involved in the monitoring? Volunteers take monthly samples and measure several core parameters:

- Conductivity
- Dissolved oxygen
- pH
- Air temperature
- Water temperature
- Depth
- Transparency

They also record a set of more subjective observations which include flow severity, algae cover, water color and clarity, surface condition and odor. They report the data on a standard paper form and submit it to the TST.

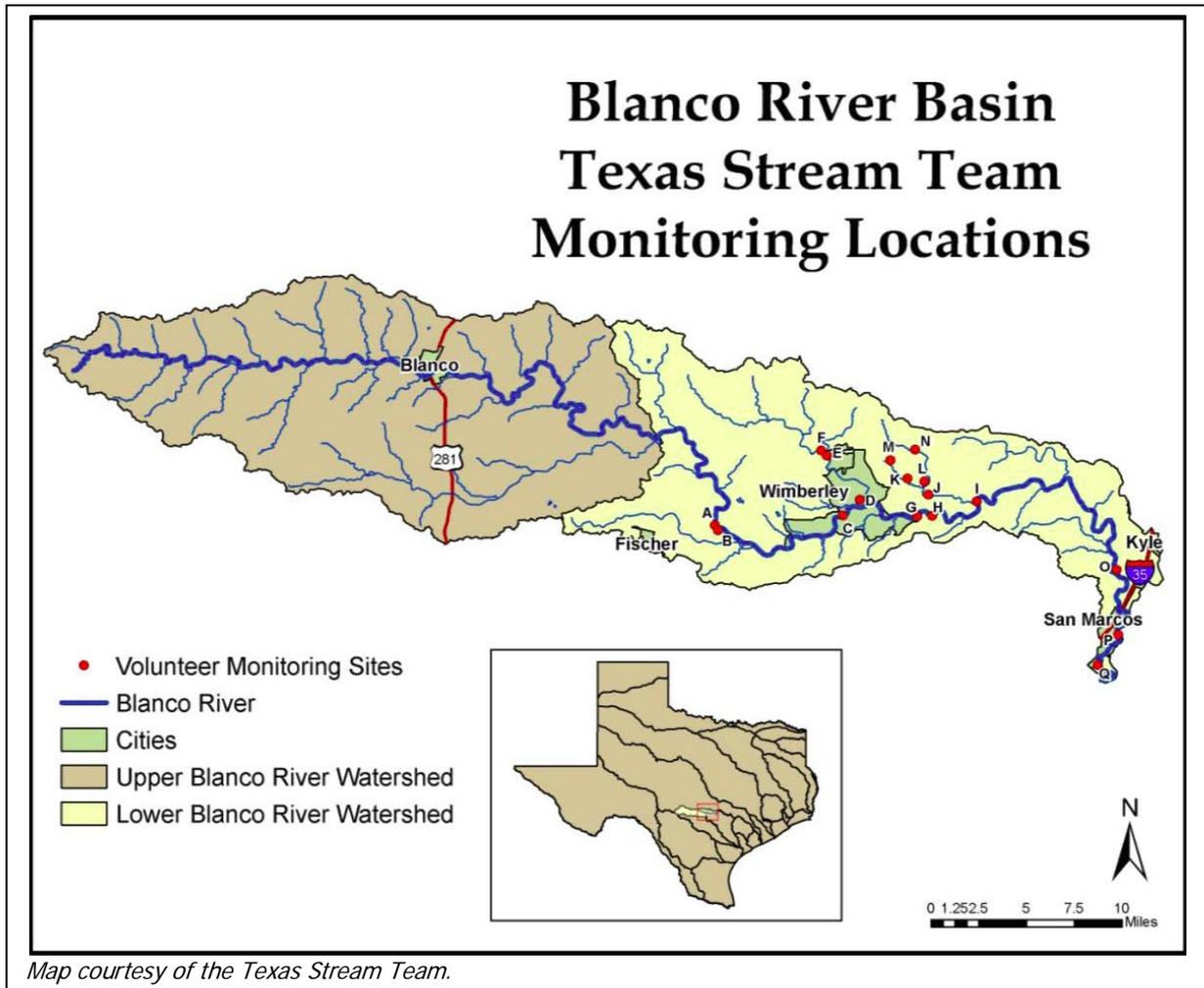
Additionally, some volunteers are trained to test for bacteria, mainly E. coli. This is a longer test which requires a sample preparation, a 28-32 hour incubation, and then a count.

Jackie Mattice is a certified trainer for the monitor project so the chapter does not have to wait for the centrally-offered sessions. Jackie's background as a chemistry and biology teacher make her a natural for this and Jacob's Well is a great place to hold the training.

We're fortunate because the water quality in our area is good right now, but that can change as we continue development. Other parts of the state are not so fortunate. The volunteers serve as an early warning system and the eyes and ears of the professional scientists involved

in the program. Establishing a baseline for the local water quality is important so any changes can be quickly detected.

The TST published a report in February, 2010, on the Lower Blanco River Watershed Data. You may find it [here](#). The following maps and graphs are excerpted from the report.

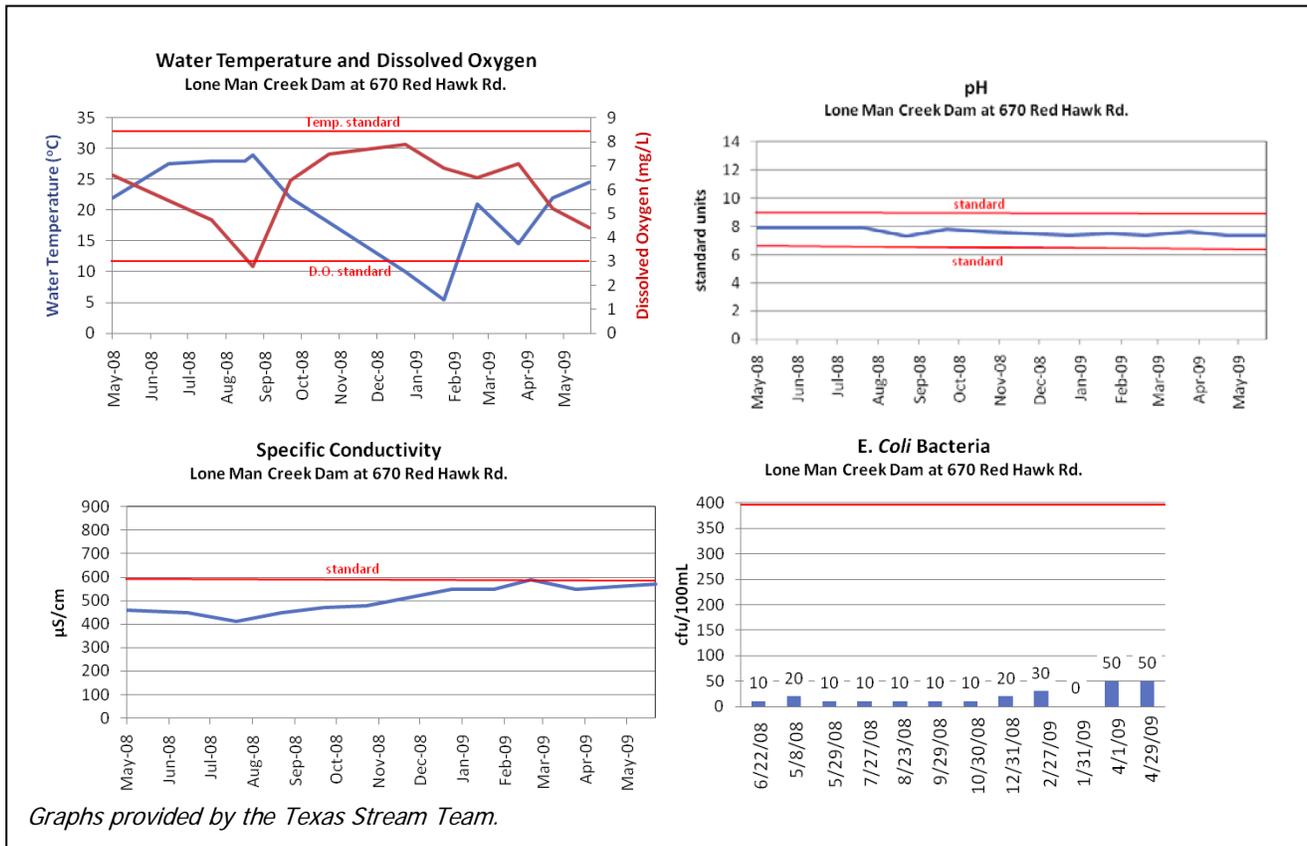


Not surprisingly, the volunteers who have served long-term have a vested interest in checking sites in their front yard or very near. They include the following HCMNs:

- Deb Bradshaw – monitors two sites on upper Lone Man Creek.
- Larry & Linda Calvert – monitor Smith Creek and Lone Man Creek.
- LaRay & Ginger Geist – monitor their Lone Man Creek dam and sites above for E. coli.
- Margaret Baker – monitors lower Lone Man Creek and the Blanco River waterpark in her development.
- Barbara Jacobson – monitors a site on the Blanco River.
- Jackie Mattice – monitors a site on Cypress Creek.

You don't have to be a HCMN to monitor. The following people also monitor:

- The Amaons – monitor a site on the Blanco River near Fischer Store Road.
- Linda McDowell – monitors Wilson Creek and the Blanco River.



The project is looking for volunteers to monitor more sites along the Blanco River. Please contact Ginger or LaRay Geist for more information.



Chapter News

New Committee Chairs!

Congratulations to the following new Committee Chairs who were elected at the January Board meeting:

- Advanced Training Committee – **Mary Arizpe**
- Volunteer Service Projects Committee – **Art Arizpe**
- Outreach Committee – **Cathy Delwiche**

The Chapter thanks these folks for their willingness to help in these important roles!

Also, many thanks to the outgoing committee chairs who provided many years of excellent service to the chapter: **Betty Finley** who served as the Advanced Training Committee Chair, **Walt Krudop** who served as the Volunteer Service Projects Committee Chair, and **Susan Nenney** who served as the Outreach Committee Chair.

Chapter Host Committee

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

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

Newsletter Committee

I'm looking for several volunteers to help work on the newsletter. Working on the newsletter is a great way to stay informed of chapter activities and only takes a few hours each month.

I've got some ideas for updating and improving the layout and need graphic design and/or photographic help.

I'm also looking for reporters and photographers to help with articles and photographs about our projects and chapter activities.

Please contact me, news@haysmn.org, if you're interested.

I've had quite a bit of informal help in the past two years and I really appreciate everyone's participation!

- Art Arizpe

Firewise Town Hall Meeting

WIMBERLEY, Texas — Residents in the area around Hays and Comal counties interested in learning how to protect themselves from wildfire are invited to a town hall meeting on Feb. 10.

The gathering is set for 6:30 p.m. at the Wimberley Community Center, 14068 Ranch Road 12.

Representatives from Texas Forest Service and the National Fire Protection Association will be on hand to answer questions and talk about what you can do to protect your home and family from wildfire.

For example, you can reduce potential wildfire losses by adopting Firewise landscaping practices 100 to 200 feet around your home. That includes moving firewood and clearing dead and dense vegetation.

Wildland Urban Interface Specialist Jan Fulkerson stressed that wildfires are a community-wide problem, which means reducing risks to homes and property is everyone's responsibility.

"More than 80 percent of wildfires in Texas occur within 2 miles of a community," Fulkerson said, reminding residents that wildfires have raged through the three counties before and likely will again. "We want to encourage residents to take proactive measures that could end up saving lives and property."

For more information, visit www.texasfirewise.org.

Gentle Reminder, 2011 Dues

This is a gentle reminder that 2011 Hays County Master Naturalist membership dues are due by January 1, 2011. The good news is that 76 people have paid as of 1/24/11. The really good news is that over 70% of the 2010 graduates have already paid - go Prickly Pears. The bad news is that since the 2011 class has done so well it means about 50% of those that paid dues in 2010 have not paid dues in 2011.

Please take a moment out and pay your dues by sending a check made out to Hays County Master Naturalists for \$15 per person to the following address.

If you want to see if you've already paid, e-mail me at lecalvert@gmail.com, and I'll get right back to you.

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

Project Spotlight: Become a "Species Spotter" for TPWD

A couple of years ago I provided information in the newsletter about how Texas Master Naturalists can become "citizen scientists" through Texas Parks and Wildlife's Texas Nature Trackers program. Many of our Hays County Master Naturalists participate in Texas Nature Trackers, and in 2010 the chapter hosted a training session for one of our programs, Texas Amphibian Watch. I'm looking forward to receiving data from all of you frog experts now (hint, hint!).

In addition to the species that are targeted in the organized Texas Nature Tracker projects (see list in sidebar), TPWD is interested in a number of other species of concern that may occur in Hays county. These are species that are known to be rare and/or declining and are therefore tracked by the Texas Natural Diversity Database.

The Texas Natural Diversity Database (TXNDD), established in 1983, is the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) most comprehensive source of information on rare, threatened, and endangered plants, animals, invertebrates, exemplary natural communities, and other significant features. The TXNDD is continually updated, providing current or additional information on statewide status and locations of these unique elements of natural diversity.

However, the data is not all-inclusive as there are gaps in coverage and species data due to the lack of access to land or data and a lack of staff and resources to collect and process data on all rare and significant resources.

Texas Nature Tracker Citizen Science Projects

Texas Amphibian Watch
Texas Mussel Watch
Hummingbird Round-up
Box Turtle Survey
Texas Horned Lizard Watch
Black-tailed Prairie Dog Watch
Tarpon Observation Network

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/trackers/

The TXNDD gathers biological information from public information sources such as: museum and herbarium collections, peer-reviewed publications, experts in the scientific community, organizations, qualified individuals, and on-site field surveys conducted by TPWD staff on

public lands or private lands with written permission. TPWD staff botanists, zoologists, and ecologists perform field surveys to locate and verify specific occurrences of high-priority biological elements and collect accurate information on their condition, quality, and management needs. Increasingly, sightings submitted by citizen volunteers that can be corroborated with photos or specimens have become an important source of data for the TXNDD.

Texas Nature Trackers is now encouraging Texas Master Naturalist chapters to develop teams of volunteers to assist in surveys for these species of concern in the state—kind of a local Biological Assessment Team. As a prototype, we are bringing together amateur botanists and herpetologists in East Texas one weekend this spring to conduct a survey for a large private landowner near Athens. Our hope is that these enthusiasts will continue to work together or on their own in conducting surveys—enjoying time in the field, helping landowners understand what rare and significant species may be found on their property, and helping TPWD better understand the status of some of these species across the state.



We'd love to hear from you. If you already enjoy birding, herping, botanizing, aquatic studies, etc., then all you need to get started is a camera (or perhaps audio recording device) and a GPS. A list of potential plant and vertebrate species of concern in Hays county is found below (there is also a list of invertebrate species of concern, including several freshwater mussels). Please contact me if you are interested, and I will be happy to provide you with a fillable or printable copy of the TXNDD report form and answer any questions.

Lee Ann Linam, TPWD Wildlife Diversity Program
leeann.linam@tpwd.state.tx.us

Hays County Plant Species of Concern

Texas Amorphia - *Amorpha roemeriana*
Hill Country wild-mercury - *Argythamnia aphanoides*
Texas Barberry - *Berberis swaseyi*
Leafy brickellbush - *Brickellia dentata*
Glass Mountains coral-root - *Hexalectris nitida*
Warnock's coral-root - *Hexalectris warnockii*
Heller's false-gromwell - *Onosmodium helleri*
Canyon mock-orange - *Philadelphus ernestii*
Buckley tridens - *Tridens buckleyanus*
Texas wild-rice - *Zizania texana*

Hays County Animal Species of Concern

American eel - *Anguilla rostrata*

Blue sucker - *Cycleptus elongatus*
Fountain darter - *Etheostoma fonticola*
San Marcos gambusia - *Gambusia georgei*
Guadalupe bass - *Micropterus treculii*
Guadalupe darter - *Percina sciera apristis*
San Marcos salamander - *Eurycea nana*
Blanco River springs salamander - *Eurycea pterophila*
Texas blind salamander - *Eurycea rathbuni*
Blanco blind salamander - *Eurycea robusta*
Cagle's map turtle - *Graptemys caglei*
Spot-tailed earless lizard - *Holbrookia lacerata*
Texas horned lizard - *Phrynosoma cornutum*
Texas garter snake - *Thamnophis sirtalis annectens*
Western Burrowing Owl - *Athene cunicularia hypugaea*
Zone-tailed Hawk - *Buteo albonotatus*
Mountain Plover - *Charadrius montanus*
Golden-cheeked Warbler - *Dendroica chrysoparia*
Peregrine Falcon - *Falco peregrinus*
Whooping Crane - *Grus americana*
Bald Eagle - *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Black-capped Vireo - *Vireo atricapilla*
Cave myotis bat - *Myotis velifer*
Plains spotted skunk - *Spilogale putorius interrupta*



Blanco River Springs Salamander

Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Annual Report

Here are a few highlights from the report submitted to the Texas Master Naturalist State Office in January.

| | |
|--|----------------|
| <i>Members completing TMN Training</i> | |
| Total number of volunteers trained in your chapter during the reporting period: | 24 |
| Cumulative total number of volunteers trained through your chapter from your chapter's inception through to the end of the reporting period: | 277 |
| <i>TMN Volunteer Service</i> | |
| Total number of approved volunteer service hours conducted by members during the reporting period: | 8507 |
| Cumulative total number of approved volunteer service hours conducted by members from the time of the chapter's inception through to the end of the reporting period: | 53159 |
| <i>Advanced Training</i> | |
| Total number of Advanced Training hours obtained by your chapter members throughout the reporting period: | 1499 |
| Cumulative total number of Advanced Training hours obtained by chapter members from the inception of the chapter through to the end of the reporting period: | 11527 |
| <i>Outreach and Education</i> | |
| Total number of outreach/education <u>EVENTS</u> ¹ conducted by the chapter throughout the reporting period: | 90 plus |
| 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? | 90 |
| How many youth, adults and/or private landowners ² in total were present for these direct events? | 2968 |
| Of the <u>events</u> reported in the first line above, how many were INDIRECT outreach/education events? Example of an indirect outreach/education event would be manning a booth or display sponsored by your chapter. | 0 |
| Approximately, how many individuals (cumulative total) were in attendance at the INDIRECT outreach/education events during the reporting period? | 0 |
| <i>NEW Acreage Impacted</i> | |
| The total acreage impacted through <u>NEW chapter projects</u> conducted throughout the reporting period. (This includes prairie restorations, wildscapes, landowner management plans/consultations, park enhancements and restorations initiated <u>for the first time</u> during the reporting period) ³ | 222.33 |
| <i>Trail Miles Impacted</i> | |
| Total miles of trails developed or improved through <u>NEW trail maintenance or development projects (initiated for the first time)</u> during the reporting period. (You may be as accurate as to the nearest tenth of a mile) | 3.5 |
| <i>New Partnerships Developed</i> | |
| List the number of new chapter partnerships initiated during the reporting period. <i>Remember: a partnership is a two-way street. Both organizations should be receiving tangibles from each other. Just being a place for Master Naturalists to volunteer is not a partnership</i> | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| <i>offering.</i> Below, list the new partner and what their partnership provides such as copies, meeting room, or other tangible or in-kind resources to the chapter at no cost to the chapter). | | | | | |
| Hays County Water Conservation Working Group booth at Rainwater Revival Conference | | | | | |
| <i>Initial TMN Certification</i> | | | | | |
| Total number of volunteers receiving their Initial TMN Certification (State TMN Certificate and 4-color Dragonfly Pin) through the local chapter throughout the reporting period. | | | | | 24 |
| Total number of volunteers receiving their Initial TMN Certification through the local chapter from the chapter's inception through to the end of the reporting period. | | | | | 268 |
| Total number of volunteers still working toward initial certification at the end of the reporting period. | | | | | 2 |
| Total number of volunteers that have dropped out of the program. | | | | | 6 |
| <i>Annual Re-Certification</i> | | | | | |
| Total number of members attaining the annual Re-Certification requirements during the reporting period. (e.g. number of members receiving the <u>Wood Duck</u> Recertification Pin for 2010) | | | | | 51 |
| <i>Milestone Pins Awarded</i> | | | | | |
| Below, list the total number of Milestone Pins awarded in each category throughout the reporting period. | | | | | |
| 250 Hours | 500 Hours | 1,000 Hours | 2,500 Hours | 5,000 Hours | |
| 7 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | |
| <i>Other Chapter Awards or Successes</i> | | | | | |
| Please list any other awards or recognition given to your chapter and/or to chapter members specifically for your Master Naturalist service throughout the reporting period. You may also use this space to list any other chapter successes or something the chapter is particularly proud of for achieving throughout the reporting period. <i>(Please indicate member name(s) when needed and/or add another sheet if needed) (Feel free to attach high quality photos when submitting your report as well) Descriptions and photos may be used in the published TMN State report.</i> | | | | | |
| The MN Board established a scholarship fund to assist up to 3 trainees beginning with the 2011 class. | | | | | |
| <i>Member Activity</i> | | | | | |
| How Many Members are on your chapter's roster? | | | | | 268 |
| Of those members listed above, how many are 'active'—meaning they have performed <u>AND reported</u> at least ONE hour of chapter approved volunteer service time and --where applicable-- have paid their current chapter dues throughout the reporting period. | | | | | 100 |

January Chapter Meeting

John Herron, Director of Conservation Programs for the Texas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, gave a talk on the work his organization is conducting world-wide, but particularly focused on Texas. He reviewed the importance of biodiversity and the effects of

fragmentation. He also discussed several on-going threats to biodiversity including habitat loss, invasive species, and fire suppression.

Texas faces challenges because of lack of funding, increasing pressure on water resources, the border fence, and increasing demand for developing energy resources including wind power.

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 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.

Reporting Reminder

Reports for January 2011 are due by February 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

Tom Hausler

Tom's wildlife camera captured some interesting guests in December.



Grey Foxes at the water dish. Photo by Tom Hausler.



A Ringtail visits. Photo by Tom Hausler.

Tom reports that there were many Grey Foxes this Fall and Winter. He usually caught 2 to 4 each night with the camera.

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.



Advanced Training Opportunities

Hays County Invaders

The following workshop is approved for 6.0 Advanced Training Hours

[Hays County Invaders](#)

Location: Hays County Extension Office, 1253 Civic Center Loop (San Marcos, TX)

Trainers(s): Travis Gallo

Time: 9 am – 4 pm Saturday, Feb. 26th, 2011

Notes: Please bring a GPS and camera if available. Lunch plans TBD.

Local Host: Hays County MN & San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance

Become A Citizen Scientist

Do you want to help slow down the spread of harmful invasive species and reduce their ecological and economic damage? The first step is to locate where invaders have arrived and get that information to those who can do something about it. That's where citizen scientists come in. Citizen scientists are volunteers who receive expert training to identify and track important invaders in our area.

The Hays County Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists and the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance are hosting an Invaders of Texas Citizen Scientist Workshop at the Hays County Extension Office Saturday, February 26th, 2011 from 9:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m.

The workshop includes classroom training about invasive species, GPS use, digital photography and reporting observations.

If you are seriously interested in joining in helping slow the spread of invasives, please contact Lance Jones, lancej1s@gmail.com.

You will receive a notice of acceptance and additional information approximately one month before the class.

Payment is not due until after you have received notice of acceptance into the class. Space is limited to 35 participants.

For more information about the Invaders of Texas program, visit <http://www.texasinvasives.org>

- Lance Jones



Volunteer Opportunities

Cornell Great Backyard Bird Count Project #701

The 2011 GBBC will take place Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21. Please join us!

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. We'll be adding updated GBBC materials for the next count as they become available.

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

- Ginger Geist

Wimberley Outdoor Educators

This year the Wimberley Outdoor Educators (project 809 HCMN volunteer activity) are planning a one day outdoor education experience for the 4th graders at Jacob's Well Elementary School at the new Outdoor Education Facility on their campus.

The three main topics are stream tables, plant life cycle and pollinators, and plant adaptations. We need volunteers to help us. Because it is a new session there will be a planning session on February 23rd, a rehearsal date (TBA after mid March) and the actual field experience day is April 12.

If you are interested, call Jackie Mattice, 512 847 2165 or email her at jrm44313@yahoo.com.

Watch this space and your email for upcoming Volunteer Opportunities.



State and National News

Whooping Cranes

The Texas Tribune has an article about the federal lawsuit on the whooping cranes.

"The Endangered Species Act lawsuit over the last remaining naturally migrating flock of whooping cranes will move forward, a federal district judge ruled Wednesday.

The Aransas Project, a nonprofit organization formed to protect water resources in the Aransas Bay region, filed the lawsuit against the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in March after an unprecedented 23 birds died during the 2008-2009 winter. The organization believes the TCEQ's over-allocation of fresh water upstream from the Aransas Bay marshland, where the birds winter, caused the fatalities. That constitutes an illegal "taking," that is, harm or harassment, of the bird under federal law, The Aransas Project contends."

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



Local News

Spring Lake Interpretive Project

From the [SMGA's](#) web site:

"SMGA's stewardship committee has been meeting with Melani Howard with the San Marcos Nature Center and Alberto Giordano and Jim Kimmel with Texas State's geography department. Drs. Giordano and Kimmel plan to have students from their classes collaborate on interpretive elements for Spring Lake Preserve that the city and SMGA will help develop and install. The interpretive elements may include kiosk displays, maps, and a brochure. Several hikes to help students access and understand Spring Lake Preserve occurred in January and may continue into February. Let us know if you have an interest in this project and we'll hook you up!"



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