

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

October, 2013

Chapter Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 10th, 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 Art Arizpe, pres@haysmn.org, by Monday October 7th.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, October 24th, from 5:00pm to 8:00pm, at Freeman Ranch. A map is available [here](#).

Our speaker will be Dr. Barron Rector on the topics of "Land Stewardship and Practices" and "Ethics for the Small Land Owner".

Dr. Rector will start with an hour's talk outside on Land Stewardship and Practices to help you take care of your own piece of heaven. The walk will start at 5pm-6pm. Then we will start our social hour a little early and it will be extended for an hour from 6-7pm. At 7pm Dr. Rector will speak regarding Ethics for Small Land Owners. This will hopefully be your guide to understanding the importance of managing your acreage no matter how small or large and tips to get you there.

This event will close out our programs for 2013. It will qualify for 2 hours of Master Naturalist advanced training.

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



A Naturalist's View

Jamie Kinscherff is a leader for the Canyon Gorge project and served for many years on the Training Committee.

Water For All?

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Summer has been fairly mild so far. Anyone who made it through 2011 here will have that as a benchmark for how hot and dry it can be sometimes. The drought continues as communities enforce second and third stage water restrictions. Water is the hot-button topic around here. Ken Burns' brilliant documentary about the Dust Bowl ended with a transition to the next man-made natural disaster – water scarcity. My favorite quote was from an old guy who said, " In about 20 years we'll all be pretty sad that we used our future drinking water to grow food for hogs". This was in reference to the Ogallala Aquifer, part of which covers the Panhandle, a sand aquifer containing reservoirs of ancient water. These sand aquifers don't recharge quickly or easily, therefore can be drawn down in just a few decades. The water here is not a renewable resource as it cannot be replaced within the lifespan of a human. For me, it is hard to deal with the knowledge that we humans know the impact 7 billion of us make on natural resources, but few of us are willing to acknowledge it and change the way we live.

Early this year Martha and I were on the island of Hawaii and learned that they get their water from aquifers formed from lava tubes. There are communities where no one is allowed to move in unless someone moves away (or dies). Water is the defining issue. They have simply done the research and the math to determine that they have reached the maximum human population for the available resources. What a concept! It's not about politics but quality of life. How much would their (or your) property be worth if there was no available fresh water? Water politics should be an oxymoron but unfortunately it's far too real. Texas, of course, has water laws unlike most other states. The right-of-capture law is archaic at best and was written when Texas was a much different place.

A close up view of the hydrology of Hays Co. will help anyone understand that we live in a special but fragile place. We have it all water wise- amazing artesian springs, recharge features and contributing zones. Under the Needmore Ranch the geological features are particularly permeable and filled with natural conduits and voids where water is moving and stored. (See the mapping available from the Edwards Aquifer Authority). This type of landscape is very sensitive to land use. Too much development on this land would affect the hydrology of Little Arkansas spring, the quality of the water and perhaps the water table in the area. Land ownership comes with the implied responsibility of stewardship. We must understand that what we do on our land does affect others in a very real way.

The population of Hays Co. in 1950 was 17,840. It was a rural, agricultural area filled with ranches and farms. Currently our population sits at about 164,000 or so and we are amongst the fastest growing counties in the nation. Our water resources are finite, dependent on rainfall and currently under great stress. Climatologists predict this part of Texas will look more like Ft. Stockton in the future- more arid and dry. The big elephant in the room is - How many people are too many? What is the tipping point regarding water availability? What is a sustainable level? It's a world-wide problem; we must all pay attention.

Do we really need to be like the Hatfields and McCoys feuding over natural resources upon which we all rely? Sadly, if one shows concern for water use, especially groundwater, someone labels them as one "who wants to take rights away from landowners" or "anti-growth". Smart, reasonable people could come to a consensus, instead ...I'm worried about how this story will end.

As Master Naturalists we are more aware of these issues than most. Water resource education is paramount if we are to make a positive influence on the future. An outreach team going to elementary schools to focus just on "water, water, water " could be very effective and fun.

- Jamie Kinscherff



Chapter News

President's Message

We've got another successful Summer Social under our belts!

What started as a one-time, "we're not sure if we'll ever do this again", has turned into a tradition. This was our third time and each one has been better than the last. Over 90 members and guests attended!

Of course we have our big get-together in November with the Graduation/Gala, but it's nice to have something in the middle of the year, when things are otherwise quiet. I enjoyed meeting new folks, visiting with the projects, the food, the great door prizes and of course our great speaker, Blake Hendon, TPWD wildlife biologist for Hays County. Blake's talk was about the Bobwhite Quail and its habitat. I think he did an excellent job on a subject which was new to me.

The project tables were always busy and the sign-up sheets had many names. I want to thank the project leaders who attended. We had **Garry Child** with the **Charro Ranch Project**, **Jackie Mattice** with the **Wimberley Outdoor Educators**, **Koy Coffey** with the **Texas Wildlife Association**, **Jeff Vasgaard** with **Jacob's Well**, **Cindy Luongo Cassidy** with the **Light Pollution Education & Outreach Project**, and **Lance Jones** with the **San Marcos Greenbelt Association**.

You can tell they're dedicated, excited and so eager to promote their efforts! I truly appreciate their work. It's not easy to plan, organize, recruit and execute on one of our projects. It is because of our project leaders' vision and drive that our Chapter accomplishes so much.

- Art Arizpe

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 16th at the San Marcos Activity Center.

Please send your nominations or your offer to serve to Larry Calvert, Chair of the 2014 Nominations Committee, at pastpres@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 Larry Calvert at pastpres@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

- Larry Calvert

HCMN website Directory Updated

I recently updated the directory on the website to include all of the changes you had sent me, and added people that got missed in the first edition. I'd appreciate it if you would look at your data to make sure it is correct and it is what you want in the directory. If you have any additions, corrections, or deletions please either e-mail me at pastpres@haysmn.org or call me at 512-484-0422. The data included are your choice so let me know. The password was changed recently and will be mailed to you. You can also just ask me. When you type it in the system will ask if you want it to remember and if you ask it to you won't have to remember the password.

By the way, several have asked that I put your class year in the database. I'm in the process of getting the listing and will include it as soon as it is entered.

- Larry Calvert

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 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 Ben Adair, hourshaysmn@gmail.com, and he 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

Shannon du Plessis

Budding wildlife photographer and Master Naturalist trainee Shannon Marlow du Plessis has had two prints accepted for the Ninth Annual Naturescapes Exhibition which will be displayed at the San Marcos Activity Center's Walkers' Gallery from September 21st through November 8th. The opening reception will be 5:00 - 7:00 pm on Saturday, September 21st.

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. 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.



Volunteer Opportunities

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



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
Gorge Preservation Society -- www.canyongorge.org
Hill Country Photography Club -- hcphotoclub.org
LBJ Wildflower Center -- www.wildflower.org
San Marcos Nature Center -- www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/parks/Nature_Center.html