

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

March, 2012

Chapter Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, March 1st, 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 February 28th.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, March 22nd, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm, at the Wimberley Presbyterian Church, 956 FM 2325. Please note – this is a new location for our meetings. A map is available [here](#).

The speaker will be [Greg Lasley](#), a wildlife photographer. Greg's *Texas Wildlife Portraits* was published by Texas A&M Press in late 2008.

The book is an eclectic collection of Texas wildlife images from birds to mammals, insects, and reptiles. Each image in the book was taken by Greg in the wild and in Texas. In his program of the same title, Greg explains how the book came to be and outlines his own evolution into the world of birding and later wildlife photography. Many of the images from the book are part of the program and Greg explains how many of the images were taken and the circumstances and background behind the shot.

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

Eva Gomez is our new Host Committee Co-Chair and was in the 2011 class.

Even after attending the first class of the 2011 Master Naturalist training, I still wasn't quite sure what kind of organization I had joined. Sure, I understood the volunteering aspect and that I was going to get a chance to make a contribution in preserving some of the beautiful areas found in our great state. But it turned out to be so much more.

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AgriLife Agent	Lee Ann Linam
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First, there were the field trips and site visits. Even being in this area for over 20 years, each place was a new experience for me. What a treat! It was great to be able to put class lectures to use with hands-on training. You can be told that the Lantana is a flowering shrub and even be shown a picture of its orange/yellow or pink/yellow flower clusters but it just does not have the same impact of actually seeing and touching one. Because of that, I now can easily identify this one. That's an accomplishment for me!

Second, the variety of volunteer opportunities offered. Not everything is work! Yes, you do have many chances of getting sweaty and dirty. Many chances. But even then, the gratification in helping is a reward. The other opportunities are the festivals or community events. Those are really fun. From the Butterfly Festival I learned how to make Painted Lady Butterflies. Okay maybe not actually make, more like helped the larvae into their 'condos' and then delivering the cages so others could watch the development into butterflies. The reward here is participating in the Butterfly Festival when they are released and seeing the smiles on the young and old.

Third, and most important, the people involved. I was blown away by the knowledge that so many members had regarding plants. I thought surely everyone must be a botanist! I have to admit, I was slightly intimidated; I was never going to be that proficient. And honestly, I am still far from that. But I had nothing to worry about; everyone has been more than willing to share their wisdom. And not only that, but their time too. It was refreshing to see and be a part of a group that gives of its time to help sustain natural areas so future generations may enjoy. Joining the Host Committee with Helen Bowie has also helped me feel a part of the group. Believe it or not, it is a lot of fun planning, setting everything out and watching everyone enjoy the goodies. It also helps to make the chapter meetings more of a social time. I hope to continue making the Host Committee something that everyone looks forward to seeing every month. Remember, we also get to look forward to the Gala at the end of the year!

- Eva Gomez



Featured Project

EmilyAnn Theatre - Caterpillar Camp, Cages for Classrooms, and Butterfly Festival, Project #602

What's happening at the EmilyAnn Theatre?

In 1998 [EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens](#) released their first 3 butterflies on the third Saturday in April at a small festive gathering in celebration of spring and life. From such a small beginning, 3,000 Painted Lady Butterflies will be released at this year's [Butterfly Festival!](#)

Before this can happen, the caterpillars must be prepared, caged and raised to become butterflies. So, a call is going out to all hands willing to help on March 31st. It is time for the Caterpillar Camp Team to assemble!

Caterpillar Camp is not just an event. It has become a tradition in which the whole community participates. Volunteers will first learn how to handle the butterfly larvae and prepare the cages for other volunteers to raise butterflies. This year several schools have requested that some of their classes participate with the caging. We have a team of Master Naturalist Educators ready to accommodate that outreach request. Our very own Jackie Mattice and Mimi Boelter have been instrumental with this effort. This is the seventh year that Master Naturalists will help cage the caterpillars. Master Naturalists receive Volunteer Hours for their participation with preparing caterpillar cages on March 31st.



Caterpillar Camp - preparing the caterpillars. Photo by Art Arizpe.

Caterpillar Camp also has Dr. Chris Nice, PhD, Department of Biology at Texas State University as our guest speaker who will present a one-hour program about butterflies. There is no better way to get Advanced Training time than in an intimate setting, listening to an enchanting speaker as he shares with his audience a program that explores the classifications, families, body parts, importance to the ecosystem, and local butterflies. As a bonus, Dr. Nice always lingers after class and takes all questions.

After the lecture, volunteers will meet in the classroom to start containing the caterpillars. Before the laboratory gloves come out, volunteers will undergo an instructional briefing. The day passes quickly and the camaraderie is a plus. Our goal is to prepare 200 cages for our schools.

Are you a volunteer interested in having more fun? Stick around then - Cages for Classrooms is the next step. First thing in the afternoon, a half-hour training session will be conducted by Jackie Mattice, Project Coordinator of the Wimberley Outdoor Educators Program. Now in her second year participating in the Cages for Classrooms, Jackie will train volunteers on the life cycle of the butterfly, its habitat, eating habits, and importance in our ecosystem. This qualifies for half-hour Advanced Training time.



Cages for Classrooms - Jackie Mattice demonstrating the butterfly's life cycle. Photo by Melinda Seib.

Cages for Classrooms continues by delivering cages early Monday morning on April 2nd, continuing the 3rd and, if necessary, on the 4th. Completing the Saturday training session enables you to participate and accumulate

additional Volunteer Time. These volunteers will in turn present the information to the school children when the cages are delivered.

The butterfly cages will be return to the EmilyAnn Theatre on April 19th. The 3,000 Painted Ladies will rest up for their star performance - "The Big Release" at the Butterfly Festival on April 21st.

The Butterfly Festival is more than the big release. It is an eco-day event filled with opportunities to share what you learn with others and earn Volunteer Hours. It's a day where HCMNs work together to bring new experiences to others about Nature.

The HCMN booth has several opportunities for volunteering: hand out brochures and answer questions about the Master Naturalist Program, get your hands dirty at the seed ball table teaching others, demonstrate the Rainfall Simulator and educate others on the importance of our native grasses, help children and adults alike to learn more about our precious water resource by demonstrating the watershed and aquifer models. There is an encore for Mother Nature.

You can also help to set up and tear down the booth. Volunteers also conduct nature hikes along the EmilyAnn trails and grounds for the public. These hikes also earn Advanced Training hours for HCMNs.

Behind the scenes, the earth is moving as EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens has broken ground for a new educational/ performance building. This is the beginning of their New Campus Complex. This first building is expected to be finished in summer 2012.

One HCMN who has made a great difference is Margaret Baker who has spent many years and countless hours at EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens. You may not know that Margaret is an A&M-educated and certified Horticulturalist, a retired Landscape Business owner of many years, and also a Master Gardener. She has provided EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens guidance in every nook and cranny of their gardens. Margaret has kindly provided EAT&G with recommendations for our new direction with the grounds. She has outlined information of Environmentally Friendly Landscaping and suggestions of native plants proven suitable for central Texas. A Native American Edible Garden will be added to the EAT&G grounds per her request. Margaret is presently working on labeling plants and trees for the grounds. In the future this will be used for the New Self-Guided Tour of the Gardens. Thank you Margaret for being so dedicated!

Joe Lapp, better known as "Spider Joe", will be at the Festival again this year. Joe has been working on some research at the EmilyAnn Theatre and Gardens. Look for his article about the new spiders he has located in our Gardens.

Last April, we released 2500 Painted Ladies. During this last autumn migration of butterflies, we saw an increase of Painted Ladies in the Garden. They lingered for two weeks, and then with the arrival of colder temperatures, they left. They may now be programmed in their DNA to return to their release point and adopt EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens as their new home. We are looking forward to this April's release and next fall's migration to see what happens.

As you can see, there are many exciting things happening at EmilyAnn. Come join the Caterpillar Camp Team and find out more! Coffee, Donuts and Lunch/Snacks are provided.

Please contact either Melinda Seib or Mimi Boelter to volunteer:

Melinda Seib, mjsieb@msn.com, 830 833-4852
Mimi Boelter, mboelte@txwinet.com, 830-833-4235

Please RSVP by March 23rd. See you 8 am, Saturday, March 31st!

You may find directions to the EAT&G [here](#).



Chapter News

President's Message

As we head into March a new class has begun; at 38, it is our largest to date; membership is at 116, highest ever; and Chapter meetings are packing us in, 56-58 each time. These wonderful stats mean we are growing and getting to know each other better - all good signs for HCMN.

What a wonderful Chapter meeting featuring Carter Smith, Executive Director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Carter entertained, informed, and addressed topics near and dear to our MN hearts. So many things to be proud of and things unique to Texas, and so many issues facing us in invasive species and plants, water, and predicted weather concerns. Carter happily spent another hour after the meeting talking with individuals about their questions or concerns.

I mentioned in my opening remarks that in 2011, we recorded 8,501 volunteer hours and since our beginning we have done 61,732 volunteer hours. These hours are valued at \$180,000 for 2011 and \$1.3 million since we started. Certainly numbers we can be proud of, but Carter put them in a different perspective. He said that TPWD receives \$3 in federal grant money for every \$1 of volunteer work. In other words, HCMN supported TPWD for grant funds of \$540,000 in 2011 and \$3.9 million since we formed. He acknowledged the wonderful contribution we have made.

This puts volunteer hour reporting in a new perspective for me. I've always thought it was important to report our volunteer hours, but now I see that when we do we support programs very important to us. Last year the news carried stories of possible actions to deal with the legislature's required TPWD budget cuts. It was scary stuff like park closures, job losses, and program cuts. So, if we want to maximize how we help, it is important that we turn in all of our volunteer hours promptly each month. I know it is easy to forget and requires some extra work to report, but doing so supports so many things that are part of our mission. Let's keep up the good work.

- Larry Calvert

Earning Those Volunteer Hours—How It Works

Hays County Master Naturalists make some great contributions to conservation and environmental education, but how can you make sure those hours count toward those awesome TMN pins? Here's a reminder of the process for claiming volunteer hours:

1. Make sure your activity is listed as an approved activity with HCMN. A list of already approved projects is found on the chapter [website](#).
2. If your project idea is not already on the list, then you will need to download and submit a [project approval form](#) and designate a project leader. The project approval form provides a checklist to make sure the project meets TMN guidelines (for example, a project cannot be for the benefit of a for-profit organization).
3. As you volunteer for an approved project, then you need to make sure that you are continuing to meet TMN guidelines, especially...
 - Be identifiable as a TMN, not as a volunteer for any other group. Wear your TMN name badge!
 - Make sure your tasks always continue to benefit conservation and outreach in general and are consistent with the TMN mission. Tasks that fundraise for or primarily serve to promote another organization are not appropriate.
4. Report your hours monthly, using the HCMN [online reporting form](#) or downloadable forms. Don't wait until the end of the year to do this! As you report hours, the following constraints may apply:
 - If you belong to two organizations that both require volunteer service as part of membership (e.g., TMN and Master Gardeners), you may not count the same work hours twice, getting credit from both organizations.
 - If working on a project managed by another organization, you may want to advise the organization that you are claiming the volunteer hours as a Texas Master Naturalist.
 - In a few circumstances, the sponsoring organization may ask for you to forego reporting your hours to TMN in lieu of reporting them for the benefit of the sponsoring organization. In these circumstances it may be possible for the state TMN program and the sponsoring organization to develop an agreement regarding allocation of hours. If no agreement exists (there are none in place in the state at this time), then the volunteer may choose to individually negotiate with the sponsoring organization regarding whether you will continue to provide services without the benefit of being able to claim these hours as TMN volunteer hours. If questions continue to arise, then the volunteer may suggest that the sponsoring organization work with Michelle Haggerty of the state TMN office to develop an agreement that meets the goals of both organizations.
5. Remember that your goal is 40 volunteer hours per year to earn and maintain your certification. As you accumulate hours, special awards exist for 250, 500, 1000, 2500, and 5000 lifetime hours.
6. Finally, come to the TMN annual meeting and HCMN Gala to enjoy the recognition and rewards associated with your hard work!

- Lee Ann Linam

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 March 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

Art Arizpe



Here's another nice shot caught by our game camera. While they are invasive and cause a lot of damage to the environment, I can't help but admire what a magnificent animal this one is. He's large and looks to be in excellent health with a thick winter coat. I guess, trying to see

the bright side, it means our property is in good shape too, to supply him with enough nutrition to look the way he does. I'm still going to try to get rid of him!

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.

Reminder: Rather than replying to the Advanced Training e-mails which come from the Chapter Secretary, you should send questions about AT Opportunities to Becky Northcut, the AT Committee Chair, at atcom.haysmn.org.



Volunteer Opportunities

Please watch your emails for upcoming Volunteer Opportunities.



State and National News

Model airplane used to monitor rainforests - conservation drones take flight

"Conservationists have converted a remote-controlled plane into a potent tool for conservation.

Using seed funding from the National Geographic Society, The Orangutan Conservancy, and the Denver Zoo, Lian Pin Koh, an ecologist at the ETH Zürich, and Serge Wich, a biologist at the University of Zürich and PanEco, have developed a conservation drone equipped with cameras, sensors and GPS. So far they have used the remote-controlled aircraft to map deforestation, count orangutans and other endangered species, and get a bird's eye view of hard-to-access forest areas in North Sumatra, Indonesia."

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



Local News

Trails Mapped Throughout SM Natural Areas!

The San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance has just completed mapping all the trails throughout the San Marcos Natural Areas. You may read the article [here](#) with links to the trail maps. A much-needed resource is now available!



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