

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

November, 2009

November 2009 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, November 12th 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 November 9th.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be the 2009 Class Graduation and Gala and will be held on Friday, November 20th. Please watch your email for further details.

Congratulations to the class of 2009, the Dire Wolves!

We plan to recognize each class for the past 11 years, so please make sure your class is well-represented at the gala!



A Naturalist's View

This month we hear from Jean McMeans, the Chapter Host Committee Chair. Jean will be the Training Committee Chair in 2010.

As a life-long city person, I definitely fit the category of "Re-Born to the Land," one of the fastest growing groups in Texas. As a child, my main interactions with nature involved the backyard, the vacant lots, and the family vacations exploring the western parts of the US and Canada. On these trips, the trees, mountains, and water spoke to my natural soul and gave me a peace I found irresistible. The fact that I grew up in the flat, almost treeless Panhandle of Texas might have contributed to that awe, too.

As an adult, I followed my love of history and the humanities as I taught high school in Amarillo and in Southlake for a total of 30 years. I enjoyed growing native plants in my yard, but I never imagined living anywhere but in the city. A reconnection with my high school boyfriend in 2000 changed all of that, and Jim and I married in 2002. In 2003 our new home on the land he owned near Wimberley was completed, and we moved to the Hill Country.

Board of Directors

President	Dixie Camp
Vice President	Ben Adair
Secretary	Mary Arizpe
Treasurer	Larry Calvert
Past-President	Dale Shively
State Representative	Tom Watson
Training Committee	Mimi Boelter
Advanced Training Comm.	Betty Finley
Membership Committee	Beth Ramey
Web Master	Herb Smith
Newsletter Committee	Art Arizpe
& Editor	news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	Susan Nenny
Host Committee	Jean McMeans
Historian	Dale Shively
Volunteer Service	Walt Krudop
AgriLife Agent	Kasey Mock
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam

After reading about the Master Naturalist program in the local newspaper, we took the class in 2005. In the class we learned valuable information about how to put our desire to be good stewards of our land into practice. We also made wonderful friends who share our concerns for protecting the natural resources we have in this area.

After completing the training, I became a member of the Training Committee. I have served on that committee since, and I am honored to be selected as the Coordinator of the Training Committee for 2010.

With the other members of the Committee, I hope to provide a profitable learning experience for the members of the new class which will inspire them to be better stewards of their property and to appreciate our Hill Country for all that it is. Sharing what you know and learning more from others is an exciting process.

- Jean McMeans



Featured Project

San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance, Project #424

The San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance works to protect the quality of life for the people of San Marcos through the creation of interconnected parks and natural areas. In the midst of unprecedented growth throughout Central Texas, the SMGA is dedicated to ensuring that along with development, we take care to protect natural areas for ourselves, our children, and our future. The organization focuses its efforts in the San Marcos area and is particularly concerned with protecting the San Marcos and Blanco river watersheds and creating natural areas accessible to the citizens of San Marcos.

The SMGA is a non-profit 501(c)3, all-volunteer organization and currently assists the City of San Marcos in taking care of 6 natural areas totaling more than 861 acres. The areas are Blanco Shoals, Prospect Park & Lower Purgatory Creek Park, Upper Purgatory Creek Park, Ringtail Ridge Greenspace, Schulle Canyon Greenspace, and Spring Lake Preserve.

The SMGA was encouraged and given some start up funds from the San Marcos River Foundation and they remain a "sister" organization with lots of overlapping interests. The city parks and recreation department owns most of the lands they have helped conserve. The SMGA was also part of the small group that helped get the county bond money for parks and open space, along with the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association, SM River Foundation and others.

Please visit the SMGA [website](#) to learn more.

Todd Derkacz, current president of the SMGA, is in the 2009 training class and is our chapter's contact for this project. Todd served as a firefighter in San Marcos and retired as fire chief in 2004 after 27 years of service. He wanted to return to the outdoors and help move the public mind a little closer to an earth-friendly way of thinking.

Shortly after moving to San Marcos, Todd found the SMGA being created by a determined woman named Chris North. She saw the bulldozers ripping through what is now Prospect / Purgatory Creek Park but which was then going to be an apartment complex. She resolved not to let that happen and Todd joined the organization to help.

HCMN became involved with the SMGA with the help of James Buratti, Minnette Marr and Judy Telford. Lance Jones and then Todd went through the training class and a site visit in this year's class to Ringtail Ridge, helped the two organizations become more connected.



Todd Derkacz at Ringtail Ridge. Photo by Lance Jones.

There are a number of volunteer opportunities available to HCMNs. Regular trail work is on Thursday mornings and occasionally Saturdays. There is also a need for hike leaders and interpreters. If you have a passion for birds, tracks, grasses, or geology, for example, the hike can have that as a theme.



Tom Watson leading a hike at Ringtail Ridge. Photo by Lance Jones.

The SMGA is also creating an interim stewardship guide for use by its volunteers. It will address a host of basic issues including things like invasive species or setting up a neighborhood / group adoption program. Each section can be a simple project in itself for those who like to research and each section of the guide will be brief and succinct to direct our volunteers until the city develops a more thoroughly researched handbook.



Volunteers working on trail maintenance. Photo by Lance Jones.

Other activities include entrance kiosk layout and upkeep, website management, and staffing a booth. They also need natural area monitors, which consists of hiking an area once a week or so and reporting what you see.



During an Earth Day Hike, a group spots a baby vulture in its nest. Photo by Lance Jones.

There are also special projects like getting involved in conservation efforts to connect San Marcos to the Walk for a Day trail project or the organizing the Naturescapes photo contest. They also need help updating the "benefits of natural areas" portion of their website.

If you would like to help, please contact Todd Derkacz, toderkacz@gmail.com.



Chapter News

October Chapter Meeting

The Chapter meeting was held on October 22nd, at the National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center. The speaker and guide was Dr. Mara Alexander.



Dr. Mara Alexander answers HCMN's questions. Photo by Art Arizpe.

Dr. Alexander gave us a tour of the facilities which started in the Texas Wild Rice planting areas. They are working to restore the rare and endangered plant to the San Marcos River.



Texas Wild Rice planting areas. Photo by Art Arizpe.

She also showed us the many Texas Blind Salamanders, as well as, the San Marcos, Comal Springs and Barton Springs Salamanders which they also study.



Texas Blind Salamander. Photo by Art Arizpe.

The center also breeds and studies the Fountain Darter. They were the first to spawn the threatened Devils River Minnow indoors.

HCMNs Presentations at State Meeting

Tom Watson, Susan Nenny and Jean McMeans represented HCMN at two sessions at the State Meeting. Below are their reports.

The state TMN meeting was held at Mo-Ranch in a beautiful setting along the banks of the Guadalupe River with comfortable accommodations and good food.

There were 14 presentations of chapter projects given in two sessions running concurrently. I was second presenter in one of the concurrent sessions which were run on Friday evening and Sunday morning. Nine chapters, including HCMN, made presentations of projects ranging from websites for nature trail information to hosting a regional conference. The chapters giving presentations were Elm Fork, Hays County, Trans Pecos, Gideon Lincecum, Galveston Bay, North Texas, Tierra Grande, Capitol Area, Rolling Plains, Highland Lakes, and Lindheimer.

Here is a list of some of the projects presented:

1. Trails of Denton County (website construction)
2. Onion Creek Land Management & Water Conservation
3. Trans Pecos Mountain Road cleanup
4. Texas Native Prairie Project
5. Hurricane Restoration at Galveston State Park
6. Trials & Tribulations of Installing a Local Rainwater Collection System
7. Planning & Hosting a Regional Conference
8. Wood Duck Nest Box Monitoring
9. Breeding Birds Surveys at Cibolo Nature Center

Chapters from around the state are obviously busy with many nature and conservation projects of significant magnitude and interest. Some of the chapters had 10 - 20 members in attendance at the meeting.

Five members of the HCMN were in attendance: Tom Watson, Ruben Garza, Walt Krudop, Susan Nenny, and Jean McMeans.

There were many new friends made and ideas exchanged, all of which could be taken home for dissemination to respective chapters. There were many good speakers from NRCS, TAES, and TPWD teaching some very exciting topics, including our own Lee Ann Linam. The meeting was a fun and relaxing time with opportunity to complete one's

advanced training requirement in a single day while learning from the variety of experts who taught some very interesting topics.

- Tom Watson

Why Outreach Matters

Sharing practical land stewardship information to build chapter strength was the theme of one session at the State Master Naturalist meeting at Mo-Ranch October 23-25. Many chapters are concerned about recruiting members to their training programs. Using the Hays County chapter experience as a case study, Jean McMeans and Susan Nenny emphasized that "sharing what you know" is critical to inspire neighbors and community members to be more responsible land stewards, as well as a successful strategy to recruit and retain chapter members.

While distributing program brochures is essential, providing basic, often eye-opening education is more likely to win the attention and participation of community members.

As the pace of land fragmentation and development intensifies, direct outreach (hands on education either in a group or one-on-one) becomes a critical activity to quickly alert new landowners to the complexities of life in the Hill Country. When we share what we know, we often inspire our neighbors to learn more through their own research and through participation in our training programs. One doesn't need to be an expert to educate the public if you can organize an opportunity and call on your MN friends.

- Susan Nenny

HCMN 2010 Chapter Dues

It is time to collect the Master Naturalist Chapter dues for the 2010 calendar year.

The \$15/year/person dues should be paid by the end of 2009. Checks should be made out to "Hays County Master Naturalists" and noted as 2010 dues.

For your convenience there will be a table at the annual Gala where you can drop off your dues. The Gala is Friday November 20th and more details will be noted in the newsletter. Your other option would be to send your check to Larry Calvert, Chapter Treasurer, 650 Red Hawk Rd., Wimberley, TX 78676.

Having dues in by the end of the year allows the Board to develop a budget as soon as they begin work in January. Thanks for your attention to this request. See you at the Gala!

- Larry Calvert

It's Officer Election Time!

The Nominations Committee will entertain nominations and volunteer offers to serve as an officer of the chapter as it develops the slate for the election at the Annual Gala to be held on November 20 at the Wimberley Community Center.

Please send your nominations or your offer to serve to Dale Shively, pastpres@haysmn.org, our Past President and Chair of the 2009 Nominations Committee, for consideration by the committee.

The Chapter Officer positions are:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

You may find descriptions of these positions in the [Chapter Operating Handbook](#), Section C, on our web page.

2010 Training Committee Forming

The application process for the Training Committee starts now. If you are interested in any of the positions, please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org.

The Training Committee positions are listed below. You may find descriptions of these positions in the [Chapter Operating Handbook](#), Section E.1 on our web page.

- **Chair / Coordinator of Training Committee** - (1 Position)
- **Vice-Chair / Assistant-Coordinator of Training Committee** – (1 Position)
- **Registration and Attendance** – (2 Positions)
- **Nature Watch Coordinator** – (1 Position)
- **Logistics & Documentation (videography)** – (1 Position)
- **Field Trip and Site Visit Coordinator** – (2 Positions)
- **Secretary** – (1 Position)
- **Speaker's Contact (includes logistics, gifts and evaluation)** – (1 Position)

- **Meals: supported by Chapter's Host**
- **Standing Committee** – (Coordinator and helpers as needed)
- **Graduation** - (Chair and volunteers as needed)
- **Other** - Volunteers as needed and determined by Chair and Vice-Chair

If you would like to apply for a position, please send an email to Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org, or Jean McMeans, hostcom@haysmn.org, with the following information:

- Position desired
- Name
- E-mail address
- Phone number(s)
- Skills, knowledge, and interests you would bring to the committee
- Chapter volunteer activities for 2009

Chapter Committees

Perhaps you would be interested in serving on or chairing a committee. Please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org.

You may find descriptions of these committees in the [Chapter Operating Handbook](#), Section B, on our web page.

- Membership Committee
- Volunteer Service Projects Committee
- Advanced Training Committee
- Newsletter Committee
- Outreach Committee
- Host Committee
- Historical Committee

2009 Chapter Awards Nominations

We are currently seeking nominations for the 2009 Chapter awards. Please see the procedure for nominations and a description of each award in the [Chapter Operating Handbook](#), Section F.3, on our web page.

Please submit your nominations to Beth Ramey, Chair of the Membership Committee, membership@haysmn.org. Beth is also serving as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Awards Committee.

New Volunteer Project, Cypress Creek Church Nature Trail, #916

This is a half mile public nature trail that is open to everyone in the wilderness property of Cypress Creek Church . Work on the nature trail involves maintenance as well as further development including identification and labeling of various grasses, trees and forbs and construction and placement of birdfeeders to bring more wildlife into the area.

Please contact Dwanna Zyla, 830-833-2687 or 281-635-1950 (cell), for more info.

HaysMN Forum

The forum has been very active lately. There have been several discussions about identifying grasses and butterflies and about bird migrations and hummingbirds. Be sure to check them 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 October 2009 are due by November 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.

Reporting Forms Updated

Many chapter members have experienced problems and frustration when using the online reporting forms because if the enter key was struck, the form would prematurely submit the data even if it was not complete.

Herb Smith was able to modify the hours reporting forms to avoid this problem. Check them out!

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

Texas Alligator Lizard

Ginger Geist sends us this photo, identified by Lee Ann Linam, as a Texas Alligator Lizard. You can find more information [here](#).



A Texas Alligator Lizard. Photo by Frank, a Red Hawk Road feral hog bow hunter.

Onion Creek is Bank Full!

Onion is flowing majestically filled to the brim of the banks in places! It is just wonderful to see water flowing there again. The water is somewhat muddy as one would expect but it will clear up as the velocity subsides. There must have been good rains in the Dripping Springs area to bring all that water down. It has been a long time since I have seen water moving downstream out there so it was a real surprise when I spotted it. The water should be really beautiful for our work day out there in early November. Some of you have never experienced water flowing there so you have a treat coming!

- Tom Watson



Onion Creek at the WQPL. Photo by Tom Watson.



The low water crossing. Photo by Tom Watson.



Rapid flow. Photo by Tom Watson.

Tom Hausler

Tom Hausler reports that the headwaters of Sycamore Creek were flowing nicely after a heavy rain on October 13th. He recorded a total of 9.89 inches for October.

He also captured a nice shot of a White Tail Buck at his wildlife watering dish.



Sycamore Creek Headwaters. Photo by Tom Hausler.



Sycamore Creek Headwaters. Photo by Tom Hausler.



White Tail Buck at wildlife water dish. Photo by Tom Hausler.

Calendar

Thursday, November 12th, Chapter Board Meeting

Friday, November 20th, Class Graduation & Gala



Advanced Training Opportunities

The following meeting is approved for 1.0 hour of advanced training.

Sponsor: Wimberley Birding Society

Monday, November 16th
10:00-11:00 am
Wimberley Community Center

Dr. Pamela Owen, senior paleontology educator, will present a PowerPoint talk detailing the history and mission of the Texas Natural Science Center in Austin, Texas. A part of the Texas Memorial Museum at the University of Texas, the TNSC is famed for its collections and programs that reflect the natural world around us. She will offer specific bird-related information as well as an overall introduction to the museum.

This presentation should provide a good introduction to an important science resource for Master Naturalists.



Volunteer Opportunities

AgriLife Extension Office

Saturday, November 7th
8 a.m. to noon
Work Day -- Extension Office

The Master Gardeners are hosting and Master Naturalists are invited to do some badly needed weeding in the native plant section, haul many wheelbarrow loads of mulch, and do clean-up in the green house.

Refreshments of sorts will be provided. Hope to see you there.

Seed Collecting and Juniper Clipping at Onion Creek

We will clip juniper seedlings and collect seeds from native plants on Sunday, November 8th from 1 pm to 4 pm.

This will be easy going as we are interested in knocking down the newly emerging juniper seedlings, a few being up to an inch in diameter. We will be working in an area near the creek so you will be able to see it with water flowing! (What a change). The weather should be cool and amenable to working outdoors for a change. Please let me know if you are coming by Thursday, November 5th so I can get the necessary accoutrements.

Thanks and cheers,
Tom, twatson11@austin.rr.com

Project # 603 - Jacobs Well Nature Center

Volunteers are needed for:

- 1) Public education and outreach - Beginning in October, the center and trails will be open to the public on Saturdays. Initial outreach will include tours of the trails and center (guided by volunteer docents) to explain the importance of habitat restoration and native species, the aquifer and water conservation, and how people can have a positive effect on our area.
- 2) Habitat Restoration - Identification of native and invasive species within the center, and development of a long term habitat management plan.

Anyone interested in helping with these activities - please contact:
Jeff Vasgaard
512-656-0690
jvasgaard@verizon.net

Barsana Dham Trail Building

Friday, October 2, 2009
9:00am-12:00pm
Hays MN Project #909
Work will begin October 2 and continue every Friday for 8 weeks.

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

Hyacinth Removal

Saturday, November 28th
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

Help Project FeederWatch Track Backyard Birds

Bird watchers needed to help scientists discover changes in bird populations.

Ithaca, NY—What happens in the backyard should not stay in the backyard—at least when it comes to bird feeders. By sharing information about which birds visit their feeders between November and April, backyard bird watchers can help scientists track changes in bird numbers and movements from year to year, through [Project FeederWatch](#) run by the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and [Bird Studies Canada](#).

Project FeederWatch begins on November 14 and runs through early April. Taking part is easy. Anyone can count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders and enter their information on the FeederWatch website. Participants submitted nearly 117,000 checklists last season. Since 1987, more than 40,000 people from the United States and Canada have taken part in the project.



Local News

Snouts are out across Central Texas

Large numbers reported from Austin, Driftwood, Dripping Springs, San Marcos, Wimberley, New Braunfels, Universal City, and San Antonio.

<http://texasento.net/snout.htm>

Mike Quinn, Austin



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