

# Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

March, 2009

## March 2009 Events

### Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at the Dripping Springs City Hall at 511 Mercer Street, 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, please contact Dixie Camp, [pres@haysmn.org](mailto:pres@haysmn.org), or 512-517-3111, by March 6<sup>th</sup>.

### Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>. The location and speaker will be announced later.

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](mailto:vp@haysmn.org), or 512-773-3668.



## A Naturalist's View

*This month we hear from Mary Arizpe, the Chapter Secretary.*

I'm happy to be serving as the Chapter Secretary this year. I became a Master Naturalist in 2006. My class was the Falcons. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science. I'm currently a kindergarten teacher in Kyle.

I enjoy volunteering at the Onion Creek WQPL, Texas Expo, and the EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly day, because they are things my husband, Art, and I can do together. After having a chance to participate in the chapter's various volunteer and advanced training opportunities, I'm now looking forward to serving as part of the Chapter leadership and seeing how the MN organization works from the inside.

Part of my job is to maintain the chapter's member contact information. Please make sure that you let me know of any changes to your mailing address, phone number, or email address. You may contact me at [sec@haysmn.org](mailto:sec@haysmn.org).

We use the email list to keep you informed of upcoming volunteer and advanced training events as well as other items of interest to Master Naturalists.

## Board of Directors

<b>President</b>	Dixie Camp
<b>Vice President</b>	Ben Adair
<b>Secretary</b>	Mary Arizpe
<b>Treasurer</b>	Larry Calvert
<b>Past-President</b>	Dale Shively
<b>State Representative</b>	Tom Watson
<b>Training Committee</b>	Mimi Boelter
<b>Advanced Training Comm.</b>	Betty Finley
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<b>Web Master</b>	Herb Smith
<b>Newsletter Committee</b>	Art Arizpe
<b>&amp; Editor</b>	<a href="mailto:news@haysmn.org">news@haysmn.org</a>
<b>Outreach Committee</b>	Susan Nenney
<b>Host Committee</b>	Jean McMeans
<b>Historian</b>	Dorothy Knight
<b>Volunteer Service</b>	Walt Krudop
<b>AgriLife Agent</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<b>TP&amp;WD Rep</b>	Lee Ann Linam

The chapter is very protective of your privacy and will not use your email address for any other purposes.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any comments or suggestions for improving our communications.

- Mary Arizpe



## Featured Project

### Onion Creek WQPL, HCMN Project # 426

The Onion Creek project, in terms of volunteer hours, is the most active one in our chapter and always provides plenty of volunteer and advanced training opportunities such as invasive species mapping, habitat restoration, and karst inventories. Other activities conducted by the City of Austin include prescribed burns and guided hikes and lectures. The chapter became involved with this land in 2005. The very first project was to clear about 2 acres of Ashe Junipers along the creek.

Tom Watson is our HCMN contact. Tom's experience includes being an Assistant Professor of Botany at the University of Montana, a Lecturer at UT-Austin, and a Computer Analyst at GTE & Dell. Tom graduated in the class of 2004, the Dragonflies. He

served as chapter President during 2005 and 2006 and is currently our chapter's State Representative.

The Onion Creek property is managed by the Wildlands Conservation Division of Austin Water Utilities of the City of Austin. The conservation management program that WCD administers is known as the Water Quality Protection Lands (WOPL). These lands were purchased with funds from a 1998 bond election for the purpose of water quality protection for the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer. You can read more about the WOPL [here](#). The property consists of 2500 acres located along Onion Creek in central Hays County with entrances on FM 967 and FM 150.

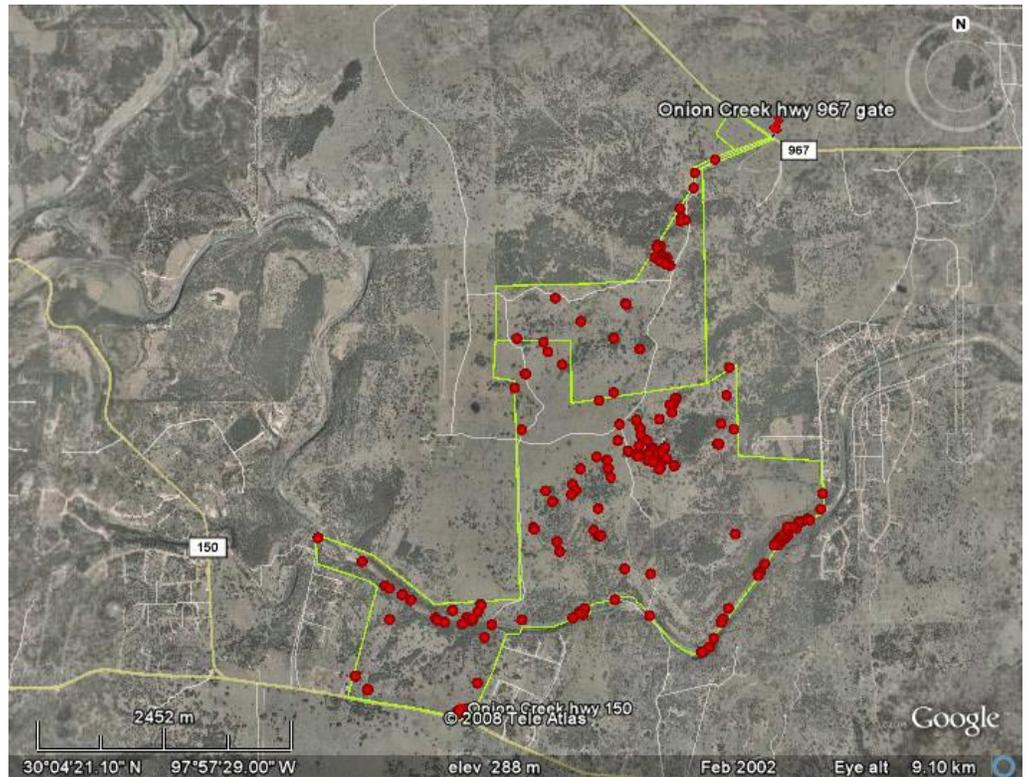
An important project completed in 2008 was the mapping of the Chinaberry trees on the property. Chinaberries are an invasive species and WCD is working to get them under control. The first step is to locate them all.



*Learning to identify Chinaberry trees.*

The trees are found by sweeping an area in a coordinated manner and recording the GPS coordinates as well keeping a log to describe the trees.

The chinaberry mapping took 2 years and resulted in finding about 200 trees. The next step is for WCD to



*Chinaberry distribution. Each point shows the location of 1 or more trees.*

review the data and prepare a plan for control and eradication.

Habitat restoration activities include native grass seeding, Ashe Juniper removal, and tree planting.

Native grass seeding is done in areas that have been burned to remove woody plant cover in order to restore native prairie and increase water infiltration into the aquifer. The city staff use a seed drill to



*Filling seed buckets.*

plant much of the area, but volunteers are needed to sow areas that are too brushy or rocky to effectively use the machinery. The native grasses being sowed include Big and Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, Switchgrass, Green Sprangletop, and several Gramas.

This work results in increased grass coverage, reduced erosion and replacement of stands of invasive King Ranch Bluestem.

Karst inventories locate and enhance natural entrances of surface water into the aquifer and also are used to determine if there are any endangered species of karst-dwelling invertebrates. They are



*Hoskin's Hole, a karst feature.*

typically conducted after an area has been burned because the karst features are easier to spot then. Volunteers sweep an area looking for caves, sinkholes or other karst features and record their GPS coordinates.

Prescribed burns will continue to be performed as a regular management practice on a schedule that emulates natural burning cycles for the Hill Country region.

HCMNs are also involved in other activities such as:

- Conducting an annual census of white-tailed deer, blackbuck antelope, and axis deer for population management. The management objective is to keep population numbers at sustainable ecosystem levels.
- Feral hog trapping to reduce damage to native habitat.
- Coyote activity monitoring to assess present and future potential impacts on adjacent ranch lands and residential areas. The objective is to assess whether coyote populations are increasing and may be harmful to domestic animals in the vicinity of the property.

Last year, Tom also finished a comprehensive inventory of the flora on the property. There are 362 species of plants, 19 of which are endemic to Texas

and 10 of those are endemic to the Edwards Plateau. There are 27 species of invasive plants on the tracts.

Please watch the newsletter or your email for notices about upcoming volunteer or advanced training opportunities. Onion Creek is a large, active project and plenty of volunteers are always welcome! Please contact [Tom Watson](#), if you'd like to help.



## Chapter News

### *First 2009 Training Class a Success!*

The HCMN Class of 2009 attended their first class on Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>.

After a delicious meal of lasagna with some wonderful side dishes and many delectable desserts prepared by the TC, Dixie Camp welcomed the group to the program and encouraged them to take advantage of the many opportunities within the chapter.

Richard Parrish spoke to the class about the role the Extension Office plays within the community.

Michelle Haggerty engaged the group in thought-provoking activities that emphasized the importance of observation in our world.

Ray Franklin presented the Rainfall Simulator, which prompted several lively discussions about oak wilt, what native species to plant, and the drought conditions of the county.

It's probably safe to say that every class member left eager to learn more and wholeheartedly anticipating the next class.

## *Class March Schedule*

March 3	Lutheran Church	Geology of Texas	Dr. Carter Keairns
March 24	Lutheran Church	Ecosystem Concepts and Management Ecological Regions of Texas	Mark Peterson, SAWS Minette Marr
March 28 Field Trip	Canyon Gorge	Geology of the Hill County	Dr. Carter Keairns, Jamie Kinscherff, Dr. Ward

## *Training Committee*

The Field Trip and Site Visit Coordinator position has been filled by Diane Spicer. Thanks for helping, Diane!

The Speaker Contact position is still open. This is a good opportunity to help train a new group of Master Naturalists and to work with a great team! Please refer to the [Operating Handbook](#) for a description of this position and contact [Mimi Boelter](#) if you are interested.

## *February Chapter Meeting*

The February Chapter meeting was well-attended with 33 HCMNs and 2 guests. The speaker was Terry Turney. He is a wildlife diversity biologist for the Edwards Plateau District specializing in non-game and endangered species and has been with Texas Parks and Wildlife for 22 years. His presentation was about biodiversity, focused on endangered and threatened animals of Texas.

Terry concentrates on the Edwards Plateau and Llano Uplift regions and administers the landowner incentive program. Most endangered and threatened species are found exclusively on private lands. He emphasized that the main thing we can do to help endangered species is to preserve habitat. He discussed several examples where altering the habitat led to an impact on animal populations and the results are not always intuitive.

One example is about whooping cranes. Cattle grazing and drinking from ponds kept the water's edge free of grass. When the cattle were removed the grass had a chance to cover the area around ponds. This allowed predators to approach the

cranes more closely and resulted in a decrease in the crane population.

He also gave an example for black-capped vireos. With proper brush management, prescribed burns, and cattle grazing policies, the diversity of plant species in a region will increase and attract populations of vireos because of the increased shelter and food. In addition, other species will benefit from the improved habitat.

You may contact Terry at via email at [terry.turney@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:terry.turney@tpwd.state.tx.us).

## *HaysMN Forum*

A recent discussion was about the best way of mounting owl nesting boxes to pecan trees.

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*

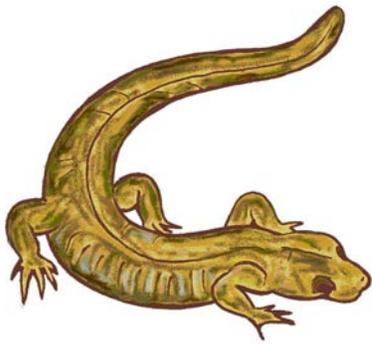
Reports for February 2009 are due by March 7<sup>th</sup>. Please submit your reports of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours by using the friendly report forms at [www.haysmn.org](http://www.haysmn.org).

## *Membership Committee 2008 Recertification Pins*

According to our records, all of the 2008 re-certification pins have been issued. They were distributed either in-person at the Gala or through the mail in January.

Please contact Beth Ramey if you think you were missed, at [recordscom@haysmn.org](mailto:recordscom@haysmn.org).

## 2009 Recertification Pin Preview



Each year, many members are curious about the next pin design. Shown here is the artwork for the salamander design for 2009.

### 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

#### Ray Franklin

HCMN Ray Franklin was interviewed for an article and appeared in a video segment on KEYE 42, a TV station in Austin on February 25<sup>th</sup>. The article is titled "Drought Taking Toll on Area Agriculture & Naturalists". Ray discusses the drought and its impact on his rainwater collection efforts.

Here's an excerpt: "The drought is taking its toll on everyone, but one man in Dripping Springs, who relies on the rain says his rainwater collection system will dry up soon."

You can read the full article [here](#). The video segment is available [here](#). There's a commercial first, so keep watching.

Congratulations and thanks to Ray for raising awareness of the problem and representing the Master Naturalists!



### Calendar

(The dragonfly logo  identifies official HCMN events)

## Wildflower Center Nature Nights: Astronomy

On Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, from 6 pm to 9 pm, the Wildflower Center Nature Nights topic will be astronomy. Look to the stars and discover wonders of the night sky at the Wildflower Center. Take a tour of the evening skies with staff from the McDonald Observatory describing familiar and mysterious points of light and the wonders they reveal. There is a \$1 admission fee.

### Texas Water Symposia

The third and final meeting of the Texas Water Symposia series will be on March 12<sup>th</sup> in Kerrville. More information is available [here](#).

### Texas Rainwater Catchment Association

The TRCA State Conference will be March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> in Kerrville. More information is available [here](#).



### Advanced Training Opportunities

#### Wimberley Earth Day Celebration

Master Naturalists who attend the Wimberley Earth Day Celebration on April 18<sup>th</sup> and take the guided Nature Walk will receive 1 hour advanced training.

#### EmilyAnn Theatre Earth Day, Project # 602

This event is approved for 1 hour of Advanced Training. The Worm Wrangling Advanced Training will be on Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, in conjunction with the EmilyAnn Theatre and Wild Connections. Volunteers will tour the native butterfly farm, Wild Connections, and learn how to handle the larvae and butterflies. Meet up with the group either at the EmilyAnn Theatre at 8:30 am and carpool to the native butterfly farm, or meet or at the Nutty Brown Café at 8:45 am and then caravan to Wild Connections in Dripping Springs. A map to Wild Connections is available [here](#). For more information, contact [Karen Hulene Bartell](#) or 512-894-0105.

#### Volunteer Firewise Workshop

The following workshop is approved for 5.5 hours advanced training. The Texas Forest Service will be hosting a one day Volunteer Firewise Workshop on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, at the Y O Ranch Resort Hotel in Kerrville. The registration fee is \$12.

The registration form was emailed separately by the Chapter Secretary, [Mary Arizpe](#). Please contact her if you did not receive it.



## Volunteer Opportunities

### *Wild Connections, Project # 801*

The Worm Wrangling volunteer opportunity will be on Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, in conjunction with the EmilyAnn Theatre and Wild Connections. Following the training at [Wild Connections](#) in Dripping Springs, put your knowledge into practice and place the larvae into special containers for other volunteers to raise into butterflies. For more information, contact [Karen Hulene Bartell](#) or 512-894-0105.



## State and National News

### *TPWD Seeking Public Comment*

"Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is looking to interact with constituents through an online public comment survey.

Annually, TPWD recommends adjustments to hunting and fishing rules for resource management needs and increased recreational opportunity. Part of the process involves gathering public comment."  
- San Marcos Daily Record

Read the full article [here](#).



## Local News

### *Great River Cleanup*

"San Marcos — Planning is already under way for the 24th Annual Great Texas River Clean Up. And everyone is invited to help.

On Saturday, March 7, volunteers will gather at 10 a.m. at the City Park Recreation Hall/Lions Club Tube Rental located along the San Marcos River to register, pick up trash bags, and grab a breakfast taco with a cup of coffee. "  
- San Marcos Daily Record

More information is available [here](#).

### *Central Texas Drought*

"For the central part of the state, 2008 turned out to be one of the driest years on record and the driest year experienced since the mid 1950s. According to

the latest [National Drought Monitor](#), most of Central Texas and the adjacent eastern Hill Country are in "exceptional" drought status, the worst of the four categories of drought. Exceptional drought is considered rare, typically occurring with a frequency of about once in 20 years. In this exceptional drought area, most locations received less than half of normal rainfall in 2008."

- LCRA Drought Index



## 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 -- [txforestservice.tamu.edu](http://txforestservice.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)