

Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

September, 2012

Chapter Events

Chapter Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, September 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 Larry Calvert, pres@haysmn.org, by Monday September 3rd.

Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, September 27th, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, 301 Hays Country Acres Road, in Dripping Springs. A map is available [here](#).

Dr. David E. Lemke will present a program on "The non-native flora of Texas".

He is a Professor of Biology and Curator of the Herbarium at Texas State University-San Marcos, where he teaches courses in Plant Taxonomy and Field Botany. His research focuses on vegetation studies of natural areas in various regions of Texas, the biology of aquatic plants, and the production of floral scents in South African carrion flowers.

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



A Naturalist's View

Jackie Mattice was in the Class of 2008 and is the leader for Chapter Project #809, Wimberley Outdoor Educators.

Think Globally Act Locally

I get frustrated with politics. It seems to me if the money spent on political campaigns went toward solving problems, we could make real progress. Since that will never come about, at least not in my lifetime, I turn to acting locally to keep sane.

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AgriLife Agent	Lee Ann Linam
TP&WD Rep	

I love being a Master Naturalist because I continue to learn about the earth and its organisms. The Master Naturalist program also provides a wealth of diverse opportunities to act locally with swell people. At our August Social we had a grand opportunity to examine and learn about activities as varied as the Rainwater Revival to the Texas Nature Trackers.

I was a high school science teacher; hence my volunteer hours mainly go to various branches of the Outreach program. **Leah Laszewski**, our Outreach coordinator, outlined the goals for the HCMN Outreach program in the April, 2012 issue of the HCMN newsletter (you can download that issue by looking under [archives](#) on the haysmn.org website).

Among the goals listed, several have been making exciting progress since April. These include:

- Increase awareness and use of the Speakers Bureau.
- Have a voice in the local press.
- Partner with our libraries throughout the county.
- Begin implementing an Outdoor Educator Program in a second school district.

Several new speaker presentations are ready to be previewed this month by the outreach committee.

Last spring the first Speakers Bureau talk on Xeric Plants took place in San Marcos, thanks to **Marilyn Bristler's** invitation. You too can request a free speaker for another organization by contacting Leah at outreach@haysmn.org. Yet another way to act locally.

Contacts at the libraries have been made by **Christine Middleton, Randy Garst, Helene Kennard and Merry Bateman**. These contacts have already resulted in Master Naturalist programs at local libraries. In June the Xeric Plant talk was delivered at the Kyle library. Later in June **Leah**, assisted by myself and **Blaine Nelson**, led a children's workshop about Insects at the Wimberley Library. The kids had a great time making their own anatomically correct insects and hunting for them outside.

I personally have enjoyed reading **Lisa Kay's** articles in this newsletter about various local organisms. I have been watching the nesting barn swallows raise their young on my porch and was pleased to learn more about these birds from her article. I think these articles would be of great public interest and Leah says we are making headway on getting Master Naturalist articles in the local papers. **Louis Parks** has agreed to do the editing and has even polished up a thistle article (by a MN author who prefers to be anonymous) that is ready to be released next spring. **Lisa Kay** has agreed to let us use some of her articles, so be watching for some Master Naturalist written articles in your local newspaper.

The plans to expand the Outdoor Educator Program to another school district are shaping up. **Ashley Whittenberger** arranged a meeting with **M. Lee Brown** this summer at Charro Ranch (see HCMN newsletter July 2012 for more info on Charro Ranch) to plan learning stations for the 5th grade class at Walnut Springs Elementary this coming school year.

The Wimberley Outdoor Educators are gearing up for a new school year. They met in August to plan for this fall. We are pleased to have several members of the current training class of Master Naturalist actively involved in this planning. The Master Naturalist planners were **John**

Boltz, Ashley Wittenberger, Sandy Lucas, and Randy Garst. Others who couldn't make the August meeting plan on joining us for the following field trips:

October 15-17 - 2nd grade field experience at Jacob's Well Elementary

November 13th - Blue Hole field trip for 7th grade

February - Cypress Creek field trip for the Biology High School Students

March - Patsy Glenn Bird Refuge field trip for 3rd grade

These events are a wonderful way to act locally while earning volunteer hours. If you are interested in learning more about how you can participate contact Jackie Mattice at jrm44313@yahoo.com. You can read more about the history and philosophy of the Wimberley Outdoor Educators by reading the February 2010 edition of the HCMN newsletter (you can download that issue by looking under [archives](#) on the haysmn.org website).

As we saw at the Summer Social, the Hays County Master Naturalists Chapter provides many different ways to act locally while thinking globally. Happy volunteering!

- Jackie Mattice



Featured Project

Canyon Lake Gorge

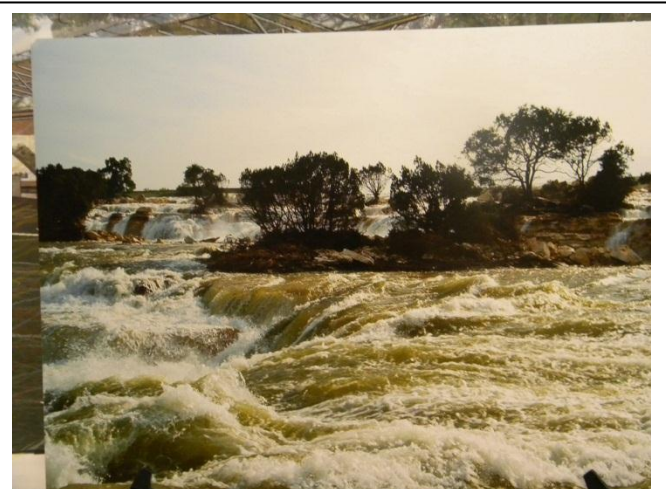
Project #705

The Canyon Lake Gorge Project was last featured in the [June 2009 issue](#) of this newsletter. Please refer to that article for more background.

Residents, members of the Gorge Preservation Society, and a host of dignitaries commemorated the Tenth Anniversary of the 2002 Flood on June 29, 2012. Two attendees remembered the inauguration of the Canyon Lake Reservoir and the talk that it would never fill, much less overflow. They marveled at growing up with Canyon Lake and then seeing it overflow on July 4, 2002 after several days of rain that wiped out the Independence Day fireworks and parades throughout much of Central Texas. The roar and rumble of the overflow lingers in their memories

While the overflowing spillway moved enough rubble to block the Guadalupe River at Horseshoe Falls and flood the area between the falls and the dam, there's no doubt that the spillway prevented a catastrophic dam failure and no end of flooding past New Braunfels and Seguin. The Canyon Lake area has recovered and added two assets to its list of attractions: the Canyon Lake Gorge and a new city park at Horseshoe Falls.

Canyon Gorge continues to be a wonderful



During the flood. Photo provided by Richard Barnett.

place to do volunteer work and big changes are happening and planned for the future. The big news is that the GBRA has purchased the 20+ acres contiguous to the gorge and on the S. Access road. An old building was renovated by volunteers and now is the new "Rock Shop". It is complete with a new composting toilet that works really well. Tourists can purchase cold drinks, ice cream and of course, gorge bling. We also have a small bus that transports our visitors from the GBRA property to the entrance at the spillway at Overlook Park by the dam. They can now park at the bottom and we end the hike where everyone left their cars.

The GBRA will soon construct a top-notch environmental education center on the property. The plans have been drawn and the design is spectacular. The center will focus on the geology, hydrology, and ecology of the Guadalupe River watershed from the headwaters to the coast. Millions of dollars have to be raised and we hope to see progress in the next few years.

As to the gorge itself, gravity blocks continue to fall off the edges and invasive species are a problem - cattails are now an issue. The trail crew always has their work cut out for them. It still is an amazing place to engage people with the outdoor world. Many who take the tour say that they will never see the world the same again. That's OK with us!



A motley crew. Photo provided by Richard Barnett.

Just a few weeks ago, as an Eagle Scout project, a fine nature trail was created with many species of native plants identified by signs. The trail is well-marked and bordered and extends from the new property along the lower gorge and ends at a location where there are plans for an overlook point with a large deck.

Volunteer opportunities for Master Naturalists abound at the Canyon Lake Gorge. Besides keeping the trails safe and adding new steps at steep points, volunteer efforts are invaluable to protect the beautiful natural resources of the Gorge from overgrowth and sedimentation. This year we have been able to accomplish many tasks, such as the power washing of the ancient ripples and the 3D aquifer channels, major trail repair and invasive control on the spillway, fossil bluff, channels, two rivers, shell flats, classroom and the exit trail. From the outdoor classroom down to the exit trail, all of the invasive *Baccharis* have been removed and the view looks great!

Volunteers are needed for the next phase of invasive removal and control. The Gorge gets plenty of visitors and needs regular attention to ready it for this fall's expected foot traffic. We need citizens and partners to slow the spread of invasive species like rushes, Maltese Star thistles and Chinese Tallow. September workdays will feature physical work (cutting and spraying) in places with slippery footing. Sturdy boots are a must! But don't fret about your skill sets or physical strength; we'll split the tasks to accommodate individuals' abilities. Side benefits include good company and opportunities to observe birds and wildlife and to find new fossils or plants.

Next February and March we are having a docent training for those interested in helping take tours through the gorge. The training is comprised of five sessions and each session includes classroom sections and hikes through the gorge. For anyone wanting to learn interpretive skills and lots of geology as well as ecology, this might be just for you. For more information or to sign up for the training, go to canyongorge.org and email Jaynellen Ladd.

September Workdays are being held, starting on September 4th, Monday & Tuesdays, 8am-11am.

Help protect the Gorge environment! Join Us!

- Jamie Kinscherff
- Richard Barnett



Chapter News

President's Message

Here's a challenge for us!

We just had a wonderful Summer Social and exceptionally good attendance. This is consistent with the growth we've experienced the last few years. Membership has nearly doubled, chapter meetings are being attended to the point where we have to carefully select sites that will accommodate the crowd, we have more projects being worked than ever before, and the training classes have been at capacity.

The challenge, as I see it, is we continue to have about the same number of people being recertified at the Gala each year. For most of those not getting recertified - they either lack or have not turned in the volunteer hours needed. Let's see if we can increase the recertification numbers!

If you are not sure where you stand, e-mail Vicki Maxcy, at membership@haysmn.org, to get your current totals, and if you have not turned in enough volunteer hours, please figure out what you have and turn those in. Thanks for your consideration.

- Larry Calvert

Summer Social

The Chapter Summer Social was another big success! A total of 70 members and 8 guests attended. Of the 8 guests, 3 were former members from the first HCMN class, Sherwood Bishop, Paul Keese, and Linda Keese.

Sky Lewey, President of the Hill Country Alliance, gave us a crash course on Riparian Management... how flora and fauna (especially humans) impact the geologic structures of water catchments... which in return impacts flora and fauna (including humans).



Early HCMNs: (left to right) Sherwood Bishop, Dell Hood, Gerin Hood, Linda Keese, and Paul Keese. Photo by Linda Calvert.

A number of projects were there also to present their work:

- #1005 Texas Wildlife Association - Koy Coffey
- #911 Texas H2Oasis - Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary - Karen Hulene Bartell
- #809 Wimberley Outdoor Educators - Jackie Mattice
- #1010 Charro Ranch Park - M. Lee Brown
- #1006 Texas Nature Trackers- Lee Ann Linam
- #424 San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance
- #1201 Lake Kyle - Judy Burdett
- #704 Outreach Committee - Leah Laszewski
- #905 Rainwater Revival & Hays Cnty Water Conservation WG - Walt Krudop

Attendees also in a door prize drawing many great gifts were awarded!

How Much Do You Know about Nature?

Just for fun, would you like to test your knowledge? A twenty question quiz was available at the Social, but for the benefit of those who did not attend, and those who did, but missed the quiz, here it is. You may take as long as you want to ponder, then check the [answers](#) on the HCMN website. If you get any wrong or just draw a blank, this will be a learning experience for you. Good luck!!



Nature Quiz



1. Give at least 2 reasons why horned lizard numbers are drastically down in the Texas Hill Country.

2. Why do whooping cranes in the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge suffer from drought in the Hill Country?
3. What do the following species have in common?
Celtis lindheimeri; *Datura wrightii*; *Dalea greggii*; *Euphorbia romeriana*;
Aniscanthus thurberi; *Asclepias engelmanniana*
4. A tour of the Canyon Lake Gorge presents a good view of the _____ Aquifer in action.
5. Why is it not a good idea to plant rosemary close to your home?
6. What is the name of the fault line running through Hays County that divides the Hill Country from the Blackland Prairie?
7. Name a snake you'd like to have on your property. Why?
8. T or F: Ashe juniper uses a disproportionate amount of water for its size.
9. Name the Big Four tall grasses of the Great Plains.
10. How many young do nine-banded armadillos bear per litter?
11. How many young do feral sows usually produce?
12. Are the following trees native to Central Texas or introduced?
Ashe Juniper, Madrone, Escarpment Black Cherry, Mexican Buckeye, Crape Myrtle, Hackberry, Ligustrum, Sycamore
13. How could it be beneficial to keep goats?
14. T or F: The live oak is the only Hill Country oak susceptible to oak wilt.
15. What is a conservation easement?
16. T or F: Ball moss is a parasite that will eventually kill its host tree.
17. Trace the path of water from Jacob's Well to the Gulf of Mexico.
18. Name as many fur bearing Texas animals as you can.
19. According to Bat Conservation International, 47 species of bats live in the U.S. How many of these can be found in Texas?
20. What is the most common bee in Texas?



Wimberley's Patsy Glenn Refuge

Prior to the 2012 HCMN Summer Social at the Wimberley Community Center, some members arrived early to check out the Patsy Glenn Refuge. Located near the back edge of the parking lot, this 1.8 acre tract was established over the last decade as a sanctuary for local and migratory birds as well as native plants and indigenous insects and animals. It was named for the late Patsy Glenn whose vision, diligence and quiet persistence was largely responsible for creating this "little piece of heaven" in the heart of Wimberley. The Wimberley Birding Society (wimbirds.org) tells us:

Patsy Glenn was that rare individual who took a dream, and with extensive communication and sensitivity, inspired others to join her to preserve a delightful environment where birds, flowers, fauna and people flourish. A former co-president of the Wimberley Birding Society, in 2002, Patsy was the first winner of the Golden Eagle Award, an annual award presented by WBS to the person who does the most for birds and birding in Hays County.

While the refuge is situated on City of Wimberley property, it is managed by the Wimberley Birding Society whose current president is our very own **Cara Wernli** who graduated as a Cougar in the Class of 2005. Cara was kind enough to visit with me about some of the work the birding society is doing. Her enthusiasm is contagious, so beware folks, she'll have you out there volunteering before you know it. Here's the scoop: the WBS meets the third Monday of each quarter and has two designated workdays per year. The last meeting was August 20 and the next workday will be Saturday October 13 from 9 AM until about noontime. Cara clarified that "workday" is used loosely because there is something for everyone from carrying water for the real laborers to cleaning up bird blinds and trails and weeding the butterfly garden. For those who can't make it on the selected date, there are plenty of tasks that can be done on an individual basis at one's leisure. Since the refuge is on the approved list for MN hours, your time adds toward the year's 40-hour volunteer requirement. What a deal, especially for those of us who live in Wimberley.

Cara also shared that membership dues for WBS is a mere \$5 per year and there are lots of trips and special occasions. You don't even have to volunteer on workdays to enjoy some of the perks. Coming up right away is *Swift's Night Out* at 6 PM on September 18. Everyone meets to socialize and enjoy the flight of chimney swifts making their way across Wimberley skies. A chimney swift tower was built a while back and it is hoped that swift families will soon start to nest and raise their families there. And then there are the trips, both locally and internationally. In late October there is a trip scheduled to the Galapagos and Ecuador and then November brings a day trip to Seguin followed by other offerings including Alaska next June. There are currently about 130 members and counting. A lot of those members double as volunteers for the Wimberley Outdoor Educators who teach Wimberley third graders about all things nature.

I returned to the Patsy Glenn Refuge on a Friday afternoon to enjoy its tranquil beauty while walking amongst the trails and sitting in the big people birdhouse looking out on a variety of bird feeders. Equipped with chairs, tables, copies of *Wildbird* magazine, a photo album and a journal for observations, it was a quiet setting for meditation and observing nature at its best. I couldn't help but notice that visitors have come from as far away as New Mexico, Laredo, and Dallas. One visitor wrote: *Beautiful day here. Saw some vibrant red robins, fluttering from tree to tree. Very quiet, peaceful.* Another journal entry recorded a Cooper's Hawk flying above the refuge. For those of us who took the time to stroll through the Patsy Glenn Refuge before the annual meeting, it was an unexpected bonus.....one that will yield many trips to come!

- Lucille Trail Kirkham

Central Texas Biological Inventory Team Created

Nearly two dozen biologists and enthusiasts converged on Blanco County in mid-April to launch the Central Texas Biological Inventory Team (BIT). Though a late season cool front with windy conditions hampered some inventory efforts, the participants still put together an impressive list of species in less than 24 hours on the Selah Ranch owned by David Bamberger.

Four local birders joined TPWD biologist Marsha May in conducting 16 point counts. They detected 29 species through auditory or visual means, including the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo. Five skilled herp enthusiasts, TPWD herpetologist Andy Gluesenkamp, and Texas Nature Trackers biologist Lee Ann Linam used their eyes and ears in detecting 16 species, despite the cool conditions. The botany team dominated the species count, as usual, as six volunteers helped TPWD botanist Jason Singhurst document 288 species!

TPWD is sponsoring these BIT training sessions to recruit skilled naturalists who might be willing to participate on teams designed to offer inventory services to landowners on a regional level, similar to the site visits conducted by Hays County TMN. However, one additional goal of the BIT effort is to provide data to TPWD on tracked species in addition to the services offered to the local landowner. As a result of the Bamberger BIT training session, four Central Texas BIT leaders stepped forward. Jeffrey Holmes will lead the Herp BIT, Patrick Garnett will lead the Bird BIT, Joan Mukherjee will lead the Plant BIT, and Rehanon Pampell will lead an Invertebrate BIT. These leaders will be responding to requests for surveys throughout the Edwards Plateau and may seek to organize their own future training sessions.



Patch-nosed snake seen on Bamberger Ranch BIT survey. Photo by Bill Brooks.

If you are interested in joining one of these inventory teams, know a Central Texas landowner who would like an inventory conducted for any of these species groups, or would like a list of the species detected please contact Marsha May at marsha.may@tpwd.state.tx.us or 512-389-8062.

- Lee Ann Linam
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Naturescapes Awards Reception

The Naturescapes Awards Reception will be held on Saturday September 15th, at the San Marcos Activity Center, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. This is the second year our Chapter is co-sponsoring the Contest and Exhibition. Several HCMNs have photographs in the exhibition and the Chapter will award a prize for the "Best Natural Waterscape" photograph.

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

Vitamin N: A Prescription for Health

So what is this popular new Vitamin N? You don't have to pop a pill. You don't need a prescription. You don't have to go to Walgreen's or a health food store to buy it. Best of all, there are unlimited refills and Master Naturalists have known about this current trend for a long time!

Vitamin N (for nature) is not a medical diagnosis but a term coined by child advocacy expert and author Richard Louv to describe the physical, emotional, and spiritual effects associated with the decline of spending time outdoors. In his bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*, he focused on why children need nature, while his latest work *The Nature Principle* is aimed at telling the whole family how to become happier, healthier, and smarter through more contact with the natural environment. The attraction of electronics and limited access to natural areas has contributed to this condition that affects both children and adults. Whether it is because parents are too busy or too afraid to let their children go outside to explore nature, or whether kids have too many electronic devices to divert their attention from enjoying a simple daily dose of fresh air experiences, the result is that children spend more and more time indoors and less time being active. While free play and outdoor time may not cure childhood obesity, it will go a long way toward getting kids to enjoy the pleasures of the outside world.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder was published in 2005 with a revised edition in 2008. It is available in all kinds of electronic formats which we will hopefully enjoy with headphones while on a walk. Louv suggests solutions to the problems he describes and has since co-founded [Children and Nature Network](#). His work has stimulated a lot of national dialogue and spawned burgeoning movements like Green Hour and No Child Left Inside. Louv's follow-up work, *The Nature Principle*, states, "The twenty-first century will be the century of human restoration in the natural world." It is "about the power of living in nature, not with it, but in it."

The writings of Richard Louv came to my attention this summer while my grandchildren were visiting. They spent a lot of time pouring over iPads, iPods, video games, Twitter, Facebook, and tapping on cell phones. I realized that they knew the names of a lot of songs and pop music stars but almost nothing about the identity of local trees or frogs or birds. A hike at Blue Hole Park or wading in the Blanco River was not nearly as appealing as lounging on my overstuffed sofa while socializing with an electronic screen. That's when I recognized that there could be a whole generation of children, including my grandchildren, who are losing touch with the natural world around them. If they are going to care about the environment and preserve the wonders that are out there, it is up to us as parents, educators and Master Naturalists to foster that appreciation and curiosity. Are we up to the challenge?

- Lucille Trail Kirkham

A Doe, A Deer ...

The White Tail deer (*Odocoileus Virginianus*) population in our beautiful Texas Hill Country is the largest in the United States. Lots of people consider them to be quite a nuisance and of course, come November, hunters come from all over to hunt for sport, meat, and trophies. A real "prize" is a very large buck; they can reach weights of over 300 pounds, though does do not get that big. It is estimated that the population of deer in our area of the world runs

between 3 and 4 million! I am not a hunter and I do enjoy seeing the deer and sitting on my front porch for long stretches just observing deer and their behavior. I moved to the Hill Country just three years ago and I was so in awe of all of the wildlife around me, that I was a little naive regarding what pests the animals could actually be. I KNEW that deer would eat landscaping and flowers, but I THOUGHT they wouldn't eat mine! I have no explanation for that other than I believe I was so in love with all of the deer appearing everywhere ("Oh, look! There's a deer in our yard!") that I was in complete denial! After all, I would much rather have enjoyed all of the beautiful nature that the Hill Country provided, especially when compared to the concrete jungle that I was used to in Dallas. However, since being here for a while, I have wised up regarding the deer. I learned the hard way that deer will happily devour all of the plants and flowers that I so thoughtfully bought and planted. Year two of being here, I decided to go with "deer resistant" plants. Ha! The joke was on me considering that my second year here was the worst drought in Texas history. I learned that the deer do not know the rules regarding the plants that they are not supposed to eat. When they starve, they EAT whatever they can. I've even seen them eat the yuccas when they are really hungry. Fortunately for me, while I did spend countless time and money on non-native and deer loving plants, I also joined the Master Naturalist program! Thank goodness that I have learned all that I have. Now, I don't work against Mother Nature; I work with her. Native plants and grasses are now the norm at my house. Not only am I losing less to the deer, but I am not spending a fortune on water either. However, I will admit to investing money into quite a bit of wire fencing for my immature trees and shrubs.

The deer in my neck of the woods are overall pretty skittish. My brother, who also resides in Wimberley, lives in an area where the deer will eat out of your hand and allow themselves to be petted. They actually come up on his deck and right up to the sliding glass door, staring inside, wanting to be fed. My deer don't do that, but the herd that hangs around my house does move through our property like clockwork every single evening. Deer generally live their entire lives within a one mile radius of where they were born so it is not uncommon to see the same deer and/or their offspring year after year. In the horrific summer of 2011, I fed a doe after I couldn't stomach seeing her starve any longer. She soon brought her fawn with her and became extremely possessive of her territory. She wouldn't come close so I would throw food her way and then go back to the porch to watch. If any other deer got within 50 feet of her, she would charge them right out of our yard. I should also mention that I have two dogs. Part of their daily routine is to play ball. Most evenings, I get their tennis balls and throw them long distances so they can fetch and retrieve. "Our" doe started to appear whenever I would throw the balls. She thought that I was throwing food and would run, parallel to the dogs, when I threw their tennis balls. The longer I played with the dogs, the more



"Jane Doe", the doe who claimed our yard to be hers in 2011 Photo by Lisa Kay.

agitated she would become. She would stare me down, huffing and puffing, with her tail straight up in the air!

In addition to being a nuisance, deer can also be quite dangerous. Take a drive through the Woodcreek North subdivision here in Wimberley at night and you will quickly realize that you will not be able to drive faster than 10 or 15 mph because of the sheer numbers of tame deer that hang out on the roads. I don't live in that subdivision but it really gives a person a good idea of just how thick the population of deer is in the Hill Country. I've expressed worry before over hitting a deer when I'm on a backroad driving 55 to 65 mph and I've been told that I will never see the deer that I hit until after I've hit one. This gives dual meaning to the phrase, "deer in the headlights" since they will sometimes jump right into the light. However, with all of the nuisances that deer pose, I will admit to being in love with them. I've become an enabler since I do try to provide them with some sort of fresh produce during times of no rain when their food is scarce. (Please don't judge!) My deer even have names: Jane Doe, Fawn Du, Buck, Fawn Dos, etc. Corny, I know, but it is a peaceful, easy life for me to enjoy what is around me in the natural world.

This summer, we have a regular herd of seven deer. The herd consists of a young buck, six does, and a fawn. Night after night we watch the herd move through the yard from our front porch. My husband started asking questions about their antlers. I mentioned to him that I thought that deer shed their antlers every year but he didn't have a lot of confidence in my answer so I decided to do more research, not only about antlers, but about other observations that I'd noted as well.

The life of a fawn begins in the Spring or Summer. Breeding season (also called Rutting season) begins in the late Fall. The gestation period lasts 200 days from conception until birth. Not all does become pregnant when Rutting season begins, however if they do not conceive at first, they can still conceive during their next estrous cycle which will begin again 28 days later. By the end of the season, 92 out of every 100 does will be pregnant. Over half of the does will have twins, especially if they have had adequate nutrition for the past year. Newborn fawns weigh between 5 and 8 pounds. Shortly after birth, the mother will move her fawn to



A fawn. Photo by Lisa Kay.

another location that isn't scented with the birth. If she has twins, she will move each fawn to a different location from each other. For the first few weeks of life, a fawn can't stand for more than around 20 minutes at a time. The doe will leave the fawn(s) so that she can forage and eat. I have known of many people who find fawns, thinking them abandoned by their mother. Good intentions can prevail and the fawns are then "rescued" from their environment by the human. Unfortunately, this almost always leads to death of the fawn. They need their mamas and the does do continue to provide and protect their fawns for the first several months of their lives. Mother

Nature of course also has a hand in providing balance for the survival of the fawns. Many are eaten by predators or fire ants. Once a deer gets through the infant stage, the average lifespan it can look forward to is between 6 and 7 years.

The adolescent male begins to grow his antlers in the Spring and Summer season. An incredible amount of calories and calcium are needed to grow a set of antlers, especially for a younger buck. When antlers are growing, they are covered with a vascular skin called "Velvet" which supplies blood and oxygen. Antlers grow faster than any other bone of any mammal at an astonishing rate of just 3-4 months. Once the antlers reach full



A group of three maturing bucks. Photo by Lisa Kay.

size, the velvet is lost and the antlers die. Velvet will begin to fall off shortly before the Rutting season. A buck can also speed this process along by rubbing his antlers up against trees and other hard surfaces. As the Velvet sheds, the buck will eat the skin to provide nourishment to itself. After shedding, there is a short window between the hardened antlers serving their purpose and then, when they begin to fall off. The antlers serve multiple purposes but are all geared towards procreation of the species. Antlers are an indicator of health; size does matter as females choose their mates. Additionally, bucks occasionally use their antlers to fight each other when competing for mating rights. Once Rutting season is over, the male body begins to reabsorb the calcium from their antlers, this making the antlers brittle and eventually causing them to fall off. Since antlers require so much nutrition, it makes sense for them to shed them as soon as mating season is over. For an informative visual on the development of antlers, please click here:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/game_management/deer/antler_growth/.

Rutting season will begin in the next few months. I hope each and every one of you is able to take a little time to watch the miracle of a life cycle begin again! Happy Naturing!

- Lisa Kay

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 are due by September 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 Vicki Maxcy, 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

Please watch your emails for upcoming Advanced Training Opportunities.

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.



State and National News

Must watch: remarkable footage reveals this bird is more skilled at fishing than most humans

"The Green Heron's use of bait and lures to catch fish is arguably one of the most impressive instances of tool use in the animal kingdom."

Check out the video [here](#).



Local News

Save the Trees: Kyle residents call for ordinance to protect trees

From the Hays Free Press, August 1st:

"As many Kyle residents drove down Center Street on their way home from church last Sunday, an unfamiliar sight greeted them.

Several protestors took to the street last weekend to voice their concern in the ongoing tug-of-war between environmental preservation and the city's plans for continued development. The activists were once again calling for a citywide ordinance to protect Heritage Oak Trees while bemoaning the city's latest development proposal, a truck stop near I-35 at the Yarrington Road exit."

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

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