

# Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

November, 2012

## Chapter Events

### *Chapter Board Meeting*

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, November 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](mailto:pres@haysmn.org), by Monday, October 29<sup>th</sup>.

### *Chapter Meeting*

**There is no chapter meeting this month, but don't miss the gala! Find details below.**

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at a chapter meeting or suggestions for topics/speakers, please contact Anne Child, [vp@haysmn.org](mailto:vp@haysmn.org).



## A Naturalist's View

*Kim Ort is the Chair of the Chapter's Advanced Training Committee. She was in the Class of 2011, the Painted Buntings.*

I've never wanted to interact with nature, never liked creepy crawly things, and definitely hated weeds, so you ask why I became a Master Naturalist? The honest answer is that I was bored and thought "Why not?" I did not have any expectation other than in going through the training I might be more comfortable with the outdoors.

Through our classes, I learned a myriad of topics from geology to grasses of Central Texas. Each class topic piqued my interest and before long, I started to figure out that I can volunteer to further my learning of the natural world in Central Texas. I volunteered on the Wild Rice monitoring project; who knew that the only stand of Texas wild rice in the world is in the San Marcos River? Even though I nearly froze in the middle of July (yes, it is possible) and was on pins and needles for a time wondering whether I was allergic to poison ivy, I loved the work knowing that what we did could make a difference for future generations. I volunteered at the Wildflower Center doing galleries of wild flowers. You might wonder why that is a good volunteer project? I learned which wild flowers bloom during each season which means the visitors to the Wildflower Center did as well. I grouped my displays by color to help people

### *Board of Directors*

<b>President</b>	Larry Calvert
<b>Vice President</b>	Anne Child
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<b>Newsletter Committee &amp; Editor</b>	Art Arizpe <a href="mailto:news@haysmn.org">news@haysmn.org</a>
<b>Outreach Committee</b>	Leah Laszewski
<b>Calendar Committee</b>	Tom Hausler
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<b>Volunteer Service</b>	Art Arizpe
<b>AgriLife Agent</b>	Richard Parrish
<b>TP&amp;WD Rep</b>	Lee Ann Linam

decide on which plant to use in their landscape. It was during this time that I stripped and re-landscaped my yard with native grasses and plants. I've been fighting my yard ever since I moved to Central Texas, spending thousands of dollars on turf grass, killing hundreds of innocent plants, wasting thousands of gallons of water and the yard still looked like a wasteland. Well, I no longer hang my head in shame when my friends visit my house and this last summer, I only watered my yard once a month. The weirdest part, I became the resource for native plants and grasses for my friends and neighbors (those of you that know me might laugh out loud at this point!). Go Native!

I came to the realization that most people would do the right thing with the environment that they live in but they do not know how to interact with it. I believe that the best thing I can do as a Master Naturalist is to help people learn how to adapt to the world outside of their door.

With that as my objective, I started to do presentations on topics that I found interesting for the Outreach program. I learned a lot creating them and I was fortunate to be invited to a couple of group's meetings to deliver talks. It is a great feeling when people tell me that they learn something new. I volunteered to be the Advanced Training chair to support the same objective, as a "Certified" Master Naturalist I know that there is a lot of knowledge that I lack. Who would not want to know that we can eat green briar's shoots and they taste like asparagus? Or, more important to the beauty of the Hill Country, what the symptoms of Oak Wilt look like? I think that sharing our knowledge with others will help them to make the right decisions about the environment they live in and the natural resources that they use. I know that the knowledge that I gained has changed my outlook on nature.

- Kim Ort



## Featured Project

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

Here's a list of the projects covered this year:

- January - #1110 Project FeederWatch
- Februar - #1107 Healing Hands Healing Lands
- March - #602 EmilyAnn Theatre
- April - #704 Hays County Master Naturalists Outreach
- May - #1006 Texas Amphibian Watch
- June - Historian Committee
- July - #1201 Lake Kyle Park
- August - #807 Chaparral WMA
- September - #705 Canyon Lake Gorge
- October - #1201 Hog Out County Grant Program

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

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

- Art Arizpe, [news@haysmn.org](mailto:news@haysmn.org)



## Chapter News

### *President's Message*

We are really doing a bang up job of our volunteer work this year. As of the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter we have turned in almost as many volunteer hours (95%) as we did for the whole year of 2011. We normally have heavier reporting in the 4th quarter of the year when lots of people try to get caught up on reporting in time for the Gala and the end of the year push.

Thanks to everyone that has been a part of this success. The work we have done has made a difference and a valuable contribution to the Hays County environment.

The invitation to the November 17<sup>th</sup> Gala and Graduation has been sent to the entire membership. Please make it a priority to get your reservation in. We'd love to see all of you make it to this wonderful event this year. It is a fun time and a chance to catch up with the MNs you haven't seen in a while or form some new friendships. So, get your reservation in ASAP.

See you at the Gala and get those hours reported!

- Larry Calvert

### *2012 Graduation and Gala*

#### **LET'S CELEBRATE!**

- Texas Live Oaks Class Graduation
- 2012 Chapter Awards and Accomplishments
- Election of 2013 Officers

**WHEN:** Saturday, November 17, 2012

6:15 – 7:00 pm Social Time with nibbles and drinks

7:00 – 8:30 pm Dinner and Program

**WHERE:** San Marcos Activity Center  
501 East Hopkins, San Marcos

**DINNER:** Fantastico Italian dinner from Carino's!!  
[salad, pasta+, dessert]

**BRING:** Your own adult beverage (tea, etc. provided)

**COST:** Texas Live Oaks 2012 Class – No Charge!!

Master Naturalists and Guests - \$12.00

**PAY:** At the door with Cash or Check only  
[2013 dues payment of \$15 may also be made]

RESERVATIONS: Please complete the Reservation form which was sent to your email and return to Helen Bowie: [Helen.bowie@live.com](mailto:Helen.bowie@live.com) or call 210-601-8862

DEADLINE: **Wednesday, November 14, 2012**

### *Looking For Board Nominations*

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 17<sup>th</sup> at the San Marcos Activity Center.

Please send your nominations or your offer to serve to Dixie Camp, Chair of the 2013 Nominations Committee, at [advisory@haysmn.org](mailto:advisory@haysmn.org) 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](#).

Perhaps you would be interested in serving on or chairing a committee. Please contact Dixie Camp at [advisory@haysmn.org](mailto:advisory@haysmn.org).

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

The Chapter Committees are:

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

- Dixie Camp

## *The Wanderers*

Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) are the only butterflies in the world that migrate north and south, just as the birds do. This morning, I was having my coffee outside and saw a single Monarch flitting from plant to plant. I watched the same butterfly for twenty minutes!

Watching that butterfly inspired me to do some research on the Monarchs. What a magnificent example they are of the grandeur of Mother Nature. It is amazing that something so small and so delicate is strong enough to migrate each Spring and Fall for up to 3000 miles!



*Photo by Theresa Benjamin. Used with permission.*

Their migration spans lifetimes of three to four generations. West of the Rockies, Monarchs migrate into southern California and the northern Baja. East of the Rocky Mountains, these butterflies begin their southern migration from southern Canada all the way down to northern Mexico. They start around the first of August and continue to migrate until the first frost.

Fortunately, for all of us in the Hill Country, we are right on their path of migration and get to enjoy them twice a year as they make their treks. At times, the sheer numbers of the butterflies seem surreal to me, especially in the last few weeks. Our area becomes a faery land of sorts, but instead of faeries, we have butterflies!

It is unknown exactly how the Monarchs are able to migrate so precisely. Research is ongoing in this field but so far has determined that the butterflies have a circadian clock located in the insects' antenna. They are also thought to rely on the earth's magnetic field for orientation and their flight patterns appear to be inherited. The butterflies only have a lifespan (after emerging as a butterfly) of two to eight weeks. The butterflies that emerge in the Fall are the great, great grandchildren of butterflies that migrated the previous Spring, yet somehow find their way to the same roosting spots, sometimes even the same trees!

The Monarchs are the best known butterflies in the United States. Monarchs were discovered in Australia and New Zealand in 1871 and they have their own migratory patterns there. The Aussies call the Monarchs the "Wanderers". There have been a few Monarchs that have been discovered in the United Kingdom but it is likely that they got there aboard a transport ship or a plane. Monarchs are also common in the Caribbean islands. These butterflies are the only ones in existence that are capable of trans-Atlantic crossings.

Monarchs are poisonous to birds and mammals because of cardia glycosides that are contained in different milkweed plants ingested by larvae. The emerging butterflies also continue to feed on milkweed plants throughout their entire lives. The bright colors of the Monarchs are also a warning to predators.

Monarchs are found in a wide range of habitats from rural country settings to urban areas. They are noted to overwinter in conifer groves with fields and meadows nearby. Courtship consists of two phases. The first phase occurs aerially where the males will chase the females and take them down to the ground. Once on the ground, copulation occurs and can take anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes! A spermaphore is transferred from the male to the female and is also thought to provide the female with energy to aid in her reproduction.

Migration spans the life of three to four generations; no single butterfly makes the entire trip. The females deposit the eggs for the next generation during each trek. This last generation of eggs that are left by the female enter into a phase called "diapause" that can last up to 7 months. During diapause, butterflies fly to an overwintering spot and stays there until February or March. They do not begin to reproduce until they begin their northward migratory patterns in the Spring and find a food source.

Monarchs are a butterfly that goes through a complete and amazing metamorphosis. Eggs are laid on milkweed plants. Four days later, the eggs hatch into wormlike larvae, the caterpillars. The Monarch caterpillar is about two inches long and has black, yellow, and white stripes. The caterpillars consume their egg cases and feed on milkweed and store energy in the form of fat. Two weeks later, the caterpillar enters the pupa or chrysalis stage, spinning a silk pad on a twig or leaf and hangs by its last pair of legs. It hangs upside down in a "J" shape and then molts, leaving itself encased in a green exoskeleton. This stage will last or approximately two weeks; during this time, hormonal changes go on leading to the development of the butterfly. A day before it emerges, the chrysalis darkens and becomes transparent. After emerging, the butterfly will hang upside down for several hours, allowing its wings to dry. Finally, it spreads its wings in search of milkweed to feed on along with a variety of other nectars from other flowers.

I have a good friend living in Lafayette, Louisiana who has two sons, six and four years old. They got a milkweed plant for their porch and they were fortunate enough to have both caterpillars eating on their plant AND they got to see the metamorphosis right on their back porch! Click on this link to see the caterpillars:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ9SrQXCnFc&sns=em>. Six year old Jack is so fascinated by the metamorphosis that he has been known to sit in a chair, up close and personal, and watch them until they fly away. Here is the link for the birth of the butterfly:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYkQyk5fTZw&sns=em>. I've even seen photos of his

parents bringing him a peanut butter sandwich so he doesn't have to leave his spot and miss anything! Young or old, or all ages in between - we all enjoy the Monarch. I think they bring out the kid in all of us!

There has been some decline in Monarch numbers. One of the ways you can help is to plant a little milkweed in your yard along with any kind of nectar producing flowering plant! You will create a haven for the Monarchs in your area, and who knows, their descendants might be back next year to visit!

### *Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting*

Congratulations to two of our chapter members, **M. Lee Brown** and **Cindy Luongo Cassidy**! They were chosen to deliver presentations at the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting held on October 26-28<sup>th</sup> at Camp Allen, Navasota, TX. In addition, they each received \$100 scholarships from the Chapter to help them attend the meeting.

M. Lee's Advanced Training session was "*Developing a Positive Project Partnership with a City: Hays County Ch. Charro Ranch Park*". Charro Ranch Park, Project #1010, is a 64.73 acre passive use nature park donated to the City of Dripping Springs in 2009. The Hays County Master Naturalists partnered with the City to preserve the natural resources, to maintain the park and to provide environmental stewardship education to the community. The presentation covered the nuts and bolts of working with a city government, including developing good working relationships, serving on city committees and understanding city policy and approval processes. The presentation also included finding funding sources, writing winning grants and how to manage your grant in partnership with city government.

Cindy's session was "*Save the Night! Mitigating Ecological Consequences of Artificial Light at Night on Flora & Fauna*." We have a related chapter project, #1108, Light Pollution Education and Outreach. Almost every living thing on our planet uses light or the lack of light to trigger life processes. How does artificial light at night affect critters and plants? The session explained those effects on living things and how we can reduce the negative effect of our lights. The training covered the ecological effects of artificial light at night on many species. The disruption of the historical cycle of light and dark may have profound physiological consequences. Every Master Naturalist should know the results of the scientific studies on the effects of artificial light at night on the natural world around us in order to have a more comprehensive grasp of the environment they want to manage. Our usage of artificial light not only affects almost every living natural resource but, in addition, much of the electricity needed for the artificial light uses up water in the generation process.

- Art Arizpe

### *October Chapter Meeting*

Daniel Lewis from the Texas Forest Service gave us a talk on the "Bastrop Wildfires, 1 year later". He began with background information on how the fires started and why a combination of factors made it the worst fire in Texas history.

The fires started when windy conditions caused trees to knock down power lines; the resulting sparks kicked the fires off. The combination of wind, drought, and low humidity all contributed to the fires' devastating effects. Over 33,000 acres and almost 1700 homes and businesses

were destroyed. The fire also destroyed the central area of the Lost Pines [Loblolly Pine](#) eco-region which is also major habitat for the [Houston Toad](#).



*Immediately after the fire, September 2011. Photo by Tom Hausler.*



*This area was re-seeded in January 2012. Photo taken in May 2012. Photo by Tom Hausler.*

He discussed the restoration efforts which are underway and their progress. There are four objectives for the work:

- Control soil erosion
- Re-seed native grasses and forbs
- Re-establish the loblolly pines and hardwoods
- Reduce fuel loads

You can follow the recovery efforts here: <http://bastroprecovery.org/>.

- Art Arizpe

### *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](http://haysmn.org) web site and look for the Forum application in the menu.

Please let Herb Smith, [web@haysmn.org](mailto: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 are due by November 5<sup>th</sup>. Please submit your reports of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours by using the friendly report forms at [www.haysmn.org](http://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 [hourshaysmn@gmail.com](mailto:hourshaysmn@gmail.com), and you will receive 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](mailto: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.*

### *Tom Hausler*

Tom reports that the White-tailed bucks are larger this year.



*White-tailed buck at the water dish. Photo by Tom Hausler.*

Please send your news items to [news@haysmn.org](mailto:news@haysmn.org).



## **Advanced Training Opportunities**

*Please watch your emails for upcoming Advanced Training Opportunities. You may also find information in the [Advanced Training Calendar](#) on our web page.*

*Reminder: Rather than replying to the Advanced Training e-mails which come from the Chapter Secretary, you should send questions about AT Opportunities to Kim Ort, the AT Committee Chair, at [atcom@haysmn.org](mailto:atcom@haysmn.org).*



## Volunteer Opportunities

Please watch your emails for upcoming Volunteer Opportunities. You may also find information in the [Projects Calendar](#) on our web page.



## State and National News

### *Whooping Crane Migration Watch Gets Under Way*

From a TPWD press release:

AUSTIN — Endangered whooping cranes have begun their annual 2,400-mile fall migration from Canada to Texas. As the rare birds approach Texas, a new citizen science initiative is inviting Texas residents and visitors to help collect sightings of whoopers.

Texas Whooper Watch (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/whoopingcranes/>) is a new volunteer monitoring program that is a part of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Texas Nature Trackers program. According to Lee Ann Linam, biologist in the Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Whooper Watch is being developed to keep track of an ever-expanding population of whooping cranes.

Since beginning their slow recovery from a low of 16 birds in the 1940s, whoopers have, with few exceptions, always wintered on the Texas coast on and near Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. However, in the winter of 2011-12, several groups of whooping cranes expanded their wintering areas to include more coastal areas and even some inland sites in Central Texas—patterns that surprised crane biologists. "Texas Whooper Watch is a program that asks the public to help us discover more about where whooping cranes stop in migration and to be ready to learn more about these potential new wintering areas," according to Linam.

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



## Local News

### *Texas Parks, Towns Embrace Dark Sky Movement*

From the Texas Tribune:

"In recent years, Texas' state parks have struggled with falling visitor numbers and budget cuts. These days, in their quest to lure people back, the parks are promoting opportunities for night-sky viewing, away from city lights.

'As Texas becomes more and more urbanized, people — literally — they can't see the stars,' said Chris Holmes, the director of interpretive services for state parks at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Next summer, he said, the department will launch a program aimed at encouraging star-gazing in more parks across the state."

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



## Links to Chapter Sponsors and Partners

### *Sponsors:*

Texas Master Naturalist -- State Website -- [masternaturalist.tamu.edu](http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu)

Texas AgriLife Extension -- [texasextension.tamu.edu](http://texasextension.tamu.edu)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department -- [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/)

### *Agencies of Interest:*

Bamberger Ranch -- [bambergerranch.org](http://bambergerranch.org)

Native Plant Society of Texas -- [www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org)

San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance -- [www.smgreenbelt.org](http://www.smgreenbelt.org)

San Marcos River Foundation -- [www.sanmarcosriver.org](http://www.sanmarcosriver.org)

Texas Outdoor Women's Network -- [www.townsanmarcos.org](http://www.townsanmarcos.org)

Texas Cooperative Extension -- Sea Grant Program -- [texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu](http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu)

Texas Forest Service -- [txforestservice.tamu.edu](http://txforestservice.tamu.edu)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -- [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -- [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service -- [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority -- [www.gbra.org](http://www.gbra.org)

### *Partners*

Austin Nature Day -- [www.austinnatureday.org](http://www.austinnatureday.org)

Gorge Preservation Society -- [www.canyongorge.org](http://www.canyongorge.org)

Hill Country Photography Club -- [hcphotoclub.org](http://hcphotoclub.org)

LBJ Wildflower Center -- [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)

San Marcos Nature Center -- [www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature\\_Center.html](http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature_Center.html)