

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

July, 2010

July 2010 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

There is no July board meeting.

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, August 5th, 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, or 512-517-3111, by August 1st.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be a field trip to the Westcave Preserve on Thursday, July 22nd, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. A map is available [here](#).

Our guide will be John Ahrens.

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, or 512-858-1015.



A Naturalist's View

This month we hear from Karen Hulene Bartell, who is the founder and Director of Texas H₂Oasis™. She also serves as the leader for project #602, the EmilyAnn Theatre Worm Wrangling and Butterfly Festival, and is a member of the Program Committee.

Speaking to Master Naturalists about environmental education is like preaching to the choir. (Do I hear an *amen*?) However, there's an aspect of environmental education that I'd like to discuss. Let's call it the passing of the torch.

Are you seeing gray lately? When I attend Chapter Meetings, I see a lot of gray hair (not mine, of course, which is "naturally" blond ;^) Like many MNs, I didn't actively seek to learn more about the environment until my fifties. Decades had passed between my childhood on a farm in northern Wisconsin and my joining the HCMN Class of 2005, the Cougars. The years in between were spent in urban and suburban areas. Though I enjoyed the outdoors, supported environmental groups, gathered

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votes on petitions from Saving the Whales to Protecting Wolves, I wasn't compelled to learn more about the environment.

Yet I always carried a deep-rooted recollection of life in the country, *of nature*. Memories of four formative years spent among dairy cattle, tractors, fields of corn with tassels that I could braid to my heart's content, "useless" swamps (pre-wetland nomenclature) filled with pollywogs and turtles, and country roads lined with choke cherries, pin cherries, and wild blackberries (that my aunt turned into delicious jellies) held an allure for me. Finally, those reminiscences percolated to the surface. As a result, I *made* time, joined the MNs, and became reacquainted with nature, but I attribute that reintroduction to my early inoculation. (*You can take the girl out of the country, but...*)

And that's my point: because as a youngster I *had been initiated* to the wonders of nature, my love for the outdoors could smolder for decades before I was able to once again embrace it, yet the attraction never waned.

I have a hypothesis. How many of you MNs lived in the country or were exposed to nature in your childhood? Studies have proven that the most direct route to caring for the environment as an adult is participating in "wild nature activities" before the age of eleven (Wells and Lekies, 2006). My theory is

that few people are drawn to become MNs if they had not been introduced to nature in their childhood. (Seriously, I am curious about this. Please feel free to write me at hulene1@austin.rr.com with your thoughts.)

Now to discuss that aspect of environmental education that we'll call the passing of the torch: if we, the gray-haired generation, don't introduce today's children to nature, if we don't pass on our love for the environment, who will support it, vote on behalf of it (in fifteen years), or save it for the generations to come?

According to the National Wildlife Federation, spending time outside "begins a life-long appreciation of wildlife and nature...[but] by the time most children go to kindergarten, they have spent more than 5,000 hours in front of a TV – enough time to earn a college degree." Studies show that spending time in nature helps kids feel secure, happy, and more focused in their daily lives, but, in a typical week, only 6% of children play outside (Children & Nature Network, 2008). It's too easy these days to come home from school (or work), flop in a chair, and sit in front of a PC or TV, while texting or talking on the phone.

One of the three reasons I founded Texas *H₂Oasis*[™], a 501c3 nonprofit organization, is to help students become stewards in harmony with nature by bridging the distance between passive and passionate, between the sedentary and exploratory, between the television screen and the natural scene with a learning experience that creates an affinity for nature.

At the Driftwood *Horse Feathers* facility, Texas *H₂Oasis*[™] creates an outdoor learning experience for the desk-bound students. Breaking free from their confines, children can leave the classroom behind and encounter nature face-to-face. Volunteer guides are pleased to make the introductions.

As adults and MNs, we find environmental education enjoyable and satisfying, but, for children, environmental education is essential.

I invite you to share your love of nature *and pass the torch.*

- Karen Hulene Bartell



Featured Project

Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, Dripping Springs Project #425

You've probably been to the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Dripping Springs because we hold many chapter meetings there. You've probably noticed the nice xeriscapic landscape and the abundant native plants. Of course, that is no accident!

The Church is the location of Project #425 and is situated on 26.5 acres on a hilltop in Dripping Springs, about 4 miles east of the junction of Highway 290 and Ranch Road 12 at 301 Hays County Acres Road. A map is available [here](#).

Our chapter's project contact is Tom Hausler, who started the project along with Ben Adair in 2007. Both Tom and Ben are members of the class of 2007, the Madrones. What a great class!

Tom is currently the Chapter's Vice President and has a professional background and two degrees in Computer Science. Tom also serves as the Nature Walk Coordinator on the Training Committee. He has 10 years experience in the tropical plant business. He became interested in HCMN because he wanted to pursue a wildlife management exemption for his property and also because of a general interest in the outdoors.



Ben Adair keeping the children busy. Photo by Tom Hausler.

Ben served as the Chapter's Vice President in 2009 and has a professional background in HR/Payroll systems technical sales support. His interest in HCMN started when he became involved with the

program at the Church and discovered that many of the Church members were also Master Naturalists.

The project's objectives are to protect and restore the habitat on the Church property. This includes providing habitat for birds and other wildlife. Some of the work so far, has consisted of installing and maintaining bird feeders, bird houses, and creating and maintaining trails.



Volunteers working on creating a trail. Photo by Tom Hausler.

There is an old quarry or gravel pit on the property which was used when Highway 290 was built. The quarry has become a problem because it routinely floods and stays wet. Part of the restoration efforts consists of filling in this area and replanting it with native grasses and plants.



The quarry area as it looked in March 2010. Photo provided by Ben Adair.

In addition to our chapter, both the Church Youth group and the Girl Scouts are involved. This means the project also serves secondary goals of education and outreach. Just think of the great benefit derived from involving children in the project and how that will continue to provide returns in the future?

Please contact Tom Hausler, vp@haysmn.org, 512-858-1015, if you would like to help or learn more about this project.



Chapter News

June Chapter Meeting

Dr. Peter English, from the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Texas in Austin delivered a very engaging talk titled "Birds, Birds, Birds".

He provided an overview of what he called "the things to like about birds" – Availability, Behavior, Migration, Physiology, and Diversity.

His presentation made great use of photos, videos and sound to demonstrate his points.

Hours Reporting Request

Michelle Haggerty, the state Master Naturalist Program Coordinator, is asking us to report our volunteer hours on a quarterly basis.

You have received a reminder from our Chapter Secretary, Becky Northcut, about reporting the second quarter hours by July 7th and will receive further reminders as the end of each quarter approaches.

This new reporting requirement will ease the end-of-year crunch that we normally experience and the Chapter Board of Directors thanks you for your cooperation.

New Rainfall Simulator

As you may have heard, the chapter now has a second rainfall simulator. The new rainfall simulator is currently at the Extension office but we are seeking volunteers to take responsibility for the unit.

This means keeping the tubs planted and watered, housing the unit, and ideally, being able to transport it when needed for demonstrations and events.

Please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org, or 512-517-3111, if you're interested in helping.

Old Tunnel Bat Cave Field Trip

There is a Special Field Trip scheduled for July 28th to the Old Tunnel Bat Cave Wildlife Area. HCMNs will be treated to a private tour by Nyta Brown who spoke at our January chapter meeting. We can have

a maximum of 70 people attend. Please RSVP to Tom Hausler, vp@haysmn.org, or 512-858-1015.

Class Site Visit

The class conducted a site visit, lead by Kasey Mock, to Anne and Garry Child's property on June 29th. Both Anne and Garry are members of the 2010 class.

They discussed agriculture and wildlife exemptions and the native grasses. The property was previously owned by the Blacks and the Childs are continuing the care of the land.

- Lance Jones



Kasey Mock leads the site visit. Photo by Lance Jones.



Garry discussing their feeders and water troughs. Photo by Lance Jones.

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 June 2010 are due by July 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

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

Wildland Conservation Division

Our Wildlands hikes take a hiatus during the heat of summer, but we'll be back full swing in the fall. The BCP Hike and Lecture Series will continue, so check out the following hikes and we'll see you on a trail soon!

BCP Hike and Lecture Series

Sat., July 10, 8:15pm to 10:30pm - Explore the BCP at Night **2.25 Hours Advanced Training**

Sat., Sept. 11, 9am to 11:30am - Birding Habitat of Westcave Preserve **2.0 Hours Advanced Training**

Sat., Sept. 25, 9am to 11:30am - Exploring Wild Basin **2.5 Hours Advanced Training**

Sat., Sept. 25, 1pm to 3:30pm - Exploring Wild Basin for Kids & Families **2.5 Hours Advanced Training**

Sat., Oct. 9, 10am to 1pm - Rediscover Hamilton Pool **3.0 Hours Advanced Training**

Sat., Nov. 13, 9am to 11:45am - A Bird's Eye View of Stillhouse Hollow
2.75 Hours Advanced Training

Texas Invasives

The following website www.texasinvasives.org provides information on invasives and the program for monitoring. Information is also provided on monitoring training programs. See the website for details and locations of trainings. MNs who attend a program scheduled from 9:00 to 4:00 will earn 6.0 hours of advanced training. One training will be held in Comal county in the fall; others are scheduled throughout the state.



Volunteer Opportunities

Monitoring Chimney Swifts, Project #912

The North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project (NSRP) is a joint effort of the Driftwood Wildlife Association with support from Texas Partners in Flight and the Nongame Urban Program of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The goal of the project is to monitor existing nest and roost sites and to develop and test smaller, more manageable towers which can be easily installed by homeowners.

To find a nesting site or roost, keep your eyes on the skies at dusk and watch for areas where swifts are feeding. Look for a tall shaft, chimney or similar structure to find where Chimney Swifts go to roost in your area. Observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. E-mail the roost location and number of swifts observed to DWA@austin.rr.com. Monitoring can be done on a one time basis or regularly until the swifts migrate in October.

Also, mark your calendar to participate in Swift Night Out, a continent wide event, to raise awareness about Chimney Swifts. On one night over the weekend of August 6, 7, 8, and/or September 10, 11, 12 observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your number, email us at DWA@austin.rr.com. That's all there is to it!

Want to do more? Build an artificial Chimney Swift tower or if your chimney flue is not metal, take the cap off and enjoy being a Chimney Swift landlord.

For more information, go to www.chimneyswift.org or contact Ann Connell at asc0707@gmail.com or 512.913.1441.

Barsana Dham Trail Building

Friday, July 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th
9:00am-12:00pm
Hays MN Project #909

For more information, contact Dennis Wagner (Dennis@UnitedCountryCentralTexas.com).

Elephant Ear Removal

Wednesday, July 7th & 21st
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).

Hyacinth Removal

Saturday, July 24th
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).



State and National News

Water Matters @ Columbia

From [Water Matters @ Columbia](http://WaterMatters@Columbia), a blog from the Earth Institute at Columbia University, comes an article entitled "The Problem of Lawns".

"In the United States, lawns are so ubiquitous that to my young eye (and many others) they seemed to be almost a basic human right. That's a serious problem, given the enormous resources that our [North American lawn-fetish](http://NorthAmericanLawnFetish) consumes."

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



Local News

Physorg.com

The web site [Physorg.com](#), has an interesting article about Canyon Gorge, "Geologist investigates canyon carved in just three days in Texas flood".

"In the summer of 2002, a week of heavy rains in Central Texas caused Canyon Lake -- the reservoir of the Canyon Dam -- to flood over its spillway and down the Guadalupe River Valley in a planned diversion to save the dam from catastrophic failure. The flood, which continued for six weeks, stripped the valley of mesquite, oak trees, and soil; destroyed a bridge; and plucked meter-wide boulders from the ground. And, in a remarkable demonstration of the power of raging waters, the flood excavated a 2.2-kilometer-long, 7-meter-deep canyon in the bedrock."

You may read the entire 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](#)
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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](#)