

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

November, 2008

NOVEMBER EVENTS

November 6 Executive Board Meeting

The HCMN Executive Board will meet at 6:30 pm, Thursday, November 6 at 829 Red Hawk Road, Wimberley. ✈

November 21 Annual Gala and Membership Meeting

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2008.
WIMBERLEY COMMUNITY CENTER
Social hour, 6:00 pm; Dinner & Awards, 6:45 pm.

Our final meeting of the year includes food, live entertainment, election of Chapter officers for 2009, and the presentation of awards.

Here is the official slate of nominees submitted by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Executive Board:

President	Dixie Camp
Vice President	Ben Adair
Secretary	Mary Arizpe
Treasurer	Larry Calvert

Additional nominations may be submitted from the floor during the meeting.

Committee chairs will be sought and confirmed by the newly elected Board. Stay tuned for a call for those positions at a later date.

The dinner menu includes your choice of pork loin or lemon rosemary chicken as entrée with parmesan mashed potatoes, salad, rolls, and apple crisp with ice cream. The cost is \$10.00. Please RSVP with your reservation to Secretary Susan Nenney by 5:00 pm, November 17. ✈

HAYS COUNTY MASTER NATURALISTS

Board of Directors

President	Dale Shively
Vice President	Dixie Camp
Secretary	Susan Nenney
Treasurer	Winifred Simon
Past-President	Tom Watson
State Representative	Tom Watson
Training Committee, '08	Jean McMeans
Training Committee, '09	Mimi Boelter
Advanced Training Comm	Betty Finley
Membership Committee	Beth Ramey
Web Master	Herb Smith
Newsletter Committee & Editor	Richard Barnett 512-847-6941 news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	vacant
Host Committee	Margaret Baker
Historian	Laurel Robertson
Volunteer Service	Walt Krudop
AgriLife Agent	Bryan Davis
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam

THE PRESIDENTIAL VIEW

Dear Naturalists,

The end is near! No, I am not talking about the end of the world or the end of the national presidential elections. This is the month in which we generally celebrate the conclusion of a year in the life of the Hays County Master Naturalist Chapter. Our Gala event is scheduled for Friday, 21 November at the Wimberley Community Center and I hope to see all of you there. A new slate of Board officers will be presented for your approval and, as always, nominations from the floor will be entertained. Also, an awards ceremony will honor those who have excelled within the chapter during 2008.

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend the State Master Naturalist Meeting at Mo Ranch in Hunt, Texas. Several new chapters were formed in 2008, bringing the

total to over 40. I met many Master Naturalists from all over the state and saw a common connection among all chapters: we all strive to preserve, protect, and conserve the natural resources in our perspective areas of Texas. The presentations were great and presenters were well prepared. The BBQ dinner and s'mores were not bad either!

As we reach the 10-year milestone for the chapter, we can look back on many enjoyable occurrences that have made the chapter strong, but its greatest strength can be found in the dedication and commitment of its members to a cause. In a time when experts are telling us that volunteerism is on a decline, I hope that we will maintain our commitment to Hays County natural resources and the Master Naturalist Chapter in the upcoming year.

Have a great month and I will see you soon. Naturally speaking,

Dale ✨



Members in the News

Welcoming Sutton and Sawyer!

Congratulations to Bryan and Cyndi Davis! They are the proud adoptive parents of two sons, Sutton and Sawyer, whom they brought home from Russia on October 17. They are already proud to be Texans and are learning about A&M football, so please give Sutton and Sawyer a warm Texas welcome.

You can find their photographs and learn all about their adventurous trek to Texas by reading their blog at <http://www.cbrussia.blogspot.com>.

Herb Smith Returns to Hill Country Alliance Calendar

The 2009 Calendar published by The Hill Country Alliance features another winning photograph by HCMN Webmaster Herb Smith. Herb's entry, "Emerald Waters of the Blanco River" took the Grand Prize out of over 400 photographs entered in the 2008 competition for HCA's second Hill Country Calendar. The

contest judges were Dana Friis-Hansen, Executive Director, Austin Museum of Art, and Stephen L. Clark, owner of Stephen L. Clark Gallery in Austin.

The calendar sells for \$13.99 each at <http://www.calendarclub.com>, where you can see Herb's photo. HCA offers discounts for large orders. Please see <http://www.hillcountryalliance.org> for ordering instructions. It is for sale in Wimberley at River House.

HCA is a nonprofit organization representing a diverse membership of neighborhood groups, ranchers, landowners, environmentalists, groundwater districts, elected officials and developers. HCA's purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. ✨

Baker Ramrods Wimberley Sign Renovation

Master Naturalist Margaret Baker acted as Environmental Advisor and project facilitator in the recent renovation and landscaping of the "Welcome to Wimberley" sign on RR 2325, near Wimberley High School. The renovation was a civic project of students at the WISD Annex. Margaret is also a member of Keep Wimberley Beautiful, which sponsored the project and paid for the supplies, including drought-resistant native shrubs.

Watch for Karen Bartell's Novel

Due for release in February 2009, *Untimely Partners*, published by Lyrical Press, is the first in the Mayan Mysteries by Master Naturalist and author Karen Hulene Bartell.

Bartell's latest novel opens a series of time-travel and paranormal romances set in ancient Toltec, Mayan, and Aztec locations.

Untimely Partners: Love is truly timeless--and brutally sacrificial, as Keiranne is about to find out. Photographer Keiranne West ends her engagement and embarks on a trip to Teotihuacán. After an incidental encounter with fellow tour member Dorian, Keiranne plummets through a rip in time 2,800 years into the past.

Lost in the brutal past of Toltec Teotihuacán, Keiranne is plunged into a fiery romance and forced to confront a high priest. Paying a steep price accelerates a journey she

hopes will lead her back to the only man she has loved throughout time.

Chapter News

October Chapter Meeting

Corky Kuhlmann told HCMN members and guests about the purpose of conservation Easements and the procedures for negotiating them. Corky is TP&WD's Project Manager for the Land Conservation Program, and he brought a wealth of anecdotes to illustrate how the program works.

Kuhlmann explains that a Conservation Easement is a restriction that landowners voluntarily negotiate to limit specified uses of their property in order to protect its natural, cultural, or productive resources. Although TP&W now owns about 1.6 million acres in various forms of properties, but is limited in its ability to acquire or operate more land for conservation. CEs serve as a means to reduce the current rate of land fragmentation by subdivision and development, and they enable families to retain ownership of large tracts that contain critical habitats.

Corky adds that The Texas Land Trust Council will hold a conference on Conservation Easements in 2009. It features Jim Jeffries, the leading appraiser for CEs. More information is available at <http://www.texaslandtrustcouncil.org>.

Susan Zimmerman is working with the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust to organize a CE workshop for landowners in the Guadalupe-Blanco River Basin. ✨

2009 Training Committee

Mimi Boelter, the 2009 Training Committee Chair, reports that the open positions on the committee have been filled. The Training Committee has begun its planning meetings for next year's training class. ✨

HaysMN Forum

Current Forum entries feature water monitoring, the falling water level of the Blanco River, and thirsty birds visiting birth baths.

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 (web@haysmn.org) know if you have any questions or suggestions. Better yet, use the Forum to discuss the Forum.

Herb Smith, Webmaster
<http://www.haysmn.org>, 512-847-2006 ✨

Reporting Reminder

Reports for October, 2008 are due by November 7. Please email your reports of Volunteer Service hours and Advanced Training hours to Beth Ramey, preferably by using the friendly report forms on our website at www.haysmn.org. ✨



CALENDAR

(The dragonfly logo ✨ identifies official HCMN events)

✨ November 5 to 7, **Texas Water Quality Conference**, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm (3 Days). Radisson Hill Country Resort & Spa, 9800 Westover Hills Blvd. San Antonio. More info below.

✨ Thursday, November 6. **HCMN Executive Board Meeting**, 6:30 pm. 820 Red Hawk Road, Wimberley.

✨ Saturday, November 15. **Introduction to Conservation Easements** sponsored by Citizens' Alliance for Responsible Development. Wimberley Community Center. Attorney Kim Sullivan, presenter.

✨ Friday, November 21, **HCMN Annual Gala**. Wimberley Community Center. More details to follow.



ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

*City of Austin
Wildland Conservation
Educational Events*

Saturday, November 1. **Across the Fence: The Movement and Impacts of Animals in the Wildland Urban Interface.** Panel Presentation: (BCP Hike and Lecture Series event). A panel of experts discusses feral hogs, white-tailed deer, suburban pets, fire ants, and other wildlife interactions taking place in the wildland urban interface.

9:00am to 12:00pm. 3 hours Advanced Training ✨

Sunday, November 2. **Upper Reaches of Bull Creek Hike.** Located near the headwaters of Bull Creek, the WTP4 tract has a deep beauty that belies its inelegant name. Participants will be led on an interpretive hike through a variety of terrains, starting on a rocky plateau, before descending a slope of rich wooded golden-cheeked warbler habitat. 1:30 to 5:30 pm. 4 hours Advanced Training ✨

Saturday, November 8. **Onion Creek Cross Country Hike.** For the outdoor adventurer, this hike is an exciting opportunity to be guided across 7 miles of the Onion Creek Unit management area. The hike will take participants overland for an engrossing personal experience through the oak-juniper savannah and riparian zone, with highlights characteristic of the *Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer recharge zone*. Aspects of historic land use will also be conveyed as guides interpret the landscape and the ongoing management activities to restore it for optimization of clean and plentiful aquifer recharge. 9:00a.m to 3:30 p.m. 6:30 hours Advanced Training ✨

To learn more about these events, or to register, please visit the calendar page of our website at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/online/registration/ecowebevents.cfm>

Daniel Dietz, Environmental Conservation Information Specialist, City of Austin, Wildland Conservation Division, 3635 RR 620S, Austin, TX 78738-6807



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Aquarena Groundwater Festival

Betty Watkins and Leah Laszewski are working at Aquarena's Groundwater Festival for 800 schoolchildren on November 19 and 20, and they need additional help leading activities there. If you can help, please tell Betty (tedbetty@austin.rr.com) or Leah (laszewski@yahoo.com). Maybe you could lead walks on the boardwalk. We think four more people are needed and perhaps could lead other activities, but any of it would be fun and fast-paced valuable volunteer work. Introduce kids to the great outdoors. ✨

Fall at Onion Creek

HCMN PROJECT #426 - HABITAT RESTORATION

Hays County Master Naturalists and other volunteers have been working at the Onion Creek properties covering the Barton Creek segment of the Edwards Aquifer (this segment feeds Barton Swimming Pool) for 4 years, restoring the former ranchlands to a more original state. By reducing the Juniper canopy cover and encouraging grass growth, the land managers (Wildlands Conservation Division [WCD] of Austin Water Utilities) are aiming to improve water quality and quantity entering the aquifer below.

The WCD biologists have recently completed a prescribed burn of approximately 300 acres on the Rutherford tract of the Onion Creek properties. After such burns, WCD asks for volunteers to hand sow native grass seeds in burned areas that are inaccessible to the seed drill.

Volunteer opportunities will be coming in September and October with WCD on these properties, which are close to Wimberley, Dripping Springs, and Kyle. Please keep your eyes open for bulletins from Susan and notices in the newsletter to this effect. MNs have enjoyed their learning experiences at Onion Creek while contributing to a worthy project. ✨



State News

Texas Monarch Watch

SYLVESTER, TX(WEST OF ABILENE), MAP

[HTTP://TINYURL.COM/43HORQ=20](http://tinyurl.com/43HORQ=20)

They are here! For the seventh year a row we had at least 50 groups of 250 to 500 settling in for the evening. So, preliminary count is estimated at a low of 12,500 and as high as 25,000! I am always amazed at how spectacular this event is for us, we spend all year awaiting the next arrival. This year we had a much larger "crop" of Milkweed than normal so we expected large numbers. We usually have 2-3 waves arrive 2-3 days apart. So, we are beginning a wonderful week today.

Full text and pix:

<http://www.learner.org/cgi-bin/jnorth/jn-query-byday?1223003556=20>

or: <http://tinyurl.com/3q7cqr=20>

The I-35 corridor has been fairly active this fall.

Just a note to let you know that I've got around 450-500 monarchs in my yard right now (1.5 acres) feeding mostly on Pentas, Gregg's Mistflower (*E. greggii*) and Mexican Flamevine (*S. confusus*).

Dale Clark, Glenn Heights (Dallas Co.), Texas. October 8, 2008

I've been working as a Hawk-watcher at Hornsby Bend, in Austin, so I've had the opportunity to watch the Monarchs coming through over the past few days. Yesterday, (Oct 8) I counted over 171, with a peak of 37 between 10 and 11 am. Today, (Oct 9) I counted 544, with the peak occurring again between 10 and 11, when I counted 275 Monarchs.

Peg Wallace, Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory, SE side of Austin.

<http://www.hornsbybend.org/=20>

Journey North. Fall 2008 Monarch Butterfly Migration: Overnight Roosts

http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/monarch_f08_roosts.html?layers=3DOct_10==20 or: <http://tinyurl.com/3f9a5r=20>

Please let me know of any additional reports of 100 or more monarchs this fall.

Thanks, Mike Quinn, Texas Monarch Watch, www.texasento.net/dplex.htm=20

Invertebrate Biologist, Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Parks & Wildlife. 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744. 512-389-8759

or 8758 (FAX). Cell: 512-577-0250.

<mailto:mike.quinn@tpwd.state.tx.us=20>

Funding for Texas Parks in Limbo

AUSTIN, Texas, October 31, 2008 (ENS).

Warning of a continuing crisis in Texas parks and natural areas, the nonprofit advocacy group Environment Texas is calling on a stalled legislative task force to meet and develop a plan "to stop raiding parks funding for other purposes."

"With severe damage to several parks from Hurricane Ike, sprawling developments threatening natural areas, and years of funding shortages leaving our parks in disrepair, now, more than ever, our state and local parks need proper funding," said Environment Texas Director Luke Metzger.

"What's infuriating is, the money is already there, it's just being diverted to other purposes by the Legislature," he said.

Since 1993, the state of Texas has funded the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in part through a tax on sporting goods. Although this tax produces more than \$100 million in revenues per year, legislators in 1995 capped the funding for the department at \$32 million per year - unadjusted for inflation.

In 2007, the Legislature used mainly general revenues and new voter-approved bonds to almost triple funding for the parks for two years. But the lawmakers did not lift the cap permanently, deferring the issue to an interim committee to decide.

That four-member committee, the Joint Legislative Task Force on Sporting Goods Sales Tax, has not convened a single meeting, although it is expected to issue a report no later than December 15, 2008.

The interim committee is composed of state Senators Kip Averitt of Waco, Craig Estes of Wichita Falls, and Tommy Williams of The Woodlands, all Republicans, as well as Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa of McAllen, a Democrat.

The task force is supposed to review the definition of "sporting goods" in the Tax Code. It will determine the amount of sales tax revenue that must be generated from the sale of "sporting goods" to fund state parks, local parks, historic sites, coastal management programs and water planning.

Environment Texas is calling on state lawmakers to create stable and substantial funding for state and local parks by

permanently removing the cap on the sporting goods tax and creating a major land acquisition program to meet the state's growing demand for outdoor recreation and to protect critical natural areas and water resources.

A report released by Environment Texas in September evaluated the experience of 15 states in securing reliable funding for open space programs. The report, "Preserving Our Natural Heritage," shows that America lost 21.6 million acres of forests, fields, and farmland to development from 1992 to 2003 - an area larger than the state of Maine.

To stem this tide, several states set up programs to buy up remaining open space before it is lost to the next subdivision. For example, since 1991 the state of Florida has provided more than \$2 billion in funding to protect natural areas as part of the successful Florida Forever program.

By contrast, in 2006 a state parks task force reported that Texas had not had a major land acquisition program since 1967.

In 2007, the Legislature only appropriated money for acquisition of new parkland from the sale of existing parkland and appropriated some funds to add land to existing parks.

"With the real-estate market still reeling, Texas has a chance to protect our cherished landscapes at bargain prices," said Metzger. "But without stable funding schemes, we are missing this historic opportunity to protect our natural heritage."

Funding shortfalls at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department also affect the ability of local governments to protect open space, Metzger points out.

Historically, the department has devoted just over one-half of its revenues from the sporting goods tax to provide grants to local governments for the acquisition and development of local parks facilities. Yet, since 1993, the state agency has had to reject more than 60 percent of local government applications because of a lack of funding.

At its meeting November 6, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission will vote on \$16.6 million in appropriated matching funds approved by the 80th Legislature for local park grants, funded by the sporting goods tax.

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LOCAL NEWS

Fall Foliage at Aquarena

If you haven't visited Aquarena since the tree colors started, you must go. Early in the morning the light on the slough is incredible, with the fabulous buffer strip that the golf course is now allowing to remain unmowed around the edge of the slough. This natural strip is full of seed heads of gorgeous native grasses, in many colors, and lily pads and floating sections of plants that intersperse the reflective surfaces of the slough.

The tallow tree grove on the right as you cross the golf course bridge is scarlet, and you'd best see it now because it is likely to be removed as a very invasive exotic in the coming year. Dr. Rose is leading an effort to remove this harmful tree that has spreading all the way from Lime Kiln Road because its white seeds float downstream. The bald cypress trees are starting to show orange, and poison ivy and Virginia creeper up in the trees are hanging down in ropes of color. A Blanco crabapple is turning purple-red, as you turn left to drive to the aquatic nursery. It is time to take photos, for sure. Next year you could win the Greenbelt Alliance's photo contest with this subject matter. Be sure and see SMGA's exhibit of nature photos, now on display at the Activity Center. It is truly awe-inspiring.

-- D.W., San Marcos River Foundation

Wimberley Butterfly Watch

The Wimberley Butterfly Watch lapsed in July, and its return is problematic. But don't give up watching out for butterflies. If you keep your eyes open for other pollinators, you are bound to see a few butterflies.

While butterflies continue to be few and far between in Wimberley, they became more common in the vicinity of Gruene during September and October.

American Snouts continued to be fairly numerous and ubiquitous during October.

Other butterflies observed in and near Gruene include Giant Swallowtail, Pipevine Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, Orange Sulphur, Cloudless Sulphur, Southern Dogface, Little Sulphur, Dainty Sulphur, Sleepy Orange,

Painted Lady, Gulf Fritillary, Tropical Leafwing, Common Mestra Tawny Emperor, Gray Hairstreak, Eastern Tailed-blue, Monarch, Queen, White-striped Longtail Skipper, Dorantes Longtail Skipper, Checkered Skipper, Lavinia White Skipper, Ocola Skipper, and Dun Skipper.

If you spotted anything you'd like to report, please email your editor at news@haysmn.org. Photos are always welcome at our Blog site.



Links to Chapter Sponsors and Partners

Sponsors:

Texas Master Naturalist - State Website - masternaturalist.tamu.edu
Texas AgriLife Extension – agextension.tamu.edu/
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – www.tpwd.state.tx.us/

Agencies of Interest:

Bamberger Ranch -- <http://www.bambergerranch.org/workshops.htm>
Native Plant Society of Texas – www.npsot.org/
San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance -- <http://www.smgreenbelt.org>.
San Marcos River Foundation – <http://www.sanmarcosriver.org>.
Texas Outdoor Women's Network - <http://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 – .nrcs.usda.gov/
Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority -- www.gbra.org

Partners

Austin Nature Day -- <http://www.austinnatureday.org/>
LBJ Wildflower Center -- <http://www.wildflower.org>
San Marcos Nature Centre -- <http://www.smgreenbelt.org>
Gorge Preservation Society -- www.canyongorge.org