

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

January, 2012

Chapter Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, January 5th, 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 Larry Calvert, pres@haysmn.org, by January 3rd.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, January 26th, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, 301 Hays Country Acres Road, in Dripping Springs. A map is available [here](#).

Jane Tillman will speak about "Wintering Birds". Professionally, Jane is a Lecturer in Dietetics at UT's Department of Nutritional Sciences. But Jane is also an avid birder. She is a Capitol Area Master Naturalist & serves as chair of the Travis Audubon Society Urban Habitat Committee. She wrote a recent piece in the Austin American Statesman: "[To me, Austin is all about the birds.](#)"

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



A Naturalist's View

Larry Calvert, our new Chapter President, was in the Class of 2006 and has served as Treasurer for several years.

Once again I thank you for the opportunity to serve as your HCMN President for 2012. I am really looking forward to working with more of you in the coming year. The Chapter has been humming along growing in projects and in membership. I would like to see us continue to have an impact on Hays County and the people in it.

I hope your experience of becoming a Master Naturalist has been as positive as mine. I see the world in a different way because of the Master Naturalist training classes, our projects and

Board of Directors

President	Larry Calvert
Vice President	Anne Child
Secretary	Chris Middleton
Treasurer	Beth Ramey
Past-President	Jeff Vasgaard
State Representative	Tom Watson
Training Committee	Lin Weber
Advanced Training Comm.	Becky Northcut
Membership Committee	Beth Ramey
Web Master	Herb Smith
Newsletter Committee & Editor	Art Arizpe news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	Leah Laszewski
Calendar Committee	Tom Hausler
Host Committee	Helen Bowie Eva Gomez
Historian	Dale Shively
Volunteer Service	Art Arizpe
AgriLife Agent	Richard Parrish
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam

the continuing education. Sometimes I am amazed at the breadth of topics and shift in perspective that this continuing education has produced. It is this perspective that I would like for us to find better ways to share with our friends and with our various community groups.

At the Social in August, we conducted a survey to gather your ideas about projects, changes that might improve the organization, and anything else on the minds of members. We were excited to see how many good suggestions the survey generated. The Board will be working hard to see how much of your thinking we can put into action. I'd appreciate your continued input -- things we may have missed or shifts in priorities that you think are important. Also please give some thought to how you might become more active in the Master Naturalist program this year and how we might better involve others.

Looking ahead to 2012 here are some of the things I think we need to do. We need to expand our outreach. We were limited somewhat in 2011 because we did not have a committee chair to take point on outreach activities. However, Leah Laszewski has agreed to lead this committee for 2012. Even with that limitation in 2011, we did some important new and continuing outreach.

As the outreach plans for 2012 unfold, again, please find a place that you might enjoy contributing. In addition to the work of our 2012 outreach committee, I would like to see each of us make the most of opportunities to educate the community about what we do and who we are. Just being openly proud of your title as a Master Naturalist and sharing who we are and what we are doing is one way to let people know about us and, maybe even, get them seeing the world a little differently.

I also would like to find a way to significantly increase the attendance at each Chapter meeting. For me, the Chapter meetings are particularly enjoyable, both for the education and the social interaction. I always find something that piques my interest and suggests new actions; and I enjoy hanging out with new and old friends (and younger ones too).

Vice president Anne Child is already at work identifying Chapter meeting topics and presenters. We are reviewing your survey suggestions for ideas on meetings and increasing attendance but are open to any other ideas you may have. Your commitment to attend Chapter meetings is also important – we want you there!

I am sure there are many other things we need to be doing in 2012 but most of all we need to do those things that keep you wanting to be involved and so very proud of what we stand for and what we are doing as Master Naturalists. I look forward to seeing you at the January 26th Chapter meeting.

- Larry Calvert



Featured Project

Project Feeder Watch

Project #1110

Do you have a bird feeder in your backyard? Or have you been thinking of putting one up, but just haven't gotten around to it? Here's your chance to provide birds with supplemental food, get to do some bird-watching and identification, and also earn volunteer hours during the winter!

[Project FeederWatch](#) is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.



A Blue Grosbeak with an Indigo Bunting. Photo by Tom Hausler.



Snow birds. Photo by Tom Hausler.

The project is run by the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#). There is a \$15 annual participation fee which covers the cost of materials, staff support, web design, data analysis, and a year-end report, *Winter Bird Highlights*. Participants receive a [Research Kit](#) and a subscription to the Lab of Ornithology's newsletter, *BirdScope*.

The project was approved for volunteer hours in December, 2011. Randy Garst is the chapter project leader and contact.

The 2011-2012 data collection runs through April 6th, and it's not too late to join. You can join at any time through the end of February.

The activity consists of periodically counting the birds you see at your feeders and sending your counts to the project. All you need is an interest in birds – participants include people at all skill levels and backgrounds. You'll choose a count site where you have provided plantings, food, or water and count the observed birds, reporting only the highest number of individuals that you see at one time. You'll then report your counts at the Project FeederWatch website. You

select your own bird-count days, which are two consecutive days, with a minimum five-day interval between counts. You can count during all or part of those days.

FeederWatch is a unique monitoring tool for more than 100 bird species that winter in North America. The data provides weekly changes in bird distribution and abundance across the United States and Canada. It indicates where the birds are as well as where they are not. The data are extremely powerful for detecting and explaining gradual changes in the wintering ranges of many species. They provided information about bird population biology that cannot be detected by any other available method.

Are you interested? Please visit the project's web page, [here](#), to sign up. You can also contact Randy, randygarst@zeecon.com, if you have any questions.



Chapter News

On the Trail

A Sneak Preview with Lin Weber

Move over Painted Buntings! Lin Weber and her enthusiastic HCMN training committee are currently planning a dynamic series of Master Naturalist classes for Hays County residents during 2012. The January 12th application deadline is just around the corner with classes commencing on February 21st. Don't let your friends miss out on this amazing opportunity. Applications are presently available online or by calling the Hays County Extension Office. Take a look at some of the things Lin has shared:

Q: What's new for 2012?

A: I am proud that the Hays County Master Naturalist program is an established organization with a workable format that does not need a lot of annual tweaking. We've had an incredibly talented and committed group of individuals who have fine-tuned the curriculum over the years. The state organization has set the basic curriculum which is largely represented in "the big fat notebook" that trainees are issued at the first class. Speakers are asked to focus on the native ecosystems of Hays County so that students can readily apply what they learn to their own neighborhoods. We'll have some repeat speakers but new ones are well. Each class begins with Nature Watch which is a sort of current events about what is happening in our backyards. With different weather conditions and each year's new set of students, we address the uniqueness of each season and situation as they develop.

Q: Are there any changes that we can expect?

A: We are excited about a class that is developing on the status of the conservation movement and secondly, an expanded role for the wetlands at Aquarena Springs. We also look forward to using the new educational facility at Freeman Ranch. No more jam-packed classrooms when we go to study butterflies.

Q: Why did you decide to accept the chairperson position for the MN trainee class?

A: My background as a high school science teacher was a perfect fit for this leadership position; the experience I gained working alongside Jean McMeans last year was also great

preparation. I love the concept of life-long learning and connecting with like-minded people regarding environmental matters. A huge plus is connecting with experts in the varied science fields. We are so fortunate to have an extensive collection of both professional and amateur naturalists who are generous of time and talent for the program. None of our speakers are ever paid for their presentations. Our reputation precedes us and we are really proud of that!

Q: How did you pick your 2012 trainee committee?

A: Each position has a skill set and we look for enthusiastic, motivated people to fill those roles. We are really privileged that **Lindsay Calvert, Steve Janda, Tracy Mock, Don Wallace,** and **David Womer** from the Painted Buntings have agreed to work with an outstanding group of returning committee members for the new year.

Q: Tell us about the application process. How do you choose class members?

A: We send press releases to the local papers and try to get the word out any way we can. Students are accepted in the order that their applications are received and we'll have 38 openings for this year's class. The clock is ticking and Mother Nature is calling!

Another great year! Another great opportunity!

- Lucille Trail Kirkham

Chapter Financial Audit

The Chapter's Financial Audit Committee, led by our TPWD advisor, Lee Ann Linam, and including Richard Parrish, our AgriLife Advisor, and outgoing Chapter Secretary Becky Northcut, met on December 5th to review the records submitted by Larry Calvert, outgoing Chapter Treasurer.

The records covered the period from November 2010 through October 2011. The committee found the records to be in good order, with no major discrepancies with the following minor exceptions: Documentation in the form of a receipt and a HCMN Reimbursement form was missing for six checks.

The committee noted that all expenditures appear to be valid expenses and recommend acceptance of this audit and approval of the financial records. The committee commends Larry for developing an excellent record keeping and budgeting system for the Chapter's finances.

Calendar Committee

Tom Hausler has been maintaining our Chapter's online calendar and has volunteered to continue in that role. Many thanks to Tom! Project leaders: this is a great way to let members know of your volunteer opportunities. You can find it [here](#).

Please send Tom any Chapter events to include, thausler@prismnet.com.

TMN Program Staff Changes:

Since Sonny's retirement as the Assistant Program Coordinator, we have had some restructuring at Texas Parks & Wildlife and I have acquired three new staff who all will provide some support to the Texas Master Naturalist Program in addition to supporting the programs they currently manage as well.

Please help me in welcoming Mark Klym, Marsha May and Lee Ann Linam to our TMN family. You all probably already know Mark as the Hummingbird Round Up and Wildscapes Program Coordinator and Marsha and Lee Ann coordinate the Texas Nature Trackers programs for TPWD and all three of them have been a great support to the TMN program over the past several years in various capacities. In addition to their existing duties, half of their time will be dedicated to the TMN program too. More info on how Sonny's previous duties will be split up amongst them will follow in the weeks to come.

- Michelle Haggerty

2012 Chapter Dues

As of December 31st, 98 members have paid their dues - and that is fantastic. Dues are due by the end of the year but if you missed paying them please send a check made out to "Hays County Master Naturalists" for \$15 and send it to the following address:

Hays County Master Naturalists
P. O. Box 78
Wimberley, TX 78676

Attention:
Beth Ramey - Chapter Treasurer

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 December are due by January 5th. 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

Meg Inglis

Congratulations to **Meg Inglis**, who received the [Native Plant Society of Texas Presidential Award of Excellence](#) for her “dedication in promoting the NPSOT mission.”

Meg won the award, along with Kathy Trizna and Cheryl Harrison, for testifying before the state legislature against House Bill 338 – a bill submitted by the plant nursery industry aimed at limiting the scope of the term “invasive” to those few plants that are listed by the Texas Department of Agriculture. The bill passed, nevertheless, but not without a fight by those representing the Native Plant Society.

The plant nursery industry did not like the fact that native plant enthusiasts were identifying some of their important plants for trade – ligustrum, chinese tallow, heavenly bamboo, for example – as invasive (which they definitely are). The NPSOT efforts were impacting consumers by getting them to think about what they were buying.

Tom Hausler

Tom shares his “Best Trail-Cam Photo of 2011”.



A Bobcat at the water dish. Photo by Tom Hausler.

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

Please watch your emails for upcoming Advanced Training Opportunities.



Volunteer Opportunities

Please watch your emails for upcoming Volunteer Opportunities.



State and National News

Rarest Bumblebee In US Found In New Mexico

From [SciTechDaily](#):

“Researchers from University of California Riverside have rediscovered one of the rarest species of bumblebee in the United States; the Cockerell’s Bumblebee. This is exciting news as this species has not been seen in over 50 years. It was found in the White Mountains of south-central New Mexico last summer.

It was a rare find since most bumblebees in the US are known from dozens to even thousands of specimens, but that’s not the case with this species. Another factor is that the area is not visited by entomologists very often and the species has also had a history of being ignored because they thought it was not actually a genuine species, but rather a regional color variant of another well-known species. So it’s part rarity and part mistaken identity. You might say they were stung by a false assumption.”

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



Local News

Dangers of fracking still becoming clear

From the Austin American Statesman:

“The word ‘fracking’ may sound funny, but it describes a drilling practice that has created a serious boom in natural gas production in Texas and elsewhere, and with the boom has come serious worries about fracking's effects on the environment.

States are just now catching up with the boom and are starting to pass rules governing fracking. The scrutiny is needed.

Fracking is formally known as hydraulic fracturing. It's a drilling process that forces a high-pressure mixture of water, chemicals and sand deep underground to break apart shale

formations. Oil and natural gas then flow along these cracks to the surface. Energy companies use fracking to tap reserves previously out of reach.”

You may find 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

Gorge Preservation Society -- www.canyongorge.org

Hill Country Photography Club – hcphotoclub.org

LBJ Wildflower Center -- www.wildflower.org

San Marcos Nature Center -- www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature_Center.html