

# Hays County Master Naturalists NEWSLETTER



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

March, 2006

## MARCH EVENTS

### *March 16 Board Meeting*

There will be a business meeting of the HCMN Board of Directors on Thursday, March 16 at 7 - 9 pm at White Wings Ranch, Wimberley. The tentative agenda includes:

- Committee reports
- Officer reports
- Old business:
  - Membership retention
  - Program Calendar
- New business;
  - Publicity
  - Telephone campaign
  - Volunteer representative

All members are invited to attend and encouraged to participate.

### *Onion Creek Work Day*

8:30 AM, MARCH 18

Onion Creek is a tributary in the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone that contributes significantly to the aquifer that feeds Barton Springs. In order to preserve water quality in the surface waters and in the aquifer, the City of Austin has purchased lands in the recharge zone. Onion Creek and its watershed are in the zone and large tracts of land are now under ownership or conservation easements by the city; most of the land is in Travis County but over 3000 acres lie in Hays County. In order to maintain water quality in the creek and aquifer, the watershed lands must be managed accordingly. The Wildland Conservation Division (WCD) of Austin Water Utilities of the City of Austin is charged with providing management for this area and uses volunteers extensively in such endeavors.

On March 18th at 8:30 am, the WCD will be holding a workday in conjunction with the Hays County Master Naturalists along the flood plains of Onion Creek. The goal is to remove the smaller Ashe Juniper trees that are invading the riparian habitat on the flood plains and creek banks. At lunch, a to-be-determined speaker will make a

## HAYS COUNTY MASTER NATURALISTS

<b>President</b>	Tom Watson
<b>Vice President</b>	Dale Shively
<b>Secretary</b>	Susan Nenney
<b>Treasurer</b>	Winifred Simon
<b>Training Committee</b>	Nancy Turner
<b>Records Committee</b>	Judy Telford
<b>State Advisory Board</b>	Walt Krudop
<b>Web Master</b>	Herb Smith
<b>Editor</b>	Richard Barnett,
	512-847-6941, <a href="mailto:richb6986@aol.com">richb6986@aol.com</a>
<b>Extension Agent</b>	Bryan Davis

presentation at the ranch house or conduct a guided tour of the riparian area along the creek. After the lunch break and program, volunteers may choose to continue working or depart. Thus, volunteers may earn volunteer and advanced training hours for this project. In addition to performing a valuable conservation service, you will be working along a hill country creek (although now dry due to the lengthy drought) in a relatively pristine setting that comparatively few people have seen. The riparian habitat along Onion Creek is lined with Sycamores, Cottonwoods, Bald Cypress, Pecan trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and many "ice cream" grasses.

We are required to RSVP so that adequate planning can be undertaken. You may sign up at Tuesday's training class or by Wednesday, March 15th by emailing Tom Watson at [twatson11@austin.rr.com](mailto:twatson11@austin.rr.com). For further information contact Tom.

## THE PRESIDENTIAL VIEW

Greetings, HC Master Naturalists,

Our kickoff party was a big success with a large turnout of regular members and the majority of the new trainees. The trainees stood and introduced themselves to the certified master naturalists who gave them a big round of welcome-aboard applause. Prior to the general meeting, David

Baker, Director of the Wimberley Watershed Association, guided attendees on a tour of Jacob's Well and ended the meeting with a lecture on water in Hays County. The great turnout of the trainees is due in large part to Dixie Camp, our telephone committee chair. We appreciate her labors to see that as many of the trainees as possible were invited. The membership approved adoption of the state bylaws and chapter operating manual, which will give the chapter governance more flexibility and better definition in conducting the business of the chapter.

Our training year is formally under way with the new training class having met for their first session at White Wing Ranch on February 21<sup>st</sup>. The training committee did a great job against a short time schedule and complications from moving from San Marcos to Wimberley. In spite of the difficulties, all went well and the board is grateful to the committee for their hard work, dedication, and positive attitude. While some logistical difficulties remain, they are working to overcome them. The current class consists of about 23 enthusiastic students. We are looking forward to helping them through their certification and to welcoming them to regular membership at the graduation ceremonies next November.

Members of the board and our committees are at work on several items to better serve you in the coming year. Some are working on improving the reporting procedures and approval guidelines for advanced training and volunteering. We hope to have those improvements on the website in the near future. Time reporting of volunteer and advanced training hours will be through the webpages designated for that purpose. The latter feature has already been added, is ready for your use, and will continue to be improved as our study concludes. Please take advantage of the new features to report your volunteer and AT hours this year.

Other members are working on gaining more publicity for the chapter in an attempt to more effectively bring our message to the public. We have been successful in obtaining commitments from LBJ Wildflower Center, the Village of Wimberley, San Marcos Nature Center, and the City of Austin/Austin Utilities to put a link to the home page of our website. This will give us exposure on well-visited websites. We continue to look for other opportunities as these. We will be exploring connections to local newspapers and other media as sources for publicity.

We have members working on programs for this year and have at least two months completed. On March 18th we will have a workday at Onion Creek in which participants will help remove juniper (cedar) trees that are invading the riparian habitat along the creek. The cleared areas will be reseeded with native plants as we help the City of Austin restore the riparian area there. There will be a speaker and/or a tour of the riparian area along the creek. In this manner, the attendees can earn both volunteer and advanced training hours.

In April we will join with Bryan Davis in sponsoring a workday at the extension center in San Marcos to help Bryan with maintenance of the native plant garden there. Later in April we will have a workshop on prairie restoration at Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne, where we will learn the principles of grassland ecology and have hands-on experience in taking measurements for vegetation monitoring. Monitoring is an important part of any restoration project as it measures the progress of the restoration strategies as the regeneration proceeds. We are looking at having a grass identification workshop later in the year, which will teach attendees the key features of grasses for making accurate identifications. I could go on for pages talking about these exciting possibilities.

We have four among our membership who are moving toward taking an outreach program to our local elementary schools. Training for such a program is available now, if any of you are interested, at Westcave Preserve. Project Wild Aquatic is the program name for which there will be advanced credit given to MN attendees. We hope that you will join us for fun in this outreach endeavor. Today we received a request from de Zavala Elementary School in San Marcos to bring our offering to that school. We anticipate that once the word is out, we will have many more schools asking for our program. The board is excited about the opportunities for our outreach teachers: Betty Watkins, Jane Little, Cara Wernli, and Karen Hayward. Additionally, we may be presented with the opportunity to begin the Junior Master Naturalist program in our schools; Bryan Davis particularly wants this. If you would like to join this group of teachers in a really worthwhile and fun endeavor, please contact me at [twatson11@austin.rr.com](mailto:twatson11@austin.rr.com).


In the near future, the board will look at adopting one or more chapter projects in which we will ask the membership to help us accomplish our goals. Two projects stand out as excellent prospects: re-vegetation of the Wimberley bypass and development of Jacob's Well nature center. The

goal of the re-vegetation project at Wimberley will be to restore the native vegetation along the roadside on the bypass, which is currently under construction. Development of the nature center will involve restoring the native vegetation on the grounds near the spring and a part in planning a nature center by renovating the current activity building. Once the nature center is in place, many opportunities will emerge from nature trail building, docent activities, research projects, and community outreach. We are enthusiastic about these prospects.

The chapter will be participating in Earth Day on April 22<sup>nd</sup> with a booth at the Catholic Church in Wimberley. Karen Bartell will lead this project and needs help setting up and tending rainfall simulator. If you can help, please let Karen know at [hulene1@austin.rr.com](mailto:hulene1@austin.rr.com). In addition we have an opportunity to set up a second booth at the San Marcos Nature Center. If you can help with this, please let me know ([twatson11@austin.rr.com](mailto:twatson11@austin.rr.com)) right away as we need to begin planning.


In conclusion, I think that our year is going to be filled with many fun and worthwhile activities from which we can learn, grow, and help. I hope that you share my enthusiasm and that you will stay tuned: the best is yet to come!

Thanks for all that you do for the Earth, for your neighbors, and for your chapter.

Tom 

## CHAPTER NEWS

### *Annual Dues Time*

It's past time for your annual dues. Please send your \$12:00 check payable to "Hays County Master Naturalists" to your Treasurer, Winifred Simon, 600 Red Hawk Rd, Wimberley, TX 78676. 

### *Members in the News*

**Herb Smith** is the recipient of the 2005 Golden Eagle Award of the Wimberley Birding Society.


Given to the person who did the most for birds and birding in Hays County during 2005, the award is sponsored by the Wimberley Birding Society and includes a cash award and framed certificate. Last

year's winner was Jamie Honeycutt of Dripping Springs.

A resident of Wimberley, Smith was recognized for designing, producing and maintaining several important birding and nature websites, including Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory, TexBirds, Hays County Master Naturalists and Wimberley Birding Society. He was also cited for activities as a Texas Master Naturalist, maintaining a bird-friendly property around his home and organizing birding trips to Honey Creek State Natural Area and the Davis Mountains Hummingbird Festival. Both trips were well attended by area birders.

"We had some really high-quality entries this year," said bird club president Peggy Wilkerson of San Marcos. "We appreciate all those who took time to make nominations."

-- Jerry Hall, WBS

The Spring issue of **Wimberley Way** includes a photograph of Herb as one of the WBS group who erected a chimney swift tower at The Refuge in Wimberley. 

## CALENDAR

March 5, 2:00 pm. **SMGA Outing at Blanco Shoals.**

<http://www.smgreenbelt.org/NewsEvents.htm>

March 7. **2006 Class Session 2.** Texas Geology, Carter Kearns; Soils & Range Management, Bryan Davis.

March 9. **Do-it-yourself Container Water Gardens** workshop. San Marcos Nature Centre. 6:00 – 8:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under "Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre."

March 11. **Volunteer Representatives Council Meeting.** Parrie Haynes Ranch near Killeen. Agenda, directions and meeting details will be sent in early March.

March 16, 7:00-9:00 pm. **HCMN Board Meeting.** WhiteWings Ranch. All members welcome.

March 18, 8:30 am. **Onion Creek Workday**

March 19, 2:00 pm. **SMGA Outing at Upper through to Lower Purgatory Creek.**  
<http://www.smgreenbelt.org/NewsEvents.htm>.

March 28. **2006 Class Session 3.** Ecology & Ecological Restoration, Steve Windhager. Keying Plants, Jill Harding.

April 5-7, 2006. **Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute 25th Anniversary Symposium** featuring "Frontiers in Wildlife Science: Linking Ecological Theory with Management Applications." Omni Bayfront Hotel in Corpus Christi and Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Center in Kingsville. For details of the symposium and registration information, please check [www.ckwri.tamuk.edu](http://www.ckwri.tamuk.edu) or call 361-593-4025.

April 8, 10:00 am - noon. **Butterflies Galore Tour** at Westcave Preserve, led by Dan Hardy. For information & registration contact <http://www.westcave.org>.

April 11. **2006 Class Session 4 at Freeman Ranch.** Nature Walk, 4:00 - 6:00 pm. Class, 6:30 pm. Human Impact, Barron Rector.

April 15, 7:00-9:00 am. **Sunrise Birding Tour** at Westcave Preserve. For information & registration contact <http://www.westcave.org>.

April 22. **Wildflower Fiesta Plant Sale & Gardening Festival**, San Marcos Nature Centre. 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under "Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre."

April 22. **Earth Day celebration.** St. Mary's Catholic Church, Wimberley.

April 23-29. **National Volunteer Week.**

April 29, 9:00 am–noon. **Canyon Gorge Field Trip**, Dr. Carter Kearns.

May 9. **2006 Class Session 5.** Birds, David Huffman. Texas Archeology, Britt Bousman.

May 11. **Making Floral Crafts from Your Own Backyard** workshop, San Marcos Nature Centre. 6:00 – 8:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under "Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre."

May 13, 10:00 am – noon. **Wildflowers of Westcave Tour.** For information & registration contact <http://www.westcave.org>.

May 20, 9:00 am-noon. **2006 Class Session 6** at Freeman Ranch. **Butterfly Boot Camp**, Chris Nice.

June 17. **Backyard Habitat Planning & Certification Workshop.** San Marcos Nature Centre. 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under "Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre."

July 20. **Cactus Gardening** Workshop. San Marcos Nature Centre. 6:00 – 8:00 pm. <http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us> under "Parks & Recreation – Nature Centre."

## ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Cultural and Natural History of Purple Martins*

March 3-4. If you are a veteran martin landlord, a hopeful enthusiast with a new martin house, or just curious about these amazing birds, we invite you to join Rob Fergus, coauthor of *The Purple Martin* (UT Press, Austin: 2002) and National Audubon Science Coordinator of the Audubon At Home Program for a workshop on the cultural and natural history of the Purple Martin. Details at <http://www.hornsbybend.org/workshop-martin-mar06.html>.

### *Overabundant White-tailed Deer in Texas: Impacts on People, Communities, and the Land*

Texas State University, San Marcos May 18, 2006, 7:45 am to 5:00 pm.

White-tailed deer are a valuable natural resource providing enjoyment for thousands across Texas and are very adaptable to life near people. However, when deer numbers escalate and they become overabundant, deer threaten wildlife and plant diversity as well as causing economic, health and safety concerns. Some Texas communities are currently confronting these issues and others soon will be. Attendees will learn about the experiences of communities and hear from nationally recognized experts currently working with overabundant deer issues.

- \* How did we get this many deer in Texas and what does the future hold?
- \* Impact of overabundant deer populations
- \* Current management tools
- \* What has and has not worked
- \* Overabundant deer as a planning issue

- \* Building consensus among stakeholders

Early registration fee - \$35 \* Good until April 1. After April 1st, registration is \$50. Registration is limited. Fee includes all refreshment breaks and lunch on day one. Pre-registration by May 1st required for a guaranteed lunch! Limited sponsorships available.

To register Contact Helen Holdsworth at the Texas Wildlife Association, 1-800-TEX-WILD or 210-826-2904, x. 120

### *Project WILD Aquatic Training*

TPWD is sponsoring a "Project WILD Aquatic" workshop at Westcave Preserve. The workshop will focus on how to teach aquatic resources and wildlife to school kids.

The training will introduce fun, hands-on, easy-to-use educational activities appropriate for education in our schools. The material is suitable for grades K – 12 and is aligned to the TEKS. Participants will receive 6 hours of SBEC and TEEAC credit if desired. Master Naturalists will earn Advanced Training credits. The number of AT hours depends on the length of the workshop.

This is a great opportunity for those interested in working with youth to take up educational outreach as a volunteer activity. Once trained, the Board of Directors and our Extension Agent will help you make connections with local schools of your choosing.

The workshop dates are to be announced soon. For further information please email [john@westcave.org](mailto:john@westcave.org) or phone (830)-825-3442.

### *Holistic Management Field Day*

HRM OF TX AND HMI WEST RANCH,  
OZONA, TEXAS FIELD DAY. 10:00 AM TO  
4:00 PM, MARCH 24, 2006

Join us for a day of hands-on learning about Holistic Management and the Southern Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education (SARE) project at West Ranch.

There will be opportunity to get out on the land and see the research site and learn from the West Ranch managers, Joe & Peggy Maddox, and the researchers about this significant project.

A meal will be provided. Please RSVP to help us plan. For more information and to RSVP: e-mail [info@hrm-texas.org](mailto:info@hrm-texas.org) or call Peggy Cole at 512-847-3822 or Joe/ Peggy Maddox at 325-392-2292

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

### *Margaret's Nature Trail, White Wings Ranch*

#### HCMN PROJECT # 601

You may remember that last summer off RR12 near San Marcos a snake fatally bit a woman from Wimberley. It turns out that she was both a member of the Unity Church and very much a nature enthusiast. She bequeathed a small amount to the church for the creation of a nature trail on the 43 acres that is owned by the church. The money is to go for signage, a tri-fold brochure, interpretive material etc.

Pastor Mindy Audlin and her husband Shawn have made great headway in the actual layout and construction of the trail. Joe Piazza, myself and a few other Master Naturalists went for a visit and were well impressed with the progress thus far. They have asked for our help to complete the construction of the trail and ID the plants along the route. They have also asked us to help in the design and writing of an interpretive tri-fold brochure about the trail and Hill Country ecosystems. We have talked about planting a native grass garden and a butterfly garden. Once the trail is complete, besides helping maintain it, we are to be available to give guided walks to interested folks.

Unity Church has learned from their insurance company that they can allow non-members access to the trail and they want to open it up to the public for educational and outreach programs. This would include school groups and scouting groups as well.

The area where the trail has been located is very diverse, going from grasslands dotted with various trees and forbs to a lovely riparian zone with the associated flora and fauna. Its length is about 1/2 mile, with spots to sit and enjoy views along the way.

-- Jamie Kinscherff, HCMN Contact;

[Jamie@kinscherff.com](mailto:Jamie@kinscherff.com)

### *Ringtail Ridge Trail*

#### HCMN PROJECT #424

Starting March 4<sup>th</sup> and every Saturday during March and April San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance's trail crew will meet at 8:30 am at Ringtail Ridge, where work is underway to extend the primary hike and

bike trail. Untrained? Unskilled? No problem: training happens with short briefings on site and one minute sessions while work progresses. Reading sources are available for those who want to know more about design and construction. If you can make only a few of the sessions, that's fine. We work for 2 hours and then go for the coffee shop. Bring strong gloves and eye protection if you have them. Contact [tobe@austin.rr.com](mailto:tobe@austin.rr.com) or <http://www.smgreenbelt.org/NewsEvents.htm>.

## *Wildscape Garden, San Marcos Nature Center*

### HCMN PROJECT # 405

The extended dry weather has not held back bluebonnet seedlings. Although fewer in numbers than last year, they are making flower stalks and a good rain should again give us the most colorful display in the Nature Center.

We have a few pink evening primroses in flower, but they are much sparser than in 2005. The hedge parsley, however, is flourishing, and there's no stopping dandelions, sow thistles, wild geranium, medicago, red henbit, bermudagrass, and similar invasive plants. We have to pull up these aggressive invaders to control them.

We welcome contributions of seeds or seedlings of annual and perennial wildflowers to improve the diversity of our garden.

## *Brown Headed Cowbird Trapping at Balcones Canyonlands*

**Goal:** The goal of this project is to incorporate volunteer assistance to expand the number of traps in operation beyond what biologists could manage in conjunction with golden-cheeked warbler surveys.

**Date:** This project requires a commitment of participation from mid-March through June.

**Time:** Traps need to be visited 3 times per week. A team of volunteers can share the responsibility for one trap. For example, a team of 3 individuals can each take one visit per week. Alternatively, biologists can share the responsibility for a trap with 1 or more volunteers if the volunteers cannot commit to a full week of visits.

**Location:** Various properties within Balcones Canyonlands Preserve

### **The Details:**

Staff biologists need assistance in operating brown-headed cowbird traps during the breeding season of the golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos. Operating a cowbird trap as a volunteer requires:

- \* Providing your own transportation to the property upon which the trap is located;
- \* Following protocols for security and safety;
- \* Walking to trap that may be a short hike from any drivable road;
- \* Entering the trap to replenish seed and water;
- \* Visually checking the trap to make sure it has not been damaged;
- \* Contacting the biologist managing that property when new cowbirds are in the trap.

No specific skills are required. Volunteers will be trained either in one group or by the biologist managing the property with a trap.

Contact: Gail McGlamery, 512-263-6347; fax 512-263-1276; [gail.mcglamery@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:gail.mcglamery@ci.austin.tx.us)

## **STATE NEWS**

### *Texas Monarch Watch*

Although the number of monarchs overwintering in Mexico this year is higher than last year (2.19 hectares), we still don't have a good idea of the overall size of the population. Reports from those who have visited various monarch colonies in Mexico indicate that while at least one colony is larger than normal, others are normal in size or smaller than usual. Even though the information available at this time is fragmentary, it would appear that the total population will be within the range of 5-7 hectares. If true, the size of the population will fit the predictions made in the July 2005 Update. Hopefully, we will be able to cite the official measurements generated by the efforts of Eduardo Rendon and his crew from World Wildlife Fund Mexico next month.

The winter conditions at the overwintering sites in Mexico have been normal to slightly above normal. The daytime highs through much of January have been in the low 70s rather than the more normal high 60s. The good news is that there have been no hard freezes or winter storms. Looking ahead into February the prospect for storms seems to be low -

assuming the jet stream doesn't dip well into the eastern Pacific.


-- By Chip Taylor. The complete web version of this update is available at:  
<http://www.MonarchWatch.org/update/2005/0131.html#11>.

## Local News

### *Wimberley Butterfly Watch*

Butterflies observed on mild days during January included Southern Dogface, Little Yellow, Sleepy Orange, Dainty Sulphur, Gray Hairstreak, Great Purple Hairstreak, American Snout, Gulf Fritillary, Variegated Fritillary, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, American Lady, Common Buckeye, and Checkered Skipper. The Gulf Fritillaries appeared to be the last ragged, stunted survivors of the 2005 crop, and they disappeared by the end of the month.

February additions to the list included Pipevine Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, Lyside Suphur, Juniper Hairstreak, Henry's Elfin, and occasional brown skippers.

Apart from Agarita and Rosemary, and a few salvias, nectar plants seem in short supply compared to last February. Anemones and four-nerve daisies are scarce, for example, and dry weather has discouraged Texas Mountain Laurel from blooming in the hills. 

## Links to Chapter Sponsors and Partners

### *Sponsors:*

Texas Master Naturalist - State Website -  
[masternaturalist.tamu.edu](http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu)

Texas Cooperative Extension – [agextension.tamu.edu/](http://agextension.tamu.edu/)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department –  
[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/)

### *Partners:*

Bamberger Ranch --

<http://www.bambergerranch.org/workshops.htm>

LBJ Wildflower Center -- [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)

Native Plant Society of Texas – [www.npsot.org/](http://www.npsot.org/)

San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance --

<http://www.smgreenbelt.org>.

San Marcos River Foundation –

<http://www.sanmarcosriver.org>.

Texas Cooperative Extension – Sea Grant Program – [texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu/](http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu/)

Texas Forest Service –  
[txforestservice.tamu.edu/](http://txforestservice.tamu.edu/)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers –  
[www.usace.army.mil/](http://www.usace.army.mil/)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – [www.fws.gov/](http://www.fws.gov/)

U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service  
– [.nracs.usda.gov/](http://.nracs.usda.gov/)