

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

November, 2010

November 2010 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, November 4th, 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 1st.

Chapter Meeting

There is no chapter meeting this month.

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at a chapter meeting or suggestions for topics/speakers, please contact Tom Hausler, vp@haysmn.org, or 512-858-1015.



A Naturalist's View

This month we hear from Art Arizpe, the Chapter Newsletter Committee Chair and Editor.

We know 2009 and 2010 have been good years for rainfall. Our chapter's [Rainfall Monitoring Project](#) data shows the trends quite nicely. At our house we've had 41.3 inches to date. The worst month on our property was August with 0.4 inches and the best was September with 10.7 (remember Hermine?). That's quite a swing from one month to the next. I've heard it said that we average 33 inches per year, with most years below average. It makes sense.

What does all the rain mean for the plants and wildlife?

I've noticed several effects throughout the year. For example, we've always seen a bit of Deer Pea Vetch on our property, but it was never very widespread. This native plant is an annual and a legume. Like all legumes, it fixes nitrogen and improves the soil. This year it just exploded and grew in thick patches. It grew in long vine-like strands and was difficult to walk through. And it was everywhere. The seeds must have been there all along. Here's a photo of a typical patch.

Board of Directors

President	Dixie Camp
Vice President	Tom Hausler
Secretary	Becky Northcut
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Past-President	Dale Shively
State Representative	Tom Watson
Training Committee	Jean McMeans
Advanced Training Comm.	Betty Finley
Membership Committee	Beth Ramey
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Newsletter Committee & Editor	Art Arizpe news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	Susan Nenny
Host Committee	Vacant
Historian	Dale Shively
Volunteer Service	Walt Krudop
AgriLife Agent	Richard Parrish
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam



A mat of Deer Pea Vetch. Photo by Art Arizpe.

If you look closely, you can see the tiny pea pods. This photo was taken in April. By the middle of summer, it was mostly gone. I'm hoping it did its job and improved the soil.

We also had many wildflowers this year. Mexican Hats, Black-eyed Susans, and even the Yuccas were putting out their flower spikes. I noticed many of the Yuccas had their spikes chewed down by deer, so the spikes and flowers must be tasty.



Black-eyed Susans. Photo by Art Arizpe.



Narrowleaf Yucca. Photo by Art Arizpe.

The September rains gave the native grasses (ok, the KR bluestem too!) a nice boost. I've seen Big bluestem on our property, but it was always a rare treat. Same story as the Deer Pea Vetch – this year it was everywhere. The Indiangrass produced 5 foot tall stems, topped off with thick yellow heads.



A stand of Indiangrass next to our driveway. Photo by Art Arizpe.

The rains caused several waves of activity: first the plants took advantage of it, and then the increased plant material provided food and shelter for animals.

Most importantly, the seed bank has been replenished, ready for the next good year.

- Art Arizpe



Featured Project

The "Featured Project" is taking a brief hiatus and will resume at the start of next year.

The "Featured Project" started in the January 2009 issue and has now covered 22 projects. Each project was chosen to highlight the wide variety of volunteer opportunities available to our members and to showcase the project's contributors' efforts.

Here's a list of all the projects:

2009

- January - #802 *Blanco Watershed Water Quality Monitoring*

- February - #408 *Elephant Ear Removal Aquarena*
- March - #426 *Onion Creek WOPL*
- April - #801 *Worm Wrangling/EmilyAnn Earth Day*
- May - #405 *San Marcos Nature Center*
- June - #705 *Canyon Lake Gorge*
- July - #704 *Eco-Day*
- August - #803 *Rainfall Monitoring*
- September - #406 *Wildflower Center*
- October - *Ecofest*
- November - #242 *San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance*
- December - #603 *Jacob's Well Nature Center*

2010

- January - #909 *Barsana Dham*
- February - #809 *Wimberley Outdoor Educators*
- March - #911 *Texas H2Oasis – Avian Sanctuary*
- April - #418 *Patsy Glenn Refuge*
- May - #807 *Chaparral WMA*
- June - #702 *Bluebird Nestbox Trails*
- July - #425 *Episcopal Church of Holy Spirit Association/Birding Activities*
- August - #912 *Driftwood Wildlife Association/Birding Activities*
- September - #501 *Training Committee*
- October - #805 *TPWD Cowbird Management*

You may find the articles in our [archives](#).

I've now completed a first-pass through the major chapter projects and plan to revisit and update each project in the future.

If you participate in or know of a project that you think we should feature, please contact me.

- Art Arizpe
news@haysmn.org



Chapter News

2010 Graduation and Gala

To all Hays County Master Naturalists:

Let's celebrate!

- Prickly Pears graduation
- 2010 Chapter Accomplishments
- 2010 Chapter Awards
- Election of 2011 HCMN officers

When: November 20, 2010

Where: San Marcos Activity Center
 501 East Hopkins, San Marcos

Time: 6:15 - 7:00 Social time
 Snacks provided - BYOB
 7:00 - 8:30 Dinner and program

Meal: Catered by Chisholm Trail Barbeque

Carnivores

Vegetarians

Brisket, Sausage,
 Chicken
 Beans, Slaw, Potato
 salad
 Trimmings
 Peach cobbler
 Iced tea

Baked potato w/
 toppings
 Broccoli slaw
 Green salad
 Peach cobbler
 Iced tea

Cost: Carnivores - \$10.00
 Vegetarians - \$5.00
 Prickly Pear class members - free
 Pay at the door (can pay 2011 membership,
 too)

Reservation deadline: November 15, 2010

Please RSVP to
 jean mcmeans jcheath42@msn.com
 or call 512-847-6578

See you there!

2010 Chapter Awards Nominations

We are currently seeking nominations for the 2010 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.

We still need input from the membership on the following awards.

3.1.4. Significant Contributions to the Chapter (1 or 2 persons)

For a certified member who has made significant contributions to HCMN on a continual basis based on years of service, volunteer hours, project participation, chapter leadership, public relations for HCMN, or other category as deemed appropriate by the Awards Committee.

3.1.6. Outstanding Chapter Volunteer of the Year

For a certified member who has made significant contributions to HCMN for the current year based on service, volunteer hours, project participation, chapter leadership, public relations for HCMN, or

other category as deemed appropriate by the Awards Committee.

Award 3.1.7 Special Achievement Award (case-by-case basis; used only as needed)

For a certified member who has made significant contributions of service and volunteerism to HCMN and the local community through project participation, leadership, public relations or other category as deemed appropriate by the Awards Committee.

3.1.8. Honorary Member (optional award each year for individual or group)

For any individual, group, or organization that has exemplified the standards of a HCMN and have made significant contributions to the continued education and stewardship of the natural resources of their community.

We ask that all recommendations be submitted with a write-up (justification) and e-mailed to Dale Shively at dale.shively@tpwd.state.tx.us.

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 Saturday, November 20th at the San Marcos Activity Center.

Please send your nominations or your offer to serve to Dale Shively, pastpres@haysmn.org, our Past President and Chair of the 2010 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.

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

TMN Statewide Meeting

The 11th Annual Statewide Meeting and Advanced Training, more commonly known as the annual conference, was held at T bar M Conference Center in New Braunfels on October 22-24. Hays County Master Naturalists were among the 319 attendees from 32 different chapters across the state – the largest attendance ever.



An insect collection board for Advanced Training. Photo by Leah Laszewski.

Judy Burdett, with the help of Jean McMeans, Sean Welch, Lin Weber, Dave and Marcy Boyd, and Larry and Linda Calvert, ran the silent auction which made \$2000 and brought home more than \$400.00 for our chapter's treasury. Many thanks to Judy and her team for making this the most successful auction ever!



A very interesting Cedar Elm Forest in the Mesquite Creek wildlife area. Photo by Leah Laszewski.

The training offerings covered a broad range of topics. Some of our favorites included Ethnobotany, insect collecting and collections, a tour of the Mesquite Creek wildlife habitat area and Geology of the Texas Hill Country.



Tom Watson received his 2500 hour pin. Photo by Lance Jones.

Our Tom Watson was awarded his 2,500 hour pin. Other Hays county highlights included 250 hours for Lance Jones and 1,000 hours for Walt Kudrop.



HCMNs having a meal in the open air Sanctuary at T bar M. Photo by Leah Laszewski.

Food, weather, accommodations, fellowship all added to a wonderful weekend. Come and enjoy the next Conference being held at Mo Ranch next October 21-23.

- Leah Laszewski

HCMN 2011 Chapter Dues

It is time to pay the Master Naturalist Chapter dues for the 2011 calendar year.

The \$15/year/person dues should be paid by the end of 2010. Checks should be made out to "Hays County Master Naturalists" and noted as 2011 dues.

For your convenience there will be a table at the annual Gala where you can drop off your dues. The

Gala is Saturday November 20th and more details are 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

Rainwater Revival

The Rainwater Revival was held in Dripping Springs on October 9th. The turnout was great and the chapter booth was fairly busy all day long.



A visitor using the watershed model at the HCMN booth. Photo by Art Arizpe.



Bryan Davis demonstrates how to assemble a rain barrel. Photo by Art Arizpe.

Pink Smartweed Seed Collection

Minnette Marr needed seeds for the Pink Smartweed so she and Karen Langridge did a little collecting, several hours worth actually, on the new Wonderworld trail in San Marcos. Access to the SMGA trailhead is on Hunter Road south of Wonderworld Drive.

October Chapter Meeting

Mark Klym delivered an excellent program! It was a great finish to this year's chapter meetings.

Mark is an Information Specialist with the Wildlife Diversity Program at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. His talk was about Hummingbird Habitats. He covered the 18 species found in the state and their habitat preferences.



Karen and Minnette at the Wonderworld trail. Photo by Lance Jones.



The Pink Smartweed seeds. Photo by Lance Jones.

Here's some useful info about Pink Smartweed:

Polygonum pensylvanicum L.
Pennsylvania smartweed, Pink Smartweed
[Polygonaceae \(Buckwheat Family\)](#)
USDA Symbol: pope2
USDA Native Status: Native to U.S.

Dense, erect, spike-like clusters of small, bright pink flowers are on sticky-haired stalks.

About 75 species of smartweeds occur in North America. They are mainly identified by their spikes of numerous flowers and encircling leaf sheaths. A closely related species, Pale Smartweed (*P. lapathifolium*), has white or pale rose, arching flower spikes and usually smooth stems. Both are found in gardens as well as in damp waste places. The seeds of these plants are eaten by songbirds and waterfowl. There are also climbing species of smartweeds.



Mark Klym discusses hummingbird habitats at the San Marcos Nature Center. Photo by Art Arizpe.

His presentation included many photos of these hard-to-see birds and also included recordings of their calls.

Monarch Butterfly Journey North

Susan Nenny shares this very informative web site about the Monarch Butterfly Migration Tracking Project. Be sure to check it out!

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/index.html>

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 October 2010 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.

All hours completed in the 2010 calendar year will apply to the 2010 total, but reporting your hours by November 1st, will allow you to receive your recertification at the Gala.

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

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

Wildland Conservation Division

Our Wildlands hikes take a hiatus during the heat of summer, but we'll be back full swing in the fall. The BCP Hike and Lecture Series will continue, so check out the following hikes and we'll see you on a trail soon!

BCP Hike and Lecture Series

Sat., Nov. 13, 9am to 11:45am - A Bird's Eye View of Stillhouse Hollow

2.75 Hours Advanced Training



Volunteer Opportunities

Elephant Ear Removal

**Wednesday, November 3rd & 17th
4:00pm-7:00pm
Hays MN Project #408**

The unique and critical habitat of Spring Lake requires a carefully managed habitat conservation program. Volunteers meet the first and third Wednesday of each month to remove the invasive Elephant Ear plant that grows along the banks of the lake. Work begins at 4pm.

For more information, contact Leah Laszewski (laszewski@yahoo.com).

Hyacinth Removal

Saturday, November 27th

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

Lake Mead sinks to a new historic low

From the Arizona Republic:

"Lake Mead sank to its lowest level in nearly 75 years on Sunday, a stark reminder of how drought and growing water demands have sapped the Colorado River and its huge reservoirs.

Not since it was first filling in 1937 has Lake Mead held so little water. The reservoir's level fell to the historic low shortly before noon on Sunday, eclipsing a previous record from the drought-stricken 1950s."

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



Local News

TCEQ recommends Hays, Comal, Travis, Groundwater District

The Hill Country Alliance has an article about the recent recommendation by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to create a Groundwater District to cover Hays, Comal, and Travis counties.

"Back in 1990 the Hill Country area was studied by the Texas Water Commission. A determination was made that the area was likely to experience "critical groundwater problems" within 20 years. The report concluded that groundwater demand would exceed availability and that groundwater conservation districts be created throughout the "Hill Country Priority Groundwater Management Area" to locally manage the resource.

Since that time, groundwater districts have been formed everywhere except Western Travis and Western Comal Counties. And, while there is a district in Western Hays County, they have not been granted full management powers provided to most other groundwater districts including adequate funding and the ability to manage wells and well drilling as carefully as other GCD's.

Recent droughts have confirmed what the 1990 reports suggested, many wells went dry and some entire neighborhoods were without water. There is now an opportunity to take an important step towards regional management of this fragile water resource. The county line is not a boundary recognized by springs, creeks, or aquifers. Managing water resources within natural systems such as aquifers and watersheds is a step in the right direction for the Hill Country."

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