

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

March, 2011

March 2011 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, March 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 March 2nd.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, March 24th, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm.

Please watch your email for information about the speaker and the location.

Board of Directors

President	Jeff Vasgaard
Vice President	Brad Krimmel
Secretary	Becky Northcut
Treasurer	Larry Calvert
Past-President	Dixie Camp
State Representative	Tom Watson
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

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

Art Arizpe is the Chapter's Volunteer Service Projects Committee Chair and the Newsletter Editor.

Magic Mushrooms

Sometimes it's the small things that are worth observing.

We're usually attracted by the large, the loud, and the brightly colored. We're also limited by our senses. Many animals use or emit sounds, but often the sounds are beyond our hearing range, both in frequency and in magnitude. We see only a small part of the electromagnetic spectrum and many plant and animals exploit frequencies in the infrared or the ultraviolet. We're also subject to our physical dimensions. We can't see the very small or the very large. We don't notice phenomena that occur on very short or very long time scales.

Given all this, it seems there are many things that I'm going to miss on a hike, and that's assuming I'm really paying attention! Nonetheless, it's the little surprises that make it worthwhile - the things that make me think "hey, I never noticed that ..."

These tiny mushrooms fall into that category. I noticed them growing on the bark of an Ashe Juniper fence rail at the entrance to our property. It helps that they're bright orange, but they really are very small, less than a quarter inch tall. They are easily overlooked and I've never seen them again. They were growing in the small crevices of the juniper's bark. I'm assuming there was a tiny bit of decaying organic matter there, perhaps the bark itself, on which they were feeding.



They only grew on the horizontal fence rails. I didn't see any on the vertical posts. I wonder what caused that. They were also only growing on the top fence rail, not the bottom one. Does that mean anything? Do they only grow on Ashe Junipers or do they also grow on other trees? Do they have to grow in tree bark or might they be found in a pile of leaves? How long do they live? What triggered their growth? Was it the temperature or humidity?

I have no idea what kind of mushrooms they were and I'll probably never find out. The magic of these mushrooms is the sense of wonder they stirred. It's amazing that such tiny things can hold so much mystery. Is there anything that you walk by all the time, but never notice?

- Art Arizpe



Featured Project

Onion Creek Water Quality Protection Land Project #426

The Onion Creek project has consistently been one of the busiest of our chapter's projects. The project was featured in the [March 2009](#) newsletter. Please refer to that article for more complete background information.

The Onion Creek property is managed by the Wildland Conservation Division (WCD) of Austin Water Utility of the City of Austin. The conservation management program that WCD administers is known as the Water Quality Protection Lands (WQPL). These lands were purchased with funds from voter-approved bonds in 1998 and 2006 for the purpose of protecting and enhancing water quality and water quantity for the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer. You can read more about the WQPL [here](#). The Onion Creek property consists of 2500 acres located along Onion Creek in central Hays County.

Tom Watson is our chapter's project contact. He and Matt McCaw from WCD provided much of the information in this project update. As one indicator of the importance and scope of the work on the WQPL, consider the organizations which are involved, in addition to WCD and HCMN:

- The Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District
- The US Geological Survey
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service
- The Nature Conservancy
- Texas Forest Service
- The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- The City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department
- The University of Texas
- Rice University
- Texas State University
- And others



Identifying chinaberry trees. Photo by Art Arizpe.

The project's ultimate goal is to increase the quantity and quality of water entering the Barton Creek segment of the Edwards Aquifer. The WCD aims to manage the property as a savannah by reducing the woody canopy coverage to below 15% where appropriate. They actively use prescribed burns as a land management tool to keep the woody vegetation down and to encourage native grass restoration.

Program-wide, in 2010, the WQPL for the first time hit its prescribed burn acreage target. This is the acreage they need to burn on average every year, about 1650 acres, in order to attain and maintain their ecological management goals across all the WQPL fee simple tracts of approximately 9000+ acres.

Activities in the past few years include WCD continuously monitoring the progress of management practices using vegetation transects, mechanical thinning, prescribed burning, native grass seeding, continued mesquite treatment, and removal of invasive woody plants including chinaberry trees, mapped by HCMN from 2006 to 2008.



The chinaberry tree mapping project was showcased as one of the only high-resolution invasive species mapping projects on city property during the process of preparing a comprehensive invasive species management plan for all City of Austin properties, as directed by a 2010 Austin City Council resolution.

HCMN also helped collect native tree and shrub seeds along the creek. Some members helped WCD collect seeds as long ago as 2004 and 2005. The seeds were germinated and grown as seedlings for transplanting. The seedlings were planted along the creek banks during the winter of 2008, just as we entered a severe drought period, resulting in mostly failures.

Each year there are numerous nature walks and nature lectures on the property. Tom Watson offers a grass identification class there twice a year. Texas Agrilife Extension holds a rangeland management class at Onion Creek every year. WCD also hosts an annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and associated hikes.



HCMNs are needed for grass seeding after prescribed burns, hand removal of junipers, GPS mapping of invasive species, karst surveys after burns, and leading interpretive hikes. Please watch this newsletter and your email for announcements.

Following are some of the people who have helped in the activities.

Juniper Clearing

Ben Adair
Debra Bradshaw
Donna Browning
Ann Child
Jim Elliot
Ruben Garza
Jamie Kinsherff
Charles Maxcy
Marianne Reese
Kevin Stockton
Tom Watson

Art Arizpe
Martha Bowen
Dixie Camp
Garry Child
Betty Finley
Tom Hausler
Brad Krimmel
Vicki Maxcy
Doug Shoumet
Bonnie Tull

Mary Arizpe
Deborah Bowers
Greg Carter
Ann Connell
Randy Garst
Lance Jones
Leah Laszewski
Susan Nenny
James Sigler
Terry Tull

Chinaberry Tree Mapping

Karen Archer
Mimi Boelter

Art Arizpe
Deborah Bowers

Mary Arizpe
Ann Connell

Jim Elliot
Ruben Garza
Lance Jones
Dave Nicosia
James Sigler
Tom Watson

Woody Franke
Ginger Geist
Jamie Kinsherff
Rick Norwood
Bonnie Tull
Linda Webb

Randy Garst
LaRay Geist
Leah Laszewski
Kate Shayler
Terry Tull

Grass Seeding

Karen Archer
Mimi Boelter
Jim Elliot
Ruben Garza
Lance Jones
Rick Norwood
Bonnie Tull
Linda Webb

Art Arizpe
Deborah Bowers
Woody Franke
Ginger Geist
Leah Laszewski
Kate Shayler
Terry Tull

Mary Arizpe
Ann Connell
Randy Garst
LaRay Geist
Dave Nicosia
James Sigler
Tom Watson

Please contact Tom Watson, twatson11@austin.rr.com, if you'd like to learn more about this project or upcoming activities.



Chapter News

Amanda Ross

Wildland Conservation Division

Conservation Coordinator

As a native Austinite who grew-up hiking Austin's trails, swimming in Barton Springs, and exploring the natural world of Central Texas, I consider myself extremely lucky to be the new Conservation Coordinator for the City of Austin's Wildland Conservation Division.

My professional background includes working for the National Park Service, organizing volunteers and overseeing educational campaigns for Texas State University and the Lower Colorado River Authority. Most recently, I worked with local communities to improve the water quality of local streams as a project manager with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Both former Conservation Coordinators leave big shoes to fill, but I'm looking forward to the challenge. Volunteers play a vital role in the success of the Wildland Conservation Division.

The Hays County Master Naturalists have worked to identify and then record the location of invasive Chinaberry trees over the past several years. This information is now being used by Wildland staff to remove the Chinaberry trees. In 2011 Volunteer opportunities with the Wildland Conservation division include seeding sites after prescribed burns, helping to remove invasive plants species, and providing support at community outreach events. We also hope to train a new group of docents to lead weekend hikes. Volunteer opportunities can be found at the following webpage or please sign-up to receive email updates at:
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/onlineregistration/ecowebevents.cfm>.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you might have.

Amanda Ross
Conservation Coordinator
City of Austin's Wildland Conservations Division
Amanda.ross@ci.austin.tx.us
512-972-1690

Membership Reaches a Record: 99

We are now at 99 dues-paying members for 2011 and members were added to the 2010 membership so it too is 99! This wonderful achievement was reached even though 26 people that were members in 2010 have yet to become members this year.

If you are unsure of your status drop me an e-mail at lecalvert@gmail.com or send a check made out to Hays County Master Naturalists for \$15 per person to:

Larry Calvert
HCMN Treasurer
650 RedHawk Rd.
Wimberley, TX 78676

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

February Chapter Meeting

Valerie Bugh, a local naturalist specializing in the arthropods of the Austin area, delivered a great talk, "Insects and Related Arthropods". 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." Be sure to check out her website: www.austinbug.com

She started with several insect relatives, such as centipedes, millipedes, scorpions, and spiders. The main part of her presentation was on the large number of insects. She concentrated on local species and had many photographs. She discussed their life cycles, including incomplete and complete metamorphosis, mating, egg laying, and diet.

Valerie offered to identify any mystery insects for us. Email your photos to her, larvalbug@att.net.



Val, left, answers questions. 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 February 2011 are due by March 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

Mary Arizpe

Mary Arizpe took this photo with her cell phone in early February while she was at work at Kyle Elementary. The gray fox found his way onto the school grounds and decided to sun himself and take a nap on the school's air conditioning evaporator units.



A gray fox taking a nap. Photo by Mary Arizpe.

Of course, this caused quite a stir at the school and many of the teachers went outside to get a better look and capture the moment. They were able to get quite close. Mary and her friends think that maybe the fox was sick.

The facility folks came to catch him and release him elsewhere and that ended the excitement.

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

Caterpillar Camp

Project 602, EmilyAnn Theatre

Saturday, March 26th, 8am: Advanced Training at the EmilyAnn Theatre – Approved for 1 hour.

Opportunity: Dr. Chris Nice, will discuss butterflies and their life cycle. Volunteers will also learn how to handle the larvae in preparation for Caterpillar Camp. Meet at the main office of the EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens in Wimberley. A map is available [here](#).

For more information, contact Melinda Seib at 830-833-4852 or mjseib@msn.com, or Mimi Boelter at 830-833-4235 or mboelter@txwinet.com

Butterfly Festival Nature Walk

Project 602, EmilyAnn Theatre

Saturday, April 16th: Advanced Training at the EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly Festival – Approved for 1 hour.

Opportunity: Nature Walk at the EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly Festival.

For more information, contact Melinda Seib at 830-833-4852 or mjseib@msn.com, or Mimi Boelter at 830-833-4235 or mboelter@txwinet.com



Volunteer Opportunities

Caterpillar Camp / Cages for Classrooms

Project 602, EmilyAnn Theatre

Saturday, March 26th, 9am: Caterpillar Camp

Opportunity: Following the Advanced Training at the EmilyAnn Theatre in Wimberley ([map](#)), put your knowledge into practice and place the larvae into special containers for other volunteers to raise into butterflies.

For more information, contact Melinda Seib at 830-833-4852 or mjseib@msn.com, or Mimi Boelter at 830-833-4235 or mboelter@txwinet.com

Continue Volunteering during the week of March 28th through April 1st: Cages for Classrooms

Opportunity: Volunteers will deliver cages and make presentations to students and others about the care of the caterpillars and the life cycle of butterflies.

For more information, contact Melinda Seib at 830-833-4852 or mjseib@msn.com, or Mimi Boelter at 830-833-4235 or mboelter@txwinet.com

Butterfly Festival
Project 602, EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens

Saturday, April 16th: HCMN Volunteer Project 602 (EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly Festival/Earth Day) – up to 6 hours.

Opportunity: Two shifts are available: 9:30am to 12:30pm and 12:30pm to 3:30pm, for both the demonstrations and the booth duty.

Demonstrations: Rainfall Simulator, Watershed Model, Aquifer Model

Booth Duty: Talk to people about the Master Naturalist program, take contact info, and help set-up or tear-down the booth.

For more information, contact Melinda Seib at 830-833-4852 or mjseib@msn.com, or Mimi Boelter at 830-833-4235 or mboelter@txwinet.com

Wimberley Outdoor Educators
Project 809

This year the Wimberley Outdoor Educators 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.



State and National News

Whooping cranes head back to Louisiana

From [Nature News](#):

“Conservationists hope fourth attempt to reintroduce endangered bird to the wild will be a success.

Officials with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) are finalizing plans to release a small flock of whooping cranes (*Grus americana*) in a protected wetland, in what could be a promising step towards long-term viability for an endangered species. The move would represent the return of a long-lost native — absent from the state for more than 60 years.

Officials say that ten captive-bred birds will be flown by plane from their Maryland hatching ground to the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in Vermilion Parish, southwestern Louisiana, as early as next week. Once released into the wild, they will be monitored by the LDWF. The department hopes to establish a non-migratory flock of whooping cranes in White Lake over the next ten years to help ensure the survival of the species."

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

Butterflies make partial comeback in Mexico

From Yahoo News:

"MEXICO CITY – The number of monarch butterflies migrating from Canada and the U.S. to Mexico has increased this year, a hopeful sign following a worrying 75 percent drop in their numbers last year, experts reported Monday.

The total amount of forest covered by the colonies — millions of orange-and-black butterflies that hang in clumps from the boughs of fir trees — more than doubled from last year's historic low.

But concerns persist about the monarchs' long-term survival, because their numbers remain well below average.

This winter, there are 9.9 acres (4 hectares) of colonies, more than double the 4.7 acres (1.9 hectares) last year, the lowest level since comparable record-keeping began in 1993."

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



Local News

Blanco State Park on the Chopping Block?

From the Blanco County News:

"Facing a budget shortfall that's anywhere from \$12 billion to \$27 billion, legislators in the Texas House and Senate are looking to make deep cuts in a wide range of state-funded programs. The Legislative Budget Board released budget proposals that recommend cutting Texas Parks and Wildlife Department funding by 25 percent. As part of the reduction, the LBB suggested transferring seven state parks to local governments, which have their own budget shortfalls.

Blanco State Park is one of the parks on the list, along with Sebastopol House State Historic Park, Daingerfield State Park, Lake Casa Blanca International State Park, Lockhart State Park, Big Spring State Park and the Wyler Aerial Tramway in El Paso."

You may read 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
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