

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

October, 2011

Chapter Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 6th, 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 Jeff Vasgaard, pres@haysmn.org, by October 4th.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, October 27th, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm.

The speaker will be Dr. D. Clark Wernecke, Executive Director for the Gault School of Archaeological Research. Dr. Wernecke brings a unique blend of scholarship and experience to the project with degrees in history, business and anthropology. He has considerable experience in business and has specialized in the management of large archaeological projects. Dr. Wernecke has worked in the Middle East, Mesoamerica, the American Southeast and Southwest, and Texas. In addition to his work with the GSAR, he is currently working on archaeological data from the Mexican War and early Texas architecture.

The location is to be determined. Please watch your email for the latest information.

If you have announcements you would like to have presented at the chapter meeting or suggestions for topics/speakers, please contact Brad Krimmel, vp@haysmn.org.



A Naturalist's View

Art Arizpe is the Chapter's Volunteer Service Projects Committee Chair and the Newsletter Editor.

I've been tracking the rainfall at our house for the last 5 years. I started collecting the data during the training class and have been dutifully sending it to Walt Krudop's [Rainfall Monitoring Project](#).

Below is a chart showing the rainfall at our house, outside of Wimberley, for 2011.

Board of Directors

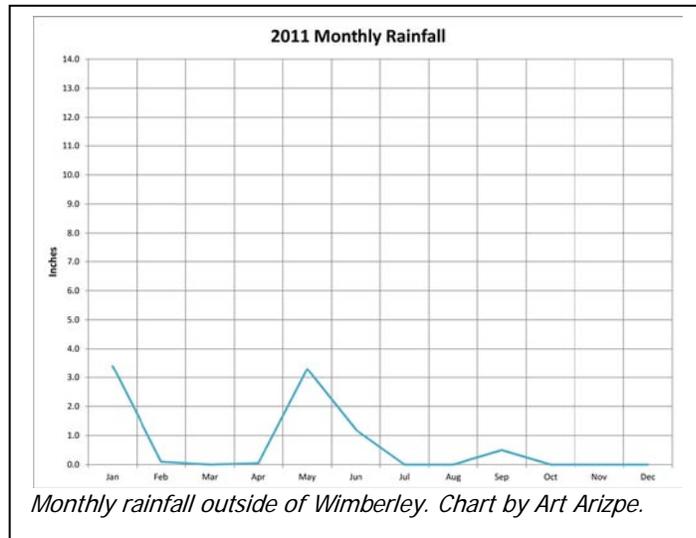
President	Jeff Vasgaard
Vice President	Brad Krimmel
Secretary	Becky Northcut
Treasurer	Larry Calvert
Past-President	Dixie Camp
State Representative	Tom Watson
Training Committee	Jean McMeans
Advanced Training Comm.	Mary Arizpe
Membership Committee	Beth Ramey
Web Master	Herb Smith
Newsletter Committee & Editor	Art Arizpe news@haysmn.org
Outreach Committee	Vacant
Host Committee	Vacant
Historian	Dale Shively
Volunteer Service	Art Arizpe
AgriLife Agent	Richard Parrish
TP&WD Rep	Lee Ann Linam

In general, 2007 was a wet year, followed by a dry 2008. 2009 was average and 2010 was wet again. 2011 has been extremely dry. The summers tend to be dry, but in July 2007 we had a house record of 12.7 inches.

The totals for the last 5 years are:

- 2007 - 28.2 (incomplete)
- 2008 - 16.4
- 2009 - 36.7
- 2010 - 43.1
- 2011 - 8.6 (so far)

The heat wave broke recently and we finally got some rain in September. We had three separate events, 0.1 inches, 0.1 inches, and 0.3 inches. That last one was a gully washer!



The grass has been brown for several months now and that's not really unusual, but the trees are starting to show signs of stress. Their leaves are turning brown and dropping. Trees lose quite a bit of moisture through their leaves through the process of [transpiration](#). A fully-grown tree may lose several hundred gallons of water in a day. The trees minimize this loss by dropping their leaves and entering a dormant state.

I've noticed that the smaller trees are the ones turning brown, so they may be more susceptible to the water loss and stress.

Here's a photo of a grove of live oaks. The taller ones are still green but the small ones in front are not.

There is no way for us to water all the trees so they're going to have to make it on their own. On the other hand, they've been out here for hundreds of years and have seen worse drought conditions, so they'll probably be fine.



Stressed out! Photo by Art Arizpe.

The grass and trees are very visible signs of the heat and drought. They remind me though that many of the effects are not so easily seen. The wildlife especially has to cope with the lack of water too. The deer especially seem thin right now. I hope they make it.

- Art Arizpe

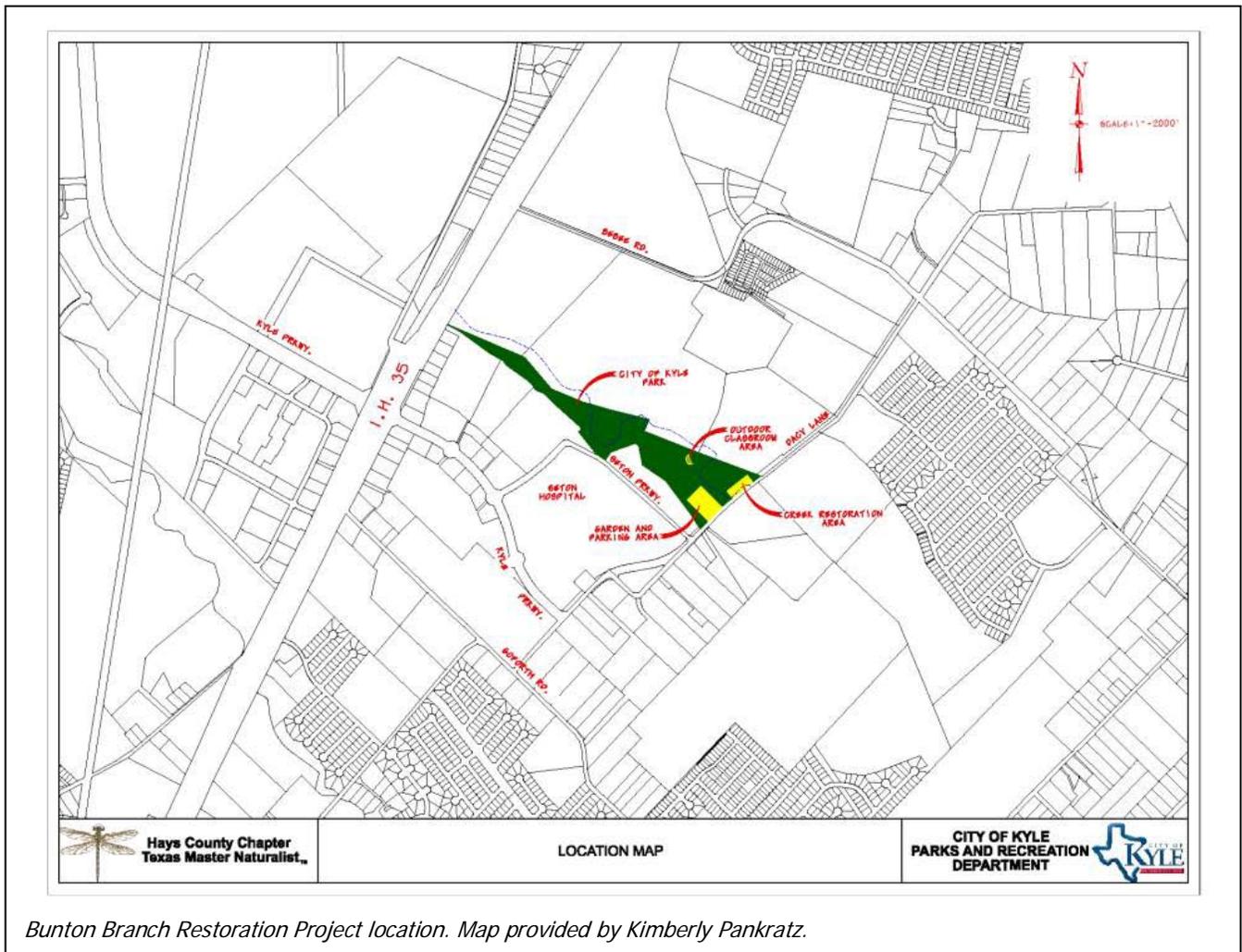


Featured Project

Bunton Branch Restoration Project #1104

Kimberly Pankratz has always had an appreciation for our parks and natural areas. When she saw an advertisement for the Texas Master Naturalist program she couldn't wait to get into the Hays County Master Naturalist class. Unfortunately she missed the deadline for the 2010 class and had to wait a whole year to start!

During that year, she worked on a few environmentally sensitive projects that she realized could have been more environmentally conscious. She has been in the surveying and engineering field for over 26 years and she also decided to go back to school and earn her civil engineering degree. The Master Naturalist class fit perfectly with her desire to design projects with a better understanding of our environment and how construction affects it.



Kimberly was born and raised in rural Indianapolis, Indiana. Her early years were spent playing with her brother and sister in the cornfield next door, raising various pets, and taking care of wildlife. Her family moved to San Antonio when she was 10 and then to Spring Branch

a couple of years later. She lived within walking distance of the Guadalupe River and the experience only reinforced her love of nature.

It didn't take long after starting the Master Naturalist class for Kimberly to find an ideal way to fulfill her goal of better serving the environment after construction – the Bunton Branch Restoration Project.

Kimberly submitted the project to the chapter in June and the project was quickly approved. Since it's a new project, she still in the planning stages. This is an excellent opportunity for members to get involved in the early stages of a project and get to see its progress and impact through the entire project.

The project is located on 35 acres of City of Kyle parkland. The park property was acquired in 2008 when the developer of the Seton Hospital and retail stores surrounding it presented the City a concept plan. The Kyle Parks Committee and City Council accepted the parkland dedication shortly after that. Bunton Branch Creek was realigned due to the construction of the Dacy Lane bridge. The project involves restoring the land to its natural state and helping with the maintenance of the parkland.

Before Creek Realignment



After Creek Realignment



Before and After the construction. Photos provided by Kimberly Pankratz.

The project's main objective and action steps are:

- Restore the portion of Bunton Branch Impacted by Construction
 - Plant native vegetation
 - Harvest saplings and other desirable vegetation from undisturbed areas of the creek and replant in the area affected by construction
 - Solicit donations from local nurseries for native trees and vegetation
- Help The City of Kyle to Maintain Parkland
 - Trash removal
 - Identify and remove invasive plant species
 - Recruit help from experts on plant identification
 - Begin erosion control plan
 - Remove creek obstructions
- Help The City of Kyle with their vision for the Park
 - Plan garden space and water system and help to build it
 - Plan nature trail to an outdoor classroom and help with building it
 - Tag, identify and map trees
 - GPS trees, log tree type and create a map for future parkland planning

Kimberley is planning a workday on October 22nd to identify the trees on the property, before the trees drop their leaves, and record their GPS coordinates. There will also be general cleanup and trash removal.

Please contact Kimberly, kpankratz@centurylink.net, 512-392-2673 (home) or 512-757-4143 (cell), if you would like to help.



Chapter News

Graduation and Gala

Please mark your calendars for the 2011 Graduation and Gala which will be held on Saturday, November 19th at the San Marcos Activity Center.

We look forward to recognizing and honoring our 2011 graduates and our Chapter's accomplishments.

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 Jeff Vasgaard, pres@haysmn.org.

2011 Chapter Awards Nominations

We are currently seeking nominations for the 2011 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 Graduation and Gala to be held on Saturday, November 19th at the San Marcos Activity Center.

Please send your nominations or your offer to serve to Dixie Camp, pastpres@haysmn.org, our Past President and Chair of the 2011 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 Jeff Vasgaard, 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

Oak Wilt Specialist Training

Come learn how to identify and treat for oak wilt. This in-depth training will provide you with the knowledge and skills needed to become an Oak Wilt Specialist! Help your neighbors control Oak Wilt.

When: Thursday, October 13, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Where: Hays County AgriLife Office
1253 Civic Center Loop
San Marcos, Texas 78666
[\(512\) 393-2120](tel:5123932120)

Presenters: Dr. David Appel, Extension Program Leader for Plant Pathology & Microbiology

Jim Houser, Regional Forest Health Coordinator, Texas Forest Service
Eric Beckers, Staff Forester, Texas Forest Service

Cost: \$10 Registration deadline is October 7, 2011. Lunch will be on your own.

Feral Hog Workshop

Feral hogs have become a problem in Central Texas. Come learn about the history of feral hogs in Texas, the biology of the hog and the damage they can cause, how to control feral hogs as well as laws and regulations governing feral hog control.

When: Thursday, October 20, 2011 from 6:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.
Where: Hays County Extension Office
1253 Civic Center Loop
San Marcos, Texas 78666
(512) 393-2120

Presenters: Jared Timmons, Extension Assistant Jacob Hetzel, Wildlife Services Richard Parrish, County Extension Agent

Cost: \$10 Please register by October 18, 2011
\$15 at the door

On the Trail

Westcave Preserve Wows MN Trainees

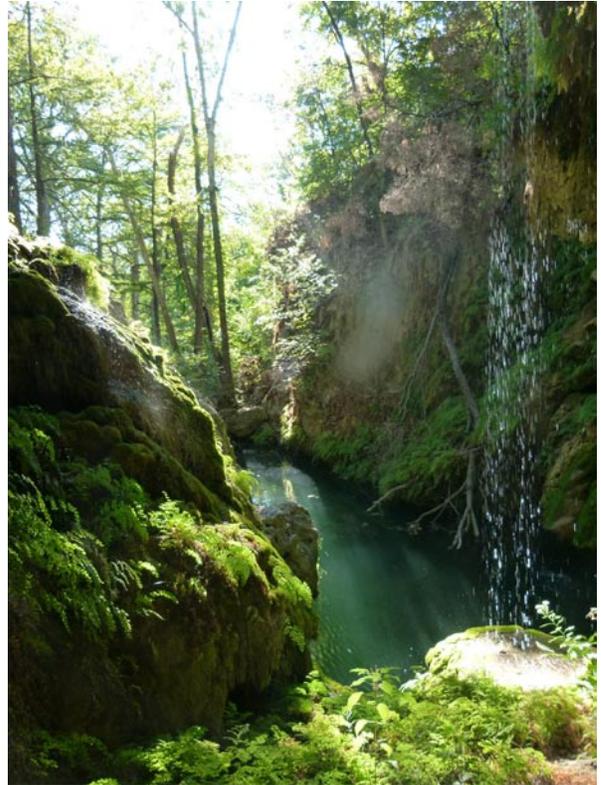
What's it like to descend and then climb back up 110 steps? The 2011 MN trainees found out on Saturday September 24 when they assembled at Westcave Preserve on Hamilton Pool Road to tour this magnificent 30-acre site west of Austin. A lot of us were visiting for the first time and there were plenty of ahs and ohs, but no scrap of disappointment. **Leigh Sebera** was effusive in her assessment: *The Preserve's limestone canyon and huge cypress trees lead to the (dripping) waterfall, fern-covered travertine columns, and a 40' pool with turtles and fish. The caves to the side and behind the pool seem to slow time down to the drip, drip of the water. I am sure it is something when water is abundant, but even in this drought, the little bit of water was soul soothing. The air was fresh with a hint of moisture. Wonderful!* **Helen Currie** summed it up this way: *The grotto is stunning. Tree identification was fun. The building and exhibits are first-rate.* Only a 5-10 minute drive from Hamilton Pool, it is a little smaller but far more picturesque than its better known counterpart.

The morning's guide was **Jack Breese**, volunteer extraordinaire and alum of the MN class of 2009. He was highly knowledgeable about the history and exceptional plant life of the preserve. We saw chinquapin oaks far larger than anything typically seen in the Hill Country, surprisingly lush ferns even in this drought, a walnut tree that had fallen over into the creek bed and appeared to be uprooted but had sprigs of new trees emerging from the trunk. Several of us gawked when someone said "look, there's water". Sure enough there were bubbling springs even in this harsh year of no rain. The most ah-ha moment occurred when the breathtaking cave formation and deep, cool-blue pool came into view. Jack steered us behind trickles of water and old stalactites draped with moss and ferns with sunlight emerging

from the other side. Cameras clicked away and mental images will be ingrained for a long time.



Getting started. Photo by Eva Gomez.



The falls and pool. Photo by Robert Currie.

Westcave Preserve was in private hands until the mid-70's when transactions led to LCRA acquiring the property in 1983 and operating today in partnership with Westcave Preserve Corporation. The Warren Skaaren Environmental Learning Center serves as a gathering place where we studied the many fossils on display and learned about the sun aperture in the ceiling. Staff member John Gerhart explained how the hole allows sunlight to be projected on the floor and crosses a meridian at local noon time each day. He swears that the large figure-8 shape on the floor, known as an analemma, is so accurate you can set your watch by it.

Amazing was the word for the day!

- Lucille Trail Kirkham

Naturescapes Awards Winners

Congratulations to the following HCMNs whose photographs won awards in the 7th Annual Naturescapes Photography Contest!

- Best In Show – “Sculpture by Cypress”, **Herb Smith**
- Award of Excellence – “Water Strider”, **Winifred Simon**
- Award of Merit – “Lost in Lavender”, **Lisa Kay**
- Award of Merit – “Full Moon”, **Winifred Simon**
- Award of Merit – “Black-eyed Susans”, **Art Arizpe**

The Naturescapes Exhibition is showing in the San Marcos Activity Center through November 4th. Please be sure to drop by and enjoy the beautiful and inspiring photographs.

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 the 3rd quarter are due by October 5th. Please submit your reports of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours by using the friendly report forms at www.haysmn.org.

As a reminder, 8 hours of Advanced Training and 40 hours of Volunteer work are required each year to recertify. You have until the end of the year to complete these hours.

If you are uncertain about your status, please contact Beth Ramey, hourshaysmn@gmail.com, and she can send you a report.

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

Tom Hausler

Tom reports his water trough has been very busy again. Three great shots this month.



A bobcat. Photo by Tom Hausler.



A pair of ringtails. Photo by Tom Hausler.



A white-tailed deer and a raccoon sharing. Photo by Tom Hausler.

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

Please watch your emails for upcoming Advanced Training Opportunities.



Volunteer Opportunities

Rainwater Revival

Do we have an opportunity for you? The Second Annual Rainwater Revival will be happening on Saturday, October 8th in Dripping Springs. Those of you that came last year will remember how much fun and new information and learning was had by all. There will be training sessions that will qualify for Advanced Training once we get approval from the chapter. From the website for the Revival, <http://rainwaterrevival.com/>, here's a description of the event.

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 booths, shopping, live music, plus much more!

In its second year, the Rainwater Revival supports the mission to spread the good word about rainwater harvesting and water conservation, the importance of which grows with our ever increasing population.

And there will be many opportunities for volunteer hours. We need help in a variety of activities at different times during the day. Whatever you like to do, there's something you can do to help. Please respond to me and I'll put you on the schedule. The nice thing about it is

that you can come and help with the Revival and also partake in the fun and training sessions on the same day. Volunteer hours and advanced training in one day, how good does it get?

Think about how you may be able to help and send me a note. Thanks in advance.

- Walt Krudop, walt@krudopinds.com

Please watch your emails for upcoming Volunteer Opportunities.



State and National News

Surviving Drought along the Llano

Amy Hardberger at the Environmental Defense Fund has an update about water restrictions along the Llano River.

“Earlier this summer, we alerted you to water shortages on the Llano River. The City of Llano has passed some of the strictest water restrictions in the state. Lawn watering is limited to once a week and only in off hours and washing cars at home and filling swimming pools is completely banned. Since the restrictions have been put in place, people are getting more efficient and creative in their use of water. The city golf course is watered with treated grey water, which still isn't done in most major cities, and citizens are watering their trees with run-off water from their washing machines, showers and dish washing water. They are stretching every drop. Those who are out of drops are using dye to get that green lawn. All of these efforts have paid off. Pumping went from 1.2-1.4 million gallons a day in May to less than 500,000 in August, a reduction of over 50%.”

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



Local News

New Map! Spring Lake Preserve

From the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance web page:

“We are pleased to announce the availability of another trail map, this time for Spring Lake Preserve. Download it soon from our natural areas page! We know you'll join us in thanking the many folks who participated in the development of this long-awaited resource.”

The full article is [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