

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

January, 2009

January 2009 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The first board meeting of 2009 is scheduled for January 15 at 7:00 PM. The meeting will be held at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit at 301 Hays Country Acres Road, which is about 2.5 miles east of Dripping Springs on Hwy 290. A map is available [here](#). The meeting will be held in the narthex so please enter through the front door of the church. If you have items for the agenda, please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org, or 512-517-3111.

Chapter Meeting

The first chapter meeting of 2009 is scheduled for January 22, at the Extension office at 6:30 PM. A map is available [here](#).

The speaker will be Dr. Jim Gallagher who is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Science at Texas A&M University and also an Extension Wildlife Specialist with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. His talk will be about land and ownership fragmentation.

Land fragmentation refers to breaking up contiguous areas with the same land cover and land use into smaller portions. Ownership fragmentation is the division of rural lands into smaller parcels that remain in rural use.

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.



The Presidential View

Welcome to the first edition of the 2009 Master Naturalist newsletter. I want to express my sincere thanks to the chapter for your confidence in electing me President for 2009. I am honored to serve this outstanding group of naturalists and will do my best to continue to enhance the organization. I will need your help and hope each of you will feel free to make suggestions and volunteer for projects and activities we provide to improve the hill country.

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 & Editor	Art Arizpe 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

Thanks also to the outgoing board and committee members. Your service has been exemplary and is reflected in our 2008 Annual Report to the Texas Master Naturalist Program. Because of your time and work the chapter has continued to grow and sustain itself.

Welcome to the new officers and committee chairs for 2009. I appreciate your willingness to serve the chapter and look forward to working with each of you. Some of the areas on which we hope to focus this year include: developing new partnerships, enlisting more chapter sponsors, and increasing member re-certification and diversity.

I encourage all members to participate in chapter projects, activities, and meetings. Chapter meetings are scheduled for the fourth Thursday of each month in different locations. Field trips may be scheduled on weekends. If you have suggestions or questions, please contact Ben Adair at vp@haysmn.org.

With the exception of January, the 2009 board meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of each month. Board meetings will be held in different locations in the county. They are open to members and to the public. If you have items or proposals for the board, please let me know at pres@haysmn.org.

Together we can provide educational and practical programs for Hays County, the communities, and the citizens. I look forward to serving with each of you.

- Dixie Camp

A Note From Your Editor

I'm excited to be the new newsletter editor! Many thanks to Richard Barnett for helping me get started with my first issue.

I was in the class of 2007 (Go Madrones!) and in the two years since I've met many impressive and wonderful people. I'm glad to help the chapter in this new role.

My professional background is in electrical engineering as a chip designer; definitely a left-brain activity, so my Master Naturalist experience gives my right-brain a much-needed workout! Most of my volunteer work has been at the WOPL Onion Creek site, but I've also worked at the Texas Expo and the Emily Ann Theatre Butterfly Day. I've given the Rainfall Simulator talk many, many times and can now do it in my sleep, although not as well as Ray Franklin. I grew up in San Antonio and have lived in Hays County since 1989.

As always, please send your comments, news items, and photos to news@haysmn.org. I look forward to hearing from you!



Featured Project

Blanco Watershed Water Quality Monitoring

This 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. LaRay and Ginger Geist won the chapter's 2008 Outstanding Volunteers of the Year Award, in part due to their efforts on this project. LaRay and Ginger transferred to our chapter from the Gulf Coast MN, where they graduated from the Spring 2002 class.

Over the past year, several Hays County Master Naturalists, became concerned about maintaining the exceptional water quality in the Lone Man Creek watershed. The group decided to develop an understanding of the changes taking place in the

region by participating in the Texas Watershed Steward training from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

Several also attended the TST monitor training at Texas State University in San Marcos in February 2008, where they obtained their water quality monitoring certification for all core parameters. LaRay and Ginger are also certified in E. coli testing. The Nature Conservancy– Blanco River Project generously donated a monitoring kit and supplies to the initial group that began monitoring in May 2008.

Although their vision was originally limited to monitoring the Lone Man Creek watershed, it quickly expanded due to a flurry of interest, and now encompasses the broader Blanco River watershed.

Additional volunteers were trained in July 2008 and in August were assigned sites throughout the Wimberley area to monitor the Blanco, Cypress Creek and Lone Man Creek.

Jackie Mattice, from the MN class of 2008, is also a certified trainer. She completed her trainer internship by supervising the July class. She would like to train other MNs and can hold local classes not restricted to the TST training schedule.



A bucket grab is one method of collecting a sample.

The goal of this group is to document the baseline water conditions in the Wimberley area. Taking 2-3 hours each month, monitors make careful observations about the condition of the water, weather and other pertinent facts. Hands-on monitoring for core parameters include measuring water temperature, which affects feeding, reproduction and the metabolism of aquatic animals, air temperature, and water clarity; measuring dissolved solids with a conductivity meter;

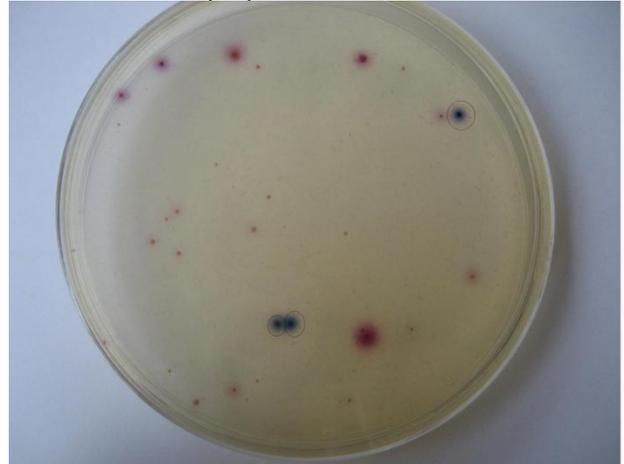
measuring dissolved oxygen, required for growth and activity; and measuring pH acidity.



Preparing a water sample for the dissolved oxygen measurement.

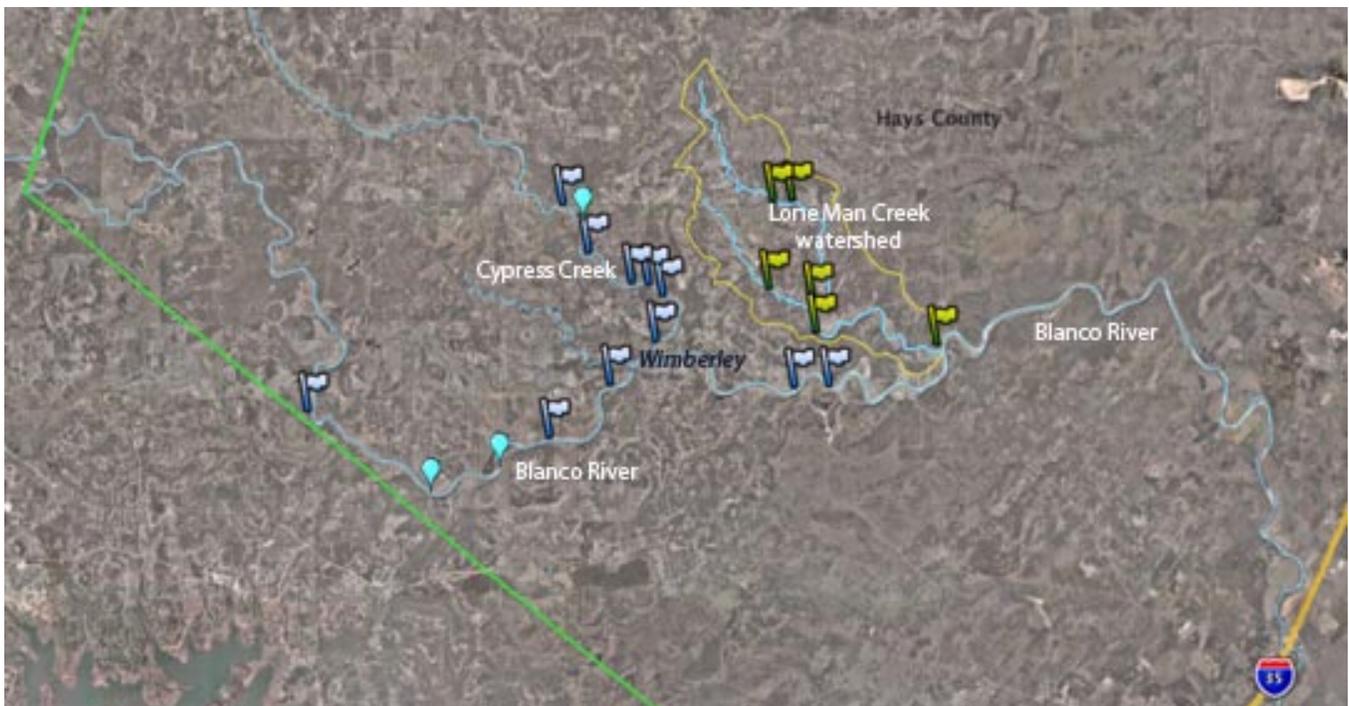
The monitoring test kits are provided by the TST and the chemicals are funded by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority.

Of the 20 monitors, seven are certified to monitor for *E. coli.*, an indicator bacteria used to determine the relative risk of swimming (contact recreation). Using the Coliscan Easygel method, a measured water sample is mixed with the media, poured into a pre-treated Petri dish and incubated for 28 hours at 33C. Monitors then count the number of individual and distinct dark purple and dark blue colonies.



This E. coli example shows an acceptable 60 colonies/100 mL.

All water quality data collected through this effort is submitted to TST for inclusion in the statewide database. In the future, monitoring data will provide valuable information regarding the effects of urbanization on water quality in the region. Documenting water quality changes will also provide local decision-makers with necessary information to



Current sites - more sites are possible.

protect our water resources.

The project is open to anyone who takes the training and is not restricted to MNs. The project is actively seeking monitors. Sites are chosen using TST guidelines and are submitted for approval before monitoring begins. Please contact Ginger Geist via email, pondscum@swbell.net, if you would like to volunteer for a site in the Wimberley area.

The TST hosts water quality training several times a year at Texas State University in San Marcos. The next TST training will be held in February. Please contact the Stream Team Statewide Volunteer Coordinator, Heidi Moltz via email, hm1079@txstate.edu or phone 512-245-3461, if you would like information about future training.



Chapter News

2009 Training Class

The 2009 Training Class begins in February. Anyone interested in training to become a Texas Master Naturalist should contact the AgriLife Extension Office in San Marcos, 512-393-2120, or follow this [Class Information](#) link, for information about joining the class.

2009 Training Committee

The 2009 Training Committee members are:

Mimi Boelter	Coordinator
Linda Webb	Vice-Coordinator
Leah Laszewski	Attendance
Sandy Lucas	Attendance
Marianne Reese	Speaker contact
Jean McMeans	Meals
Lin Weber	Meals
Karen Archer	Nature Watch
Jamie Kinscherff	Site visit coordinator
Ann Connell	Site visit coordinator
Randy Garst	Camera man/Tech person
Debbie Wright	Secretary

Many thanks to these folks for volunteering for this important committee and helping to create future Master Naturalists!

HaysMN Forum

The Forum traffic has been light lately. This is a great resource where you can share information or ask questions. 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 (web@haysmn.org) know if you have any questions or suggestions. Better yet, use the Forum to discuss the Forum.

Herb Smith, Webmaster, www.haysmn.org, 512-847-2006

Reporting Reminder

Reports for December 2008 are due by January 7. Please submit your reports of Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours by using the friendly report forms at www.haysmn.org.

Annual Dues Time!

It's that time of year. Send in your HCMN Dues for 2009 now and get the year started off on the right note. Mail your check for \$15.00 made out to Hays County Master Naturalist to:

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



Members in the News

Ella Hetherly

Ella Hetherly, a Master Naturalist from the class of 2006, passed away December 16. Among many other activities, she volunteered at the Lady Bird Wildflower Center and portrayed Mother Nature on the chapter's 2007 July 4 parade float. A celebration and scattering of ashes was held at her home on December 27.

Donations to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in her honor are appreciated.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to Ella's family.

Calendar

(The dragonfly logo identifies official HCMN events)

Texas Water Symposia

The third meeting of the Texas Water Symposia series will be on January 29 in Fredericksburg. Read more info [here](#).



Advanced Training Opportunities

Bear Creek Bends and Open Savannas

Saturday January 3, 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM, 3.5 hours of advanced training

A 3.5 mile guided hike through restored grasslands to the banks of Bear Creek. The creek may be dry, but you will see evidence of the beavers that called this section of creek home during the wetter times.

Upper reaches of Bull Creek

Sunday January 4, 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM, 3.5 hours of advanced training

Participants will be led on an interpretive hike through a variety of terrains, starting on a rocky plateau, before descending a slope of rich wooded golden-cheeked warbler habitat. This tract was featured on KUT in December. Hear it at <http://kut.org/items/show/15086>

For registration, please contact Daniel Dietz, Environmental Conservation Information Specialist, City of Austin -- Wildland Conservation Division. 3635 RR 620S, Austin, TX 78738-6807. Tel: 512-263-6443; cell phone: 512-731-2517. Fax: 512-263-1276. Pager 512-802-8721.



Volunteer Opportunities

GBBC is Coming!

PROJECT #701

Save the Dates: The next 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!"

Participants did just that in record numbers for the 2008 count, submitting more than 85,000 checklists and identifying 635 species. Let's break some more records this year!



State and National News

Central Texas Drought Continues

From the San Antonio Express News: "The Central Texas area classified as in exceptional drought expanded this week to include Floresville, Fredericksburg, Kerrville, Bandera, Bastrop and Round Rock, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor." The full story is [here](#).

Texas Monarch Watch

Journey North. Fall 2008 Monarch Butterfly Migration: For maps tracing Monarch migrations, please see www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/monarch_f08_roosts.html.

For a map of Monarch sightings in Texas this fall, please see http://www.texasento.net/Monarchs_Fall08.htm

Thanks, Mike Quinn, Texas Monarch Watch, www.texasento.net/dplex.htm, Invertebrate Biologist, Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Parks & Wildlife. 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744. 512-389-8759 or 8758 (FAX). Cell: 512-577-0250. mike.quinn@tpwd.state.tx.us

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Learning Bird Behavior Turns Kids into Scientists

Ithaca, NY--Why is that crow chasing a hawk? Do birds fly away from noisy places? How long will an American Robin spend pulling a worm from the ground? The BirdSleuth curriculum from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is all about tapping into a child's natural curiosity to answer scientific questions in a fun way. The just-released revision of the Exploring Bird Behavior module offers educators even more lessons, posters, and multimedia resources. The new student toolkit comes with two important tools for collecting behavioral information about birds: a BirdSleuth stopwatch and tally counter.

"Kids love to work with gadgets," says BirdSleuth project leader Jennifer Fee. "Give them a stopwatch or put them in a lab coat, and they transform into little scientists. And then it becomes easier to explain tricky concepts, such as the difference between a behavioral event and a behavioral state." (An event can be counted; a state can be timed.)

This module also comes with a DVD showing bird behaviors most students have never seen, including stunning slow-motion video of the exotic courtship dance of the Greater Sage-Grouse. A 32-page teacher's guide includes step-by-step instructions for completing all six lessons, or "investigations."

The Exploring Bird Behavior module, like the others in the BirdSleuth series, engages students in inquiry by building lessons and activities around citizen-science projects from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This module uses the Crows Count project. Students count crows and their relatives (ravens, magpies, and jays), observe their behaviors, and report what they see to the Cornell Lab where scientists are studying the dynamics of group behavior in crows.

"BirdSleuth gets kids interested in nature, gets them outside, and teaches them to think more critically," says Fee. "They ask questions, collect data, look for patterns and evidence, test ideas, make conclusions, and share results."

To learn more about the new Exploring Bird Behavior module and about the entire BirdSleuth curriculum, visit www.birds.cornell.edu/BirdSleuth.edu. The staff is happy to answer any questions about how to make BirdSleuth a welcome supplement to your existing science curriculum.



Local News

Low Flow on San Marcos River

SMRF also reports that the water flow in the San Marcos River was down to 95 cubic feet per second (cfs) last Monday and that San Marcos will begin stage 1 conservation rules when the 10-day average is 96 cfs or less, also called the critical period because endangered species cannot survive long in such dry conditions.

Edwards Aquifer Alliance (EAA) staff expect us to enter stage 1 by January 21 and stage 2 by April or

May. San Marcos' drought has been even worse than San Antonio's drought, which has had its worst 15-month low-water period since 1871. Since we are headed for a seriously dry spring and maybe summer, why not start conserving now? EAA is meeting with mayors around the region to encourage them to find ways to curtail water use before it is too late. It will be too late if we lose our spring flow to the point that endangered species die off. Please help people understand the dead seriousness of this drought.

-- SMGA, December, 22.

Lime Kiln Road Recharge Zone

The San Marcos River Foundation (SMRF) recently reported on a problematic city wastewater pipe on Lime Kiln Rd. SMRF submitted photos to TCEQ of sunken areas that formed several times after the pipe was buried, plus a wet spot that may indicate that a spring was exposed when the 30 foot-deep trench was dug.

TCEQ found that an improper grade of pipe had been installed and required the contractor to clean up soil that eroded into Sink creek. SMRF continues to be concerned that the gravel bed deposited by contractors to support the pipe is washing away underground into caves or cavities deep in the recharge zone. A solid gravel bed is required to stabilize the pipe as it carries tons of sewage to the city's wastewater treatment plant. The project will cut through the recharge zone and across Sink Creek Canyon to Craddock Street and has the potential to forever damage the water quality of the San Marcos River. The increased wastewater capacity will support dense development in the area, which is not good for the recharge zone, Sink Creek, or the river. Thanks to SMRF for keeping an eye on the project and for keeping us informed.

-- SMGA, December, 22.

Wimberley Butterfly Watch

From the VisitWimberley web site: "Imagine a creature scarcely four inches across, with fragile orange and black wings, weighing less than half an ounce, flying up to six thousand miles to find warmth and shelter from winter climes."

Read the full article, by Dorey Schmidt, [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-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature_Center.html
Gorge Preservation Society -- www.canyongorge.org