

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

September, 2011

Chapter Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, September 1st, at the Camp Jacob Watershed Education Center at the Jacob's Well Natural Area, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. A map is available [here](#). The meeting is open to members and the public.

If you have any questions or items for the agenda, please contact Jeff Vasgaard, pres@haysmn.org, by August 30th.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, September 22nd, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. Please watch your email for details about the location and the speaker.

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

Jackie Mattice is the leader of the Wimberley Outdoor Educators, Project #809, has served on the chapter's Outreach Committee and was in the Class of 2008.

It is the start of a new school year. Excitement runs high among the children, parents and teachers. As a former comprehensive science teacher (meaning I taught all the sciences—Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Earth Science) the start of school brings back fond memories. Last week I had the pleasure of going to Jacob's Well Elementary School for the "Meet the Teacher" session. Decked out in my Hays County Master Naturalist shirt and name tag, the experience turned out to be a good outreach for HCMN as several parents asked about the program.

My task was to recruit parent volunteers for the Wimberley Outdoor Educators program. As an "ice breaker" I asked the family I was talking to, what grade the child was going into. The students who proudly told me they were in 4th and 5th grade enthusiastically remembered their field trip to the Patsy Glenn Bird Refuge when they were in 3rd grade.

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For those of you not familiar with the Wimberley Outdoor Educators, we are HCMN project 809. Our goal is to acquaint the students in the WISD with the local natural areas as well as to instill in them an understanding of their natural environment. The students circulate through stations on the field trip with hands-on material related to the Texas Essential Knowledge (TEKS) of their grade. The 3rd grade goes to the Patsy Glenn Bird Center, the middle school goes to Blue Hole and the High School Biology students go to Cypress Creek Nature Trail.

During the first week of October (2011), we are starting a new outing for the 2nd graders, related to plants. We will be using the Outdoor Education Classroom area at Jacob's Well Elementary School. The school received a grant in 2010 to develop this lovely several-acre spot for outdoor education, and it is conveniently located next to the school. Linda Land, a current HCMN trainee is the principal of the school. She was instrumental in securing the grant and overseeing completion of the project. We are always looking for volunteers to help us carry out our mission.

I personally enjoy all aspects of nature. My husband and I travel to see the many habitats of this earth, from the Arctic to the Amazons. I was so enthusiastic about the Hays County Master Naturalist program because it showed me the natural wonders of Central Texas (we moved from Ohio).

It wouldn't be right to have A Naturalist's View in the midst of one of the worst droughts on record without even mentioning it. All I can say is, that even during this horrendous drought, nature continues to amaze me. I recall one trip to the Sea of Cortez and Baja California when we visited large areas where they had not had ANY RAIN for two years! Still there were plants and animals that survived. I even have photos of blooming plants.

I graduated from High School in Tucson Arizona, so I know about environments with little rain. The big difference is that they don't expect rain until August (wish we could have some rain this August). People know to plant xeric vegetation, not lawns.

So, I see this drought as an opportunity for the Hays County Master Naturalist to expand the Outreach Program. People want to know about xeric plants and water conservation.

I remain a teacher at heart who wants to share my love of the natural world with people, young and old. The Wimberley Outdoor Educators program has put me in touch with kindred souls who also like to work with students. So, although I am retired as a formal classroom teacher, I can still be part of a team that influences the future generations.

We invite you to join our team. We have fun, earn lots of volunteer hours, and feel good about our efforts to share our appreciation and understanding of the natural environment.

- Jackie Mattice



Featured Project

Charro Ranch Park Project #1010

Charro Ranch Park is a passive nature park in Dripping Springs intended primarily for walking, hiking and nature viewing. It's located on 65 acres on FM150 between Dripping Springs and Driftwood. The land was donated to Dripping Springs by the Hibberd family in April 2009 and is the largest donation the City of Dripping Springs has ever received.

The Park's Master Plan was approved by the City of Dripping Springs City Council in June, 2011. HCMNs M. Lee Brown and Garry and Ann Child served on the Park's Partner Committee and helped develop the Plan. They provided technical support to the City of Dripping Springs and representatives from DISD to lay out a 1.5 mile cross-country track to reduce the environmental impact of the track.



Mocky, the park greeter. Photo by M. Lee Brown.

M. Lee Brown proposed the project to our Chapter and received approval in 2010. She discovered the Park in 2009 and spent many hours hiking there. When she graduated from the HCMN Class of 2010 and decided to propose a partnership with the City of Dripping Springs.

M. Lee has a M. Ed. degree and worked as a School Psychologist traveling to villages throughout Alaska and then Appalachia. She worked closely with people whose cultures are closely intertwined with nature.

She then returned to Texas and owned and operated a certified organic greenhouse and managed a herd of cattle. She moved to Dripping Springs when she sold her business and although her business had only been 50 miles from Hays County, she realized she knew little about her new environment. The HCMN Chapter provided her with a great opportunity to learn more about her new surroundings.

The project's goals include working with the City of Dripping Springs to ensure the park is used for its intended purpose as a passive-use nature park, preserve the native hill country flora and fauna, provide the community with educational and recreational outreach. Volunteer work includes data collection of the wildlife, native and non-native vegetation, natural and human use history, the riparian area, and land management to assist the city by providing citizen science based recommendations to preserve, manage, and enhance the park resources.

Volunteers also assist with trail building and maintenance, litter cleanup, monitoring oak wilt, identifying non-native, invasive species, and assisting in habitat restoration. Volunteers will develop formal and informal educational information for park visitors, inform local citizen groups of the importance of stewardship of the park resources, promote activities such as walking, wildlife observation, native plant identification and other related activities.

A rainwater guzzler was installed in July 2011 and work is nearing completion on a designated parking area. Volunteers are currently working on restoring the oak wilt trenches and turning one of the trenches into a trail. They are also working with several boys on their Eagle Scout projects. A bird survey is held on the 2nd and last Sunday of each month and will have a one year record after the September counts.

Near-term projects include trail, brush and invasive species maintenance, signage, increasing Hays County Master Naturalist participation and conducting public outreach.

Long-term plans include enhancing the trail system, funding for a pavilion, monthly workdays, plant surveys, demonstration areas, and regular educational programs.

Several HCMNs have been helping:

- **M. Lee Brown** - Organized project, presented proposal to the City of Dripping Springs Parks and Recreation Commission, member of Park Partner's committee, assisted with technical support of cross-country trail, twice monthly bird surveys, Great Backyard Bird Count, outreach with community and trash clean-up and maintenance. Created <https://sites.google.com/site/thecharranchparkproject/home> to organize project.
- **Anne Child** - Assisted with technical support on cross-country track layout, wrote Draft Master Plan, attends Park Partner meetings, trash clean-up and maintenance.
- **Garry Child** - Serves on Park Partner's Committee, Workday Coordinator, assisted with technical support on cross-country track layout, trash clean up and maintenance.
- **Leigh Erin Jandle** - Supported initial project development, Bird identification.
- **Jim Donohoe** - Trail/Park maintenance, construction.
- **Helen Marsh** - Bird Surveys, plant identification.

The project has regular workdays on the 2nd Saturday of the month. With the Master Plan in place, the project is moving forward and has many volunteer opportunities. Please contact M. Lee Brown, mleebrown1@gmail.com, for more information.



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

Rainwater Harvesting Workshop

In spite of what you're thinking, it will rain again someday ...

There will be a Rainwater Harvesting Workshop on Saturday, September 10th. Learn about basic installation for outside landscape use, inside potable and non-potable use, sanitation of systems and general system maintenance.

The workshop will be conducted by Brent Clayton and Billy Kniffen.

The registration flyer can also be found online at <http://hays-tx.tamu.edu/newsletters/flyer2.pdf>. There is a \$30 registration fee.

When: Saturday, September 10th, from 9 am to 4 pm

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

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:(512)393-2120)

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.

On the Trail

A Max-cy-Mum Thanks!

Vicki and Charles Maxcy deserve a standing ovation for orchestrating buffet dinners prior to MN trainee classes over the past two years. They have planned, organized and emailed with more precision than a military mess hall sergeant. Class members never had to sit through instruction with a growling stomach or resort to quick fast food stops before class. Take note of what some of them have to say:

Lisa Kay: *Before the first class, I was expecting our "meal" to be something like catered BBQ. I was stunned when I walked in and saw the spread that lay before us. As time has gone by and we all have started getting to know one other, I always look forward to going to class. The good food and good company are always very uplifting. It is a time when we can put away the rest of the world and enjoy breaking bread with folks who share a passion for nature. For me, the delicious food is a metaphor for the beauty that surrounds us in nature and awakens our senses.*

David Womer: *I'm not an eloquent writer but what I can tell you is that when it comes to food that is a high pressure job! Charles and Vicki organize so well and do such a great job; it seems to me that there is never a problem and Vicki is always concerned if she doesn't see me back in line for seconds and will come and get me!! They are awesome people whom I enjoy and they genuinely want to take care of you!*

Barbara Rosen: *Charles and Vicki should be applauded for the energy they have put into coordinating our meals. The variety of foods we have been privileged to savor over the past months has been amazing and we are not done yet! Thank you for all you do for us.*

Don Wallace: *It goes without saying that Vicki and Charles are a fantastic and invaluable team for HCMN. Each meeting is a superbly planned meal. It has been really fun for me to cook some of the recipes (etc...egg plant and chopping all those veggies). Makes me really appreciate them for the time they must spend planning, setup for each meal, the prior notifications to us as volunteer cooks, and then the cleanup after each meeting. They deserve a special medal.*

Nancy Russell: *Contributing to the Master Naturalist meals has been so much more rewarding than most pot lucks because they have been planned so that nothing is in excess or left out. Recipes with quantities for a large number have also enabled me to expand my own cooking skills. The appreciative greetings of Vicki and Charles each time add to the feelings of community sharing.*

Vicki and Charles will be retiring at the end of the 2011 MN class year stint. A great opportunity awaits other gourmet naturalists to step up to the plate and make another trainee class healthy and happy. Vicki tells me that one of the nice things about doing the trainee

meals is that they are able to acquire their volunteer hours during the week, leaving weekends free for other pursuits. The really good news is that Vickie and Charles are willing to share their terrific recipes for your success.

- Lucille Trail Kirkham

Naturescapes Awards Reception

The Naturescapes Awards Reception will be held on Saturday September 10th, at the San Marcos Activity Center, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Our Chapter is co-sponsoring the Contest and Exhibition this year and several HCMNs have photographs in the exhibition: **Art Arizpe, Shannon Brotherton, Jane Dunham, Lisa Kay, Linda Keese, Paul Keese, James McMeans, Winifred Simon, and Herb Smith.**

Please join us in recognizing the great photographs and promoting awareness of the importance of protecting and preserving the natural areas in Hays County.

MNs can help plants and animals weather the drought!

I think we are all seeing that the drought has caused animals and plants to go into crisis mode. As Master Naturalists we learn about what is needed for animal habitat, and what plants fare best in this area. However, right now, I think it is important for us to pay particularly close attention to what plants and animals are telling us they need. For plants, wilting leaves is a sure sign that water is needed. However, the birds are what have caught my attention.

For example, some recent communications really amused me. We picked this year to plant many fruit trees and I have had to hand water them nearly every other day. While doing this a Cardinal landed above me and chirped loudly. I aimed the hose in his direction and within a few seconds the Cardinal and a half dozen of his friends were showering away. After a minute or so of this, all flew off chirping away.

This fun event was followed by an even more amazing event a couple of days later. I was again watering some wilted plants just off our porch. To my surprise a couple of the rare Golden-Cheeked Warblers zoomed into the spray and started showering and chirping. They were within 5 feet of me and not at all fazed by my being there. I called Linda from the other end of the porch; and they just kept on showering.



Golden Cheeked Warblers enjoying a shower. Photo by Linda Calvert.

Linda went and got her camera. By the time she returned there were 5 GCWs; we observed four simultaneously a number of times. The most Linda could get in a picture was three at one time; our best attempt is shown above. This went on 15 minutes or so. We have concluded after repeated sightings of GCW and many other species that we don't see very often that our many feeders and 3 bird baths are critical right now. We really enjoy using our MN training, especially the observational skills - it is so much fun. I hope you are learning a lot too during this very tough drought.

- Larry Calvert

August Chapter Meeting

The August Chapter meeting was held at our first-ever Summer Social event at John Knox Ranch. We had an excellent turn-out and enjoyed a social time, a presentation by Dr. Caitlin Gabor from Texas State University Biology Department, and an excellent lunch. In addition, several volunteer projects had tables set up to talk to members about their work and recruit volunteers. Throughout the meeting there were also door-prize awards which were enjoyed by everyone.

There were 10 projects present:

- #403 Texas Parks and Wildlife Texas Nature Tracker
- #424 San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance
- #602 EmilyAnn: Butterfly Festival, etc.
- #603 Jacob's Well Natural Area
- #604 Wimberley Parks & Recreation Blue Hole Regional Park
- #809 Wimberley Outdoor Educators
- #911 Texas H2Oasis
- #1005 LANDS program

- #1010 Charro Ranch Park
- #1104 Bunton Branch Restoration



The project tables were very busy! M. Lee Brown talks about the work at Charro Ranch Park. Photo by Art Arizpe.

Dr. Gabor's talk was titled "Predator-prey dynamics and stress hormones in the San Marcos Salamander". She presented some background about the predator-prey cycle and how it applies to the salamanders and then explained her experiment's design and results.

I received many positive comments about the event. Jean McMeans and Lin Weber did a great job organizing it!

- Art Arizpe

Chapter Committee Openings

The Chapter has two important committee chair positions open – the Host Committee and the Outreach Committee, and could use your help.

You may find a description of this committees in the [Chapter Operating Handbook](#), Section E, on our web page.

Please consider chairing or serving on either of these important positions. Contact Jeff Vasgaard, pres@haysmn.org, if you're interested.

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 August 2011 are due by September 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.

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. Two great shots this month.



A white-tailed buck. Photo by Tom Hausler.



A bobcat. 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

Jacob's Well Fall Festival

The Jacob's Well Fall Festival will be held on September 17th from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

The event is shaping up to be the coolest in town. We still need a few more volunteers.

Interested? Please contact Linda Lang: lelang1@verizon.net or Jeri Porter: jeripster@gmail.com.

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

S.A. teeters on brink of Stage 3 water rules

The San Antonio Express News has an article about the Edwards Aquifer water level monitoring and the impact of the drought from August 24th.

"The water level of the Edwards Aquifer J-17 monitoring well has dropped more than two feet since Monday, putting San Antonio on the edge of triggering Stage 3 watering restrictions.

Unless the region gets rain very soon, the Edwards Aquifer Authority and San Antonio Water System are predicting that sometime between next week and mid-September, outdoor watering with sprinklers and irrigation systems will be limited to one day every other week."

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



Local News

Austin to buy 611 acres to protect water quality in recharge zone

The Austin-American Statesman has an article about the City of Austin purchasing land to protect the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone.

"The City of Austin plans to buy 611 acres in the heart of the sensitive Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, a deal officials are hailing as a major step in protecting water quality in the aquifer and in area springs, including Barton Springs.

The \$11.8 million parcel in northern Hays County is owned by 668 Avana Land Holdings LLC . The city will pay most of the cost with money voters approved for purchases of open space in a 2006 bond package."

You may read the full 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