

# Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

October, 2009

## October 2009 Events

### Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:pres@haysmn.org), or 512-517-3111, by October 5<sup>th</sup>.

### Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, October 22<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, at the National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center, 500 East McCarty Lane, in San Marcos. A map is available [here](#).

We will receive a tour of the facilities from Dr. Tom Brandt or one of the staff members.

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at the chapter meeting or suggestions for topics/speakers, please contact Ben Adair, [vp@haysmn.org](mailto:vp@haysmn.org), or 512-773-3668.



## A Naturalist's View

*This month we hear from Beth Ramey, the head of the Chapter Membership Committee.*

I think I can trace my interest in the natural world back to early childhood. When I was seven years old, my parents, both school teachers, moved the family to Ft. Defiance, Arizona on the Navajo Indian Reservation. My playground in these early years were rugged, relatively untouched, expanses of the Colorado Plateau, gorgeous "red-rock" country bounded by scenic national parklands such as Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon, Canyon de Chelly and the Petrified Forest, to name a few. Weekend activities for our family consisted of picnics and hikes in the beautiful, wild places that surrounded our community. Playing outside meant running anywhere within a mile of the house and horseback riding was a common after-school activity.

When the family moved to Phoenix 6 years later, I had to adjust to an urban environment, but I

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<b>TP&amp;WD Rep</b>	Lee Ann Linam

continued to seek out any wild, overgrown corner of the world where there might be a nest of birds or other creature to observe. The Sonoran Desert that surrounds the Phoenix metropolitan area taught me to appreciate the subtle aspects of nature. Plants were sparse and scrubby, animals rare and the seasons practically non-existent. Yet, there was a balance in the wild places that I recognized and appreciated. As Phoenix grew in the 60s and 70s, I mourned the loss of natural places and worried that we would lose everything before I was able to acquire a piece of land and work to keep it natural.

I have been employed in the lumber and home center industry for over 30 years. While I find the job of providing materials for families' homes to be a meaningful pursuit, I have often felt conflicted about the fact that some of my efforts have contributed to sprawl, land fragmentation and loss of habitat. As a result of the internal conflict, I became an advocate of Green Building and sustainable forestry in the early 80s.

My husband and I moved to Texas in 1998 and fell in love with Central Texas. We immediately put up a dozen bird feeders and began trying to learn about the area and its creatures. We came across some information about the Master Naturalist program at the feed store in Wimberley and took the classes in 2006. The education we received was exactly what we were seeking.

I have always wanted to be able to find that harmony between man and nature and now, with the MN training, feel that I am making educated choices instead of wild guesses.

I still have a career in the lumber and building materials industry which takes up a large amount of my time and energy. When the opportunity to take on the Membership Chair role presented itself, I knew it was a perfect fit. I do the majority of the work on my PC at home, spending a few hours each weekend logging hours and maintaining the database. It may not be the most exciting thing to do, but I know it's important to the members and the chapter as a whole.

My husband and I are working to create a beautiful, native island of refuge for wildlife on our property while working constantly to influence the land-use decisions our neighbors and friends make every day. We hope to serve as an example and a resource for other small landowners in the area.

- Beth Ramey



## Featured Project

### *Eco Fest 2009*

Eco Fest 2009, Living Greener in the Hill Country, will be held on Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, at the Katherine Anne Porter School. The school is located at 515 FM 2325 in Wimberley. A map is available [here](#).

This is the first year for Wimberley's biggest, free, environmental event and it promises a full day of entertaining and educational events. Eco Fest is sponsored by the Citizens Alliance for Responsible Development. CARD promotes sensible growth in the Wimberley Valley and western Hays County. To learn more about CARD, visit their web site: [www.hayscard.org](http://www.hayscard.org).

Eco Fest's speakers have been chosen to offer help to Hays County residents eager to make practical, cost efficient and environmentally sound decisions on their property. The keynote speaker is well-known Austin green architect Peter L. Pfeiffer, of Austin's Barley & Pfeiffer, at 3:00 pm. Peter has been featured on the Discovery Channel's "World's Greenest Homes."

HCMNs Jamie Kinscherff and Karen Archer, partners in Argus Ecoservices, will talk about land stewardship.

Our former AgriLife Extension Agent, Bryan Davis, will talk about smart wildlife management for the small acreage owner.

Other speakers include:

- Elizabeth McGreevy, landscape architect, on Ashe Juniper management
- Richard Heinichen, co-author of "Rainwater Collection for the Mechanically Challenged."
- Malcom Beck, founder of Garden-Ville, on organic gardening.
- Eric Beckers, Texas Forest Service, on oak wilt.
- Jan Fulkerson, Texas Forest Service, on protecting our homes from fire danger.

In addition, HCMNs will be holding mini-seminars and teaching exhibits.

There are several volunteer opportunities available to HCMN. These include delivering poster and fliers, especially outside of Wimberley. We can also help work the CARD booth for the event and help make information and direction signs. They also need help getting the school ready for the event and making sure the presentation equipment is ready. On the day of the event, we can help set up booths and equipment. Also needed are parking directors, registration desk help, distributing and collecting surveys, taking tickets, etc. And of course, helping with clean up.

If you would like to help, please contact Susan Nenny, [outreach@haysmn.org](mailto:outreach@haysmn.org), or Louis Parks, [louis.parks@gmail.com](mailto:louis.parks@gmail.com).



## Chapter News

### *New Hays County AgriLife Extension Agent*

Kasey Mock of San Marcos has been hired for the Hays County AgriLife Extension agent position. He will begin training with the Comal County Agent on October 15<sup>th</sup> and begin work in Hays County on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

Kasey grew up in Kyle and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Science & Development, Extension and Industry Option, from Tarleton State University in Stephenville, TX.

Please welcome Kasey to Hays County and HCMN!

## *October Chapter Meeting*

The Chapter meeting was held on September 24<sup>th</sup>, at the Onion Creek WQPL. The speaker was Kevin Thuesen, Ph.D. who works for Austin WCD. His talk was titled "Utilizing Ecological Restoration to Achieve the Mission of the Water Quality Protection Lands."

Kevin gave us some background on the WQPL. The lands were purchased with bonds issued in 1998. The initial goal of the program was to protect Barton Springs. There are two types of lands in the program, fee simple and conservation easement. Fee simple lands are owned by Austin and are actively managed under 10 year plans by WCD. Conservation easement lands have their development rights owned by Austin, but the land remains under private ownership. There is an annual review by WCD, but the lands are not actively managed. The conservation easement approach is attractive because the cost is 40-60% of fee simple.

There are currently 23,567 acres in the program. 9,050 are fee simple and 14527 are conservation easement.



*Kevin Thuesen answering questions from HCMNs.  
Photo by Tom Watson.*

The basic restoration approach consists of 3 strategies: thin the juniper, seed native grass, and manage with fire. In particular, at the Onion Creek WQPL, 316 acres have been thinned, 150 acres have been seeded, and 2000 acres have been burned since 2006.

In addition, WCD is actively managing the karst features, which involves locating them, cleaning them, and preventing further debris deposits. WCD is also actively managing the wildlife, mainly whitetail deer and feral hogs.

## *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 20<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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

### *Chapter Committees*

Perhaps you would be interested in serving on or chairing a committee. Please contact Dixie Camp, [pres@haysmn.org](mailto: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](mailto:membership@haysmn.org). Beth is also serving as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Awards Committee.

### *Class October Schedule*

Ch . #	Date	Location	Topics	Speaker
20			Urbanization and Land	TBA
21	Oct 6	Agri-Life Extension Office	Fragmentation Volunteers as Teachers	Flo Oxley

### *HCMN Chapter Memorial Fund*

The Hays County Master Naturalist Chapter has established a Memorial Fund to set aside contributions to the Chapter specified as honoring someone. Having a separate fund will keep the contributions from ending up in the operating funds.

The initiation of this fund comes from contributions to honor the memory of Alleen Barnett. At this time the Board has not designated a use for the funds, but the use will be reported in the Newsletter when the decision has been made.

- Larry Calvert

### *HaysMN Forum*

There's been a flurry of postings recently, mainly due to the rains. Be sure to check them out and please see the article below.

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.

### *And a Miracle Happened ...*

*The following was posted to our forum. It's a beautiful description of the response of life to the recent rains.*

After months of punishing drought and temps over 100 degrees, our stretch of Lone Man Creek had shrunk down to a mud puddle the size of a three car garage less than 18" deep. The great blue herons, great egrets and green herons were having a field day -- every day -- for weeks and weeks. For the fish there was nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. We were seriously considering catching the remaining fish and transporting them to safer habitat when ... a miracle happened! We got 7 inches of rain in 4 days. And while that was pretty miraculous in itself, the real miracle was the

response of the native flora and fauna to this blessed event.

First the riparian fauna ...

Before noon of the first day, the Gulf Coast toads had declared that it was party time. And their friends from all over the area came down to the creek for some action. By evening, their cousins, the Rio Grande Leopard frogs, had joined the party.

By the afternoon of the first day, Roseate Skimmer dragonflies were already out in full force. The males hovering above guarding the females to assure they were the dad to all those eggs. Any body of water was fair game. But limestone pot holes which had been dry for months were among their favorites; no fish. After all, the larger bass were on the hunt, breaking water near the water's edge. Those dragonflies laying eggs were mighty tempting. Freshly minted butterflies (e.g. Giant & Tiger Swallow Tails) were already out of the chrysalis taking advantage of the abundant fresh flowers.

The light rains on the second and third day caused the water to rise enough to connect most of the isolated pools and cover the edges of the gravel bars. The sunfish wasted no time in clearing out gravel nests and began spawning. Common Green Darner dragon flies now greatly outnumbered the Roseate Skimmers. The Common Green Darner couples were flying in tandem. The pair would land on any bit of soggy flotsam & jetsam they could find, so the female could insert the eggs out of reach of predators. The Black Saddle bags were doing their own thing. The males would release the female long enough for her to drop down to lay an egg and they snatch her back to assure no interloper got parental rights.

By the fourth day the water had cleared enough to easily see the small schools of sunfish scouting out the new territory and groups of 6-8" bass patrolling the shallows looking for a tasty gambusia snack.

Even though the rain had stopped the creek was still slowly rising. The karst Edwards formation, that caps the hills, had captured a bunch of water and it was now slowly releasing it to percolate through the hillside plumbing. The thirsty Walnuts, Red Oaks, Ash, Cedar Elm on the hillside got their first good drinks in many months.

The pools in the creek were finally connected, allowing exploration by kayak. In the water, fish were everywhere - bass, from fingerlings to 12", various sunfish of all sizes, gambusia by the hundreds! The air above the water was crowded with dragonflies. Which begs the obvious questions -

- How did all this aquatic life survive the drought in a mud puddle about the size of a three car garage that was only 18" deep? How did the dragonflies respond so quickly? How ...

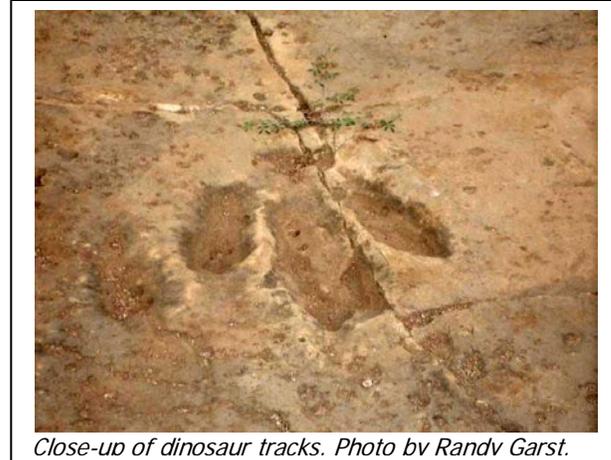
- Talon Dancer

### *Class Bamberger Field Trip*

The class went to Bamberger Ranch on a Field Trip on Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup>. Here are a few photos.



*Randy Lenz (center), in this year's class, at the dinosaur tracks he discovered while working for 16 years as the biologist at Bamberger Ranch. From left to right: Marianne Reese, Dennis Wagner, Randy Lenz, Bob Burke, Nick McGee, and Donna Browning. Photo by Mimi Boelter.*



*Close-up of dinosaur tracks. Photo by Randv Garst.*



The covered tram carried happy MNs through the ranch. Photo by Mimi Boelter.



The man-made bat cave at Bamberger Ranch is home to over 136,000 Mexican Free-Tail bats as of this year. Each year the number grows. In the first few years, biologists worked to make the cave hospitable enough to attract bats to live. Adding mesh netting over the windows helped the bats echolocate the opening, preventing them from smashing into the windows by mistake. Photo by Mimi Boelter.

### Western Cottonmouth Moccasin



Western Cottonmouth Moccasin enjoying the waters of Lone Man Creek.

### Lone Man Creek Water Levels

Here's a good way to put the drought in perspective. The 3 photos below show the same section of Lone Man Creek, about 1 year apart and immediately before and after the recent rain. The same rock is circled as a reference.



Section of Lone Man Creek, July 27, 2008.



Section of Lone Man Creek, August 27, 2009.



Section of Lone Man Creek, September 25, 2009.

## *Class Wildflower Center Field Trip, August 22<sup>nd</sup>*



*Minette Marr describes some of the valuable volunteer work involving cataloging plants to the HCMN class at Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center. Photo by Mimi Boelter.*

## *Class Deb Bradshaw's Site Visit, September 1st*



*Diane Spicer performs the Nolina Dance. Photo by Mimi Boelter.*

### *Reporting Reminder*

Reports for September 2009 are due by October 7<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).

8 hours of Advanced Training and 40 hours of Volunteer work is required each year to recertify.

This year, October 20<sup>th</sup> is the cutoff date for reporting all of your Volunteer and Advanced Training hours in order to receive your certification pin at the Gala.

As always, you have until the end of the year to complete these hours, if you need more time, but you won't be able to get your award at the gala.

If you are uncertain about your status, please contact Beth Ramey, [hourshaysmn@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:news@haysmn.org).



## Members News

### *Naturescapes Contest and Exhibition*

Congratulations to HCMNs **Herb Smith** and **Winifred Simon** for winning awards at this year's Naturescapes!

Herb won Best in Show for his image, "Blue Winter Morning" and also won an Award of Merit for his image, "Cypress Creek Below Black Log Crossing".

Winifred won an Award of Excellence for her image, "Infrared Tree with Clouds" and also won Awards of Merit for her images, "Green & White", "Face to Face", and "Mushroom".

The exhibition is running through October 30<sup>th</sup> at the San Marcos Activity Center. Be sure to check it out.

### *Tom Hausler Wildlife Photos*

Here are a few more photos from **Tom Hausler's** wildlife camera.



*A Texas Spiny Lizard. Photo by Tom Hausler.*



*A Red-Tail Hawk. Photo by Tom Hausler.*



*A Whitetail fawn. Photo by Tom Hausler.*



## Calendar

Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, Chapter Board Meeting

Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, Chapter Meeting

Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, Chapter Board Meeting

Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, Class Graduation & Gala



## Advanced Training Opportunities

### *Wildland Conservation Education Events*

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

All events are free of charge.

### Guided Hikes

#### Scenic Views & Hidden Springs 2.5 Hours Advanced Training

**Date and Time:** Saturday, October 3, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

**Location:** Located near the intersection of Circle Drive and Hwy 290W. Directions sent upon [registration](#)

**Description:** Did you know the City of Austin owns land for water quality protection? Participants will be guided on a 3.5 mile hike over classic Hill Country terrain, enjoying beautiful views of surrounding wildland and close up looks at varied habitats ending with a visit to a hidden spring. All the while, guides will relate the history of the tract and how it is being managed to benefit water quality and quantity. This

hike will proceed at a moderate pace and features some steep slopes. For ages 12 and up.

### **Canyonland Habitats 3.5 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Sunday, October 4, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Location:** Located near the intersection of FM 2222 and RR 620. Directions sent upon [registration](#)

**Description:** For experienced hikers seeking a rugged, wildland experience, this hike will offer that and a lot more. Participants will move through three distinctly different habitats including restored shrub land for black-capped vireos, mesic slopes of mixed grasslands and woods, and shaded, wet canyons. This hike will proceed at a moderate pace and features significant elevation changes, does not follow a trail, and will require some hiking through thick woods. Due to the challenging nature of this hike it is intended for audiences 15 and up that are in good physical condition.

### **Fall Discoveries in the Canyonlands (Part of the BCP Hike & Lecture Series- Hosted by Travis Audubon Society) 2.5 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, October 10, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

**Location:** Located near the intersection of Anderson Mill and Lime Creek Road (Leander). Directions sent upon [registration](#)

**Description:** Join us for a fall hike in Baker Sanctuary, Travis Audubon's 690-acre tract within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP). The Sanctuary contains mature hardwood-juniper woodlands that are habitat for the Golden-cheeked Warbler as well as numerous other bird and animal species. Weather permitting; we will hike the wooded loop trail along Harris Creek in the original 94-acre portion of the preserve. Although Golden-cheeked Warblers have returned to their winter homes in Central America, we will look for fall migrants and winter residents while we explore the geology and varied vegetation of the upland and riparian areas of the Jollyville Plateau. For ages 12 and up.

### **Onion Creek Cross Country 7.0 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Sunday, October 11, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Location:** Located near the intersection of FM 967 and FM 1626. Directions sent upon [registration](#)

**Description:** For the outdoor adventurer, this hike is an exciting opportunity to be guided cross country over a portion of the Onion Creek Unit under

management by Austin Water Utility's Water Quality Protection Land program. The seven hour 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. This hike will proceed at a moderate pace and does not follow a specific trail, but rather a route anchored by specific points of interest. Participants should be in good physical shape to keep up with group. For ages 18 and up.

### **Birding by Impression 3.0 Hours Advanced Training**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, October 24, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

**Location:** Located near the intersection of Loop 360 and Pascal Lane. Directions sent upon [registration](#)

**Description:** "Birding by Impression" is a holistic approach to identification that has been employed by indigenous people throughout the world for thousands of years. This technique, sometimes called "right-brained birding," uses the fundamental characteristics of shape, size, structure, behavior, voice, and habitat to identify birds. With practice, you will not only be able to rapidly identify more species of birds, but also build a greater sense of awareness of the natural world. This technique is probably best summed up by the Nobel prize-winning Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, who said, "Bird by bird, I've come to know the earth." For ages 12 and up.

### ***Vegetation Surveys at the Wildflower Center***

The following has been approved for 4.0 hours of Advanced Training.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center will be training volunteers to help in its on-site Research Area studies, where plots are burned or mowed at different times of the year to examine the effects on plant communities. Participants will learn to identify plants and estimate the percentages of different species of plants occurring in the research plots.

Every experience level is welcome. The surveys will be conducted in small teams, with staff members nearby at all times. New participants in the surveys will attend one four-hour training class, and commit to work at least two four-hour field sessions.

Training is optional for those who have volunteered in the past.

Training is available on any day between Wednesday, Oct 14 and Saturday, Oct 17 . Training on Wednesday or Thursday will be from 2 till 6pm, on Friday or Saturday from 9am till 1pm. Surveys will begin on Tuesday, October 20 and continue Tuesdays through Saturdays until completed, usually about two and a half weeks. Volunteers can choose to work on morning (9am to 1 pm) or afternoon (2 to 6 pm) shifts, or work all day.

The recent rains have brought a dramatic greening of the countryside. We are looking forward to seeing vegetation changes after our extended drought, as well as our research burns in 2008. For more information, or to sign up for one of the training sessions, contact Dick Davis at [ddavis@wildflower.org](mailto:ddavis@wildflower.org) or call (512) 232- 0251

Sincerely,  
Dick Davis  
Land Steward  
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center  
4801 La Crosse Av  
Austin TX 78739-1702  
(512) 232-0251



## Volunteer Opportunities

### *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](mailto:Dennis@UnitedCountryCentralTexas.com)).

### *Austin WCD*

Hi Wildland Volunteers,

I have two educational/outreach opportunities that need volunteers. No special skills are necessary, just a familiarity with the programs and a willingness to talk to the public.

1. October 24<sup>th</sup> Kealing Middle School is having a "Block Party" from 10:00am-2:00pm. The Block Party is an opportunity for local elementary schools to learn more about Kealing, for Kealing students to learn more about education beyond middle school, and for adults in the community to learn about services, events, and businesses in the area and beyond. We would like to have a booth there to

highlight the Wildland Programs and hikes (Balcones Canyonland Lands and Water Quality Protection Lands.) I am also looking for a lead on this event as I can't attend. The lead position would involve setting up and taking down the booth. I can provide the table top exhibit and brochures.

2. October 31 is Austin Cave Festival in Southwest Austin in the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve. We will set up our Slaughter Creek Watershed Model and also have a booth on karst invertebrates of the BCP. The event is from 9 am to 3 pm but I will need help from 8 am to 4 pm to assist with set-up and take-down. It's a great event with an opportunity to visit the cave at the preserve! Flyer for the event is attached.

If you are interested in either or both events please let me know the following:

Event:  
Time you can work:  
Phone number:

Thanks in advance for your consideration!

Best,  
Cappy

Cappy Smith  
Conservation Program Coordinator  
City of Austin - Wildland Conservation Division  
3621 S. FM 620 Rd., Austin, TX 78738  
512-972-1687  
cell: 512-483-1972  
fax: 512-972-1665

Wildland Conservation volunteer and educational events found at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/online-registration/ecowebevents.cfm>

### *Elephant Ear Removal*

**Wednesday, October 7<sup>nd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>**

**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](mailto:laszewski@yahoo.com)).

## *Hyacinth Removal*

Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup>

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](mailto:wassenich@grandecom.net)).



## **State and National News**

### *Lion Sightings on the Rise*

From the [Texas Wild Network](#): "Over the past few years, both sightings of mountain lions and the number killed in Texas have increased. Does this reflect an actual increase in the population? No one knows for sure.

Cougars have the most widespread distribution of any terrestrial mammal in the Western Hemisphere, ranging from the southernmost tip of South America through Central and North America - at least historically. Cougars colonized North America at the end of the Pleistocene Era, 10,000 years ago, when many species had just gone extinct for unknown reasons - including the saber-tooth cat, woolly mammoth and giant ground sloth. When European settlers arrived, they relentlessly persecuted cougars. Eventually people eradicated the cats from the eastern United States - except for the few remaining Florida panthers, which remain an endangered subspecies. Cougars maintained a foothold throughout western North America and South America."

Read the entire article [here](#).



## **Local News**

### *U.S. Drought Monitor Forum*

The U.S. Drought Monitor Forum, sponsored by the National Drought Mitigation Center, will be held in Austin October 7<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>. [Details and Registration](#).



## **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)

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

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

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

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