

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

October, 2010

October 2010 Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 7th, 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 August 1st.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, October 28th, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, at the San Marcos Nature Center. The center is located at 430 Riverside Drive in San Marcos. A map is available [here](#).

The speaker will be Mark Klym, Information Specialist, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Wildlife Diversity Program. His topic will be Hummingbird Habitats.

Please note that this is the last chapter meeting for 2010.

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at the 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 Richard Parrish, our new AgriLife Agent.

Our world is ever-changing. Climate conditions and man-made alterations continue to shape and evolve the world we live in. It is how we address and adapt to these ever-changing variables that determine how we take care of and enjoy the world that we live in and in what condition we leave it for future generations.

There is a change that is taking place at the Hays County Office of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service as well. Kasey Mock, who had been our County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources left at the first of June to take another job outside of Extension. On September 1, I assumed the position that was left behind by Kasey.

Board of Directors

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AgriLife Agent	Richard Parrish
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam

My name is Richard Parrish, and I am your new County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources.

While I am new to this position, I am not new to the Hays County Extension Office. For the past ten years, I have served in the role of County Extension Agent for 4-H and Youth Development Programs for Hays County. I have had the chance to get to know and work with some of you during that time. Prior to my arrival in Hays County, I had also served as the County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Hardin County as well as serving as the Assistant County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Orange County. I look forward to having the opportunity to work with you as we focus on continuing the natural traditions that our society was built upon.

As I stated earlier, change is always happening. I look forward to the changes that will be taking place in regards to my serving as your County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Together, we can continue to build and strengthen the natural heritage that our society relies upon. I look forward to working with and getting to know each of you.

- Richard Parrish



Featured Project

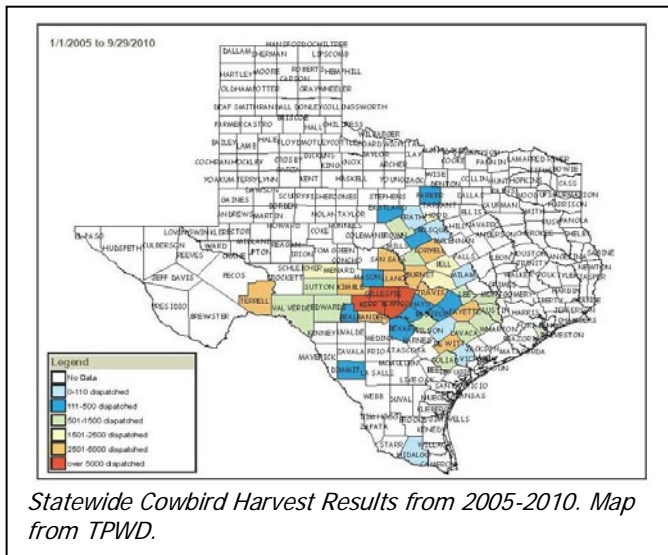
TPWD Cowbird Management, #805

Brown-headed cowbirds are nest parasites. They construct no nests of their own, but instead lay their eggs in the nests of other bird species. This behavior evolved because the cowbirds used to follow the large bison herds and would feed in the short grass left behind by the herbivores. The adult cowbirds would not remain in any area for long and left their eggs behind to be raised by others. The cowbird young hatch sooner and are larger than the host species young and either actively expel the other chicks or out-compete them for food.

The other bird species adapted to this periodic cowbird parasitism, but now the scenario is very different. The great bison herds are gone, replaced by fenced-in cattle which remain in one area. The cowbirds are doing what they've always done, but their constant presence is now a significant threat to other bird species.

In particular, the two local endangered species: [Golden-cheeked Warblers](#) and [Black-capped Vireos](#) are known to suffer from cowbird parasitism and this, perhaps more than habitat loss, has contributed to their decline.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Cowbird Trapping program is designed, not to eradicate the cowbirds, but to reduce their population to levels that allow the other birds species to cope with their parasitism. You can find more information on the program [here](#). The [2009 TPWD report](#) indicates that 441 birds were trapped in Hays County.



Currently several HCMNs participate in the program: Karen Archer, Larry Calvert, Ann Connell, Randy Garst, and LaRay and Ginger Geist.

In 2009 Karen Archer trapped 391 of the total 441 birds reported for Hays County. In 2010 she trapped 583. In 2009, a total of 16193 cowbirds were trapped in about 25 counties in Texas.

This project is unlike most HCMN projects in several ways. You must attend a free certification class given by TPWD and obtain a permit to handle the non-target songbirds that may inadvertently enter the trap.



A cowbird trap. Photo by Ginger Geist.

The traps are only operated for three months: March, April, and May. After May 31st, the fledglings of non-target species are more abundant and are more likely to be trapped.

The traps must be monitored at least once a day to make sure that no songbirds are trapped. Songbirds must be released and cowbirds must be euthanized. Occasionally, a songbird will be injured and it too must be euthanized. Data must be collected and forwarded to TPWD.

As you can see this project requires dedication, but the results are worthwhile.



Several cowbirds in the trap. Photo by Ginger Geist.

The roof of the trap has a wood panel with a 1-1/4 inch slit cut parallel to the length of the panel. Cowbirds are able to drop into the trap but are not able to fly out. Cowbirds are gregarious and cowbirds already in a trap will entice others. 'Bait' birds are available from TPWD or other trappers at the beginning of the trapping season.

Randy Garst share some interesting notes about the project:

- Cowbird females lay up to 70 eggs per season in multiple nests.
- Every cowbird trapped may increase the songbird population by 2.5 birds.
- Traps are large, walk-in size. Plans are available on the TPWD site or traps may be available from other sources.
- Traps must have seed and water available at all times when active.
- Traps are best placed near 'edges' in open areas near forested areas where songbirds nest.
- All cavity nesting songbirds are susceptible, not just endangered species. Don Connell noted around 40 additional cardinals in his banding activities following a season of cowbird trapping.
- Certification training also ensures compliance with state laws that must be followed closely to preserve the program from critics.
- TOWMA (Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Areas) has traps across Texas. In the March/April 2010, they reported 1476 Females and 779 Males trapped in 12 counties with Fayette, Goliad and Lee counties trapping the most birds.

Please contact Randy Garst, randygarst@zeecon.com, if you would like to help or learn more about this project.



Chapter News

2010 Graduation and Gala

Please mark your calendars for the 2010 Graduation and Gala which will be held on Saturday, November 20th at the San Marcos Activity Center.

We are having barbeque with all the trimmings, as well as a vegetarian option, and look forward to recognizing and honoring our 2010 graduates and our Chapter's accomplishments.

- Dixie Camp

Call for Graduation and Gala Committee Volunteers!

Since we have a vacant Host Committee Chair, we are calling for volunteers for the Graduation/Gala Committee to help develop the program and decorate the room. Please contact Dixie Camp, pres@haysmn.org.

- Dixie Camp

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.

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.

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

2011 Training Committee Formed

Please welcome next year's Training Committee:

Jean McMeans - Coordinator
Lin Weber - Assistant Coordinator
Helane Kennard - Secretary
Jean Richmond - Speaker Contact
Mimi Boelter and Judy McBride - Registration and Attendance
Leah Laszewski – Nature Watch Coordinator
Deb Bradshaw and Donna Browning - Site Visit Coordinators
Dick McBride - Logistics and Documentation
Vicki and Charles Maxcy – Meals

Many thanks to these members for supporting the chapter in such an important endeavor!

Photos Needed for State Meeting

Our chapter has been asked to submit photos for use at the TMN State Meeting slideshow. Depending on how many photos they receive, they will be able to use 10 to 20 from each chapter.

Please send me any photos you have that showcase our members and activities. Please send them to me by October 14th.

You may email them to me – news@haysmn.org.

- Art Arizpe

Prickly Pears' Wildflower Center Field Trip

On August 21st, the Class of 2010, visited the Wildflower Center.



Discussing a native grass planting area. Photo by Randy Garst.



A big fire ant problem. Photo by Randy Garst.

Prickly Pears' Bamberger Ranch Field Trip

The Class of 2010, visited Bamberger Ranch on September 11th. Thirty six members signed up. It was the first field trip at the ranch this fall and Steven Fulton and Colleen Gardner did a great job.



At the rainwater simulator. Photo by Tom Hausler.



Just starting out. Photo by Tom Hausler.



David Bamberger at Hes' Country Store. Photo by Tom Hausler.

The highlight of the day was when David Bamberger arrived and talked to the class and told stories.

- Tom Hausler

Prickly Pears' Kappler Site Visit

The Prickly Pears visited Adam Kappler's property in Dripping Springs on September 21st. The Kapplers live at the top of a hill and have a small pond that is home to numerous frogs and damsel flies.



Lee Ann at the pond. Photo by Lance Jonesa.

- Tom Hausler
- Lance Jones

Prickly Pears' Field Trip to Freeman Ranch

Dr. Chris Nice did a lecture on insects and butterflies and then the class went butterfly catching with their nets.

- Tom Hausler



Lin caught a butterfly. Photo by Tom Hausler.

September Chapter Meeting

The program on September 23rd was all about bluebirds! HCMN Bonnie Tull spoke about her approved chapter project, Bluebird Nestbox Trails, #702. She also discussed her experiences with several nest box designs and demonstrated their use.



Pauline Tom demonstrates how to remove an undesirable bird from the nest box. Photo by Art Arizpe.

Pauline Tom, President of the Texas Bluebird Society, then spoke about her organization and their work. She discussed the best practices for building and locating nest boxes, the appropriate habitat, how to protect from predators and how to record and track data.

Rainwater Revival

From the seven hills of ancient Rome to today's Texas Hill Country, rainwater collection has spanned the globe and the ages. To celebrate this timeless conservation practice, rainwater collection professionals and enthusiasts will converge just outside of Austin in Dripping Springs, Texas on **Saturday, October 9, 2010** for the Rainwater

Revival. The festive day will be filled with informative and entertaining presentations by professionals and users of rainwater, water conservation-related business vendor booths, rainwater system displays, and plenty of experts to provide guidance and services. There will also be food and drink booths, live music, and more.

A brainstorm of the Hays County Water Conservation Working Group, the Rainwater Revival supports the mission to spread the good word on rainwater harvesting and water conservation, the importance of which grows with our ever increasing population.

Hays County Commissioner Karen Ford, who has spearheaded the event, sees the daily impact of the growing population on the county's water supply, but is encouraged by the diversity of volunteers, sponsors, and vendors who have rallied to the Rainwater Revival cause.

"No matter what your age, education, or political affiliation, we all need water to survive and thrive," says Ford. "An almost endless resource has been available to us for time eternal, we just need to look upward."

In addition to a roster of speakers providing an experienced cross-section of rainwater collection knowledge, the Rainwater Revival will feature a collection of 55-gallon recycled rain barrels transformed into works of art by local artists. The barrels will be displayed around Hays County during the weeks leading up to the Rainwater Revival and then auctioned off at the event.

Admission to the Rainwater Revival is free. The event will take place on the grounds of Roger Hanks Park in Dripping Springs, Texas. Festivities will kick off at 10:00AM and conclude at 5:00PM.

For the latest information on the Rainwater Revival, including speaker, sponsor, and vendor information visit the event's official website at rainwaterrevival.com.

- Rainwater Revival News Release

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 September 2010 are due by October 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., Sept. 11, 9am to 11:30am - Birding Habitat of Westcave Preserve **2.0 Hours Advanced Training**
Sat., Sept. 25, 9am to 11:30am - Exploring Wild Basin **2.5 Hours Advanced Training**

Sat., Sept. 25, 1pm to 3:30pm - Exploring Wild Basin for Kids & Families **2.5 Hours Advanced Training**

Sat., Oct. 9, 10am to 1pm - Rediscover Hamilton Pool **3.0 Hours Advanced Training**

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



Volunteer Opportunities

The big 4-0! Racking up 2010 Volunteer Hours

Have you done your MN math? About this time of year, some chapter members and trainees realize they need more volunteer hours to reach the 40-hour total minimum needed to complete annual certification requirements.

Good news! Upcoming one-time events offer a chance to rack up some time and to interact with the general public. It's going to be a busy fall, so please join us for some outreach fun.

October 9, 10a-5p: Rainfall Revival, Roger Hanks Park, Dripping Springs, Project # 905

HCMN will host a booth with the rainfall simulator and our other two water-related models.

Coordinator needed for this booth as well as members and trainees to work in shifts.

Volunteers collect and assemble materials as needed, run the models, answer questions, set up and take down before and after. Contact Susan Nenney: 512.289.8166; snenney@peoplepc.com

October 16, Saturday, EcoFest, Wimberley Project #704

HCMN will host a booth with various materials, grasses and simulators. Volunteers start conversations, answer questions, distribute materials, collect contact info for possible trainees, operate/assist with Rainfall Simulator, set up and break down. Contact Susan Nenney 512.289.8166 snenney@peoplepc.com

October 16, Saturday, EcoFest, Wimberley Project #1008

General volunteers needed to support EcoFest.

Most hours available late September through the event include advance work (for example, distributing flyers), cleanup at KAPS before and after event, working at registration, assisting visitors and exhibitors, set up and take down. Contact Louis Parks 512.289.8666; louis.parks@gmail.com

October 22-23, Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting, New Braunfels Project # 403

The annual silent auction is hosted this year by our chapter. Volunteers needed to assist with auction

items displays, facilitating purchases, collecting money, etc.

Oct 22, Friday, 12:30p to 7:00p

Help Judy Burdett receive and set up all silent auction items.

Oct 23, Saturday evening 7:00 pm until concluded

Take the money and distribute auction purchases.

Oct 24, Sunday 9am – 12:30

As needed for final distribution of purchases.

Contact Judy Burdett oonaburdett@aol.com

- Susan Nenney

Elephant Ear Removal

Wednesday, October 6th & 20th

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, October 23rd

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

Take the Bird Chow Challenge!

From the CDRI newsletter:

Our friends at Cornell University have a fun challenge for you:

Birds can have funny eating habits, just like we do. Take a walk outside –you might see pigeons trying to snag a piece of pizza in the park or a flock of Cedar Waxwings scarfing up berries from a bush. Maybe a gull will steal your sandwich! Look for a

horde of grackles going nuts at a feeder, or an American Robin tagging along after a farmer plowing his field.

Be creative! Take a photo, create some artwork, shoot video, write a story or a poem, or create a sculpture. Just show or describe some avian food follies! Submit your creation and you may win a prize.

For more information about this contest, visit the [Bird Chow Challenge](#) website.

Windfall in New York

The New York Times Opinionator has a piece on the forces involved, pro and con, in wind power generation.

“There is a David and Goliath aspect to these battles between heavily funded corporate interests and citizen activists who come out and stand in the rain with home-made signs. Will the NIMBY’s — a designation one should wear with pride — really be able to do something, as they did in Meredith, or will the forces of darkness masking as environmental crusaders prevail? Tune in.”

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



Local News

Kyle, county unite to buy Jacob’s Well

From the Hays Free Press:

“After nearly six hours of often volatile discussion, a majority of the Hays County Commissioners Court appeared to agree on Tuesday that the city of Kyle will, in fact, be afforded the privilege of returning about \$1.2 million in parks funds it doesn’t plan to use.

In May 2008, the city was awarded \$2,479,000 from \$30 million in parks and open space money to develop a 43-acre regional park east of IH-35, later named Kyle Vista Park. But last month, the city council approved an interlocal agreement with the county in which they would relinquish the larger grant and instead receive half that amount for improvement projects at Gregg-Clarke Park, City Square Park and Plum Creek Preserve & Nature Trail’s Lake Kyle Park.

Under the agreement, the unused portion of Kyle’s grant would be used to buy 50 acres adjacent to the

landmark Jacob's Well near Woodcreek in the western side of the county. The commissioners court voted 4-1 to approve the purchase from Westridge Partners LLC which had expressed its intent to build a condominium development on the property and had sued the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association and the city of Woodcreek for access to the artesian well and the right to build a road to its property. County Judge Elizabeth Sumter cast the only vote against buying the land, which adds to 46 acres surrounding the well which the county previously committed \$3 million to purchase."

You may read the entire 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