

T E X A S



# THE HAYS HUMM

MONTHLY NEWS, EVENTS & ARTICLES of the  
HAYS COUNTY CHAPTER  
TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS



FEBRUARY 2018

right here at home -- in the Hill Country

## CHAPTER NEWS

### CHAPTER BOARD

President – Anne Child  
Vice President - Mary O’Hara  
Secretary - Tracy Mock  
Treasurer - Larry Calvert  
Past President - Beth Ramey  
Dixie Camp – State Representative and  
Volunteer Projects Coordinator  
Gordon Linam –TPWD Advisor  
Training Coordinator – Mark Wojcik  
Advanced Training - Beverly Gordon  
Calendar - Beverly Gordon  
Historian – Dana Martensen  
Webmaster and Membership Chair -  
Jane Dunham  
Outreach & Marketing - Art Arizpe  
Outreach Events - Roxana Donegan  
Host Committee - Mary Dow Ross  
Newsletter Editors – Tom Jones, Betsy  
Cross  
Willett Project - Candy Spitzer

### MN BOARD MEETING

When: Thu, February 8, 6:30pm – 8:30pm  
Where: 200 Stillwater Drive Wimberley, TX  
78676. Click [map](#) for location details

### CHAPTER MEETING

Field Trip in place of Chapter Meeting,  
When: Sat. Feb 24 @ 9:45am  
Where: TX Museum of Science & Technology  
RSVP: Please rsvp to Mary O’Hara at  
[vp@haysmn.org](mailto:vp@haysmn.org) or [512.354.5878](tel:512.354.5878)  
Cost: \$8 per person

**NEWSLETTER NEWS:** The Chapter has a new  
Newsletter Team. Thanks to Tom Jones and  
Betsy Cross for volunteering to fill this role.  
And a big THANKS to Hope Shimek for 3  
years of sending out the news.

**TRAINING COMMITTEE:** needs someone to  
put together this years' class directory. We  
will have the pictures and information but need  
someone with computer skills to assemble and  
print the directories (at least assemble the file).  
**Mark Wojcik:** [mark.zima@yahoo.com](mailto:mark.zima@yahoo.com) or  
**Dick McBride:** [docdik@mygrande.net](mailto:docdik@mygrande.net)

**Last Call for 2017 MN Hours** - Members  
have until February 15<sup>th</sup> to report hours to VMS

**Advanced Training Calendar** – Click  
the link below for more opportunities

<http://haysmn.org/calendar-at.html>

**Requirements for Performing Volunteer  
Service** with Master Naturalists on page 3.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE  
ANNE CHILD

Photo by Eva Frost

Last fall Dixie Camp, who was on the nominating committee, reached out to me and asked if I would serve as president of Hays County Master Naturalists. She knew I enjoyed being Vice President before. She also knew I am a regional coordinator for a non-profit lobby organization and serve as an officer of Dripping Springs Toastmasters. On paper I was well qualified. But I was feeling a little bit overbooked already so I thought about it for a week. When she called back I told her, quite tentatively and without much enthusiasm: "Sure."

At the chapter gala in November, I listened in awe. First was the graduation ceremony of the 2017 class of "The Nighthawks." Many of them were well pedigreed *before* starting the class. Their passion and accomplishments last year were impressive. Then chapter members were recognized for their hours of service, their dedication to the environment, and their deep and wide expertise.

I was humbled. I felt inadequate. I felt overwhelmed. How was I, a former software engineer who talked to and was often out done by my computer, going to lead these impressive volunteers? Then it struck me that it's the president's job to hold the chapter together administratively to enable these volunteers to achieve their greatness. I didn't have to be an expert in all aspects of Nature. Whew!

The Mission of Master Naturalists is to "develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas

Why? Because we recognize there is a Need: "Many communities and organizations rely on such citizen volunteers for implementing youth education programs; for operating parks, nature centers, and natural areas; and for providing leadership in local natural resource conservation efforts. In fact, a short supply of dedicated and well-informed volunteers is often cited as a limiting factor for community-based conservation efforts." I enjoy being one of those "well-informed volunteers" (though I wish I could retain that information better sometimes) and serving with others who care. It's just a lot of fun. Now, with enthusiasm, I am happy to give back to the organization.

What is my vision for this year? It is for us together as Hays County Master Naturalists, to empower an atmosphere of learning and action for our volunteers. The citizens and visitors to Hays County will encounter and appreciate our natural environment and then understand our collective role and responsibility in healing and creating a more sustainable world.

Yep, it will take all of us. But knowing the wonderful and talented people in this organization and working with the dedicated board members and training committee, it's going to be a great year.




**Tom Jones**

Class of 2017-The Nighthawks


**Betsy Cross**

Class of 2017-The Nighthawks

## MEET THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

About Myself – Enjoyed a long professional career as a consulting Geologist-Hydrogeologist and Project Manager with General Electric. Moved to Wimberley in 2013, retired in 2017. Master Naturalist (Nighthawks) with Texas Waters Specialist certification and a Citizen Scientist with the Meadows Center Stream Team. As part of my local volunteer efforts, I am a member of the Guide Teams at Jacobs Well and Westcave Preserve.

You May Not Know - Foodie. Do all the cooking in our house.

FAV Master Naturalist Activity - Guiding at Jacobs Well & Westcave Preserve.

About Myself – Currently working full time as a free-lance healthcare IT consultant. I travel regularly for my current project, which takes me to Maryland, Kentucky, or Indiana at least monthly. I am also from the Nighthawks class of 2017 and enjoy volunteering at Jacobs Well in the Nature Center.

You May Not Know - I moved to San Marcos in 2015 so my grandson could live with me and attend Texas State University, where he is pursuing a degree in Physical Therapy.

FAV Master Naturalist Activity - I recently built and replaced several damaged bluebird boxes at Jacobs Well in preparation for the 2018 nesting season. This year I am taking lead on monitoring and documenting the 9 nest boxes on that 80-acre property.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Please send Tom or Betsy your events, articles, Chapter News, PHOTOS and other monthly news. Promote your project, get Volunteer help, share an interesting article or report back on your Field Trip or Site Visit. The Newsletter is for all Hays County Master Naturalists and your input is vital to a great Newsletter.

**Tom Jones** - 281.380.2802 (talk & text) - <mailto:wimberleytom@gmail.com>

**Betsy Cross** - 817.688.3833 [betsy.cross@sbcglobal.net](mailto:betsy.cross@sbcglobal.net)

## Requirements for Performing Volunteer Service with Master Naturalists

It is necessary for all Master Naturalist members to pass a Criminal Background Check in order to be approved to work on MN projects. This check is done by either AgriLife Extension or by Texas Parks and Wildlife.

This process has been hampered for some continuing members of Hays MN because they did not enter a birth date (needed for identification) and/or they didn't check the boxes giving their consent. If you heard from me that there is a problem with your CBC, please respond with the requested information.

If you want to see if you have already done this, go to "Edit My Profile" at the bottom of the Welcome page in VMS (the online spot where you submit your hours of MN service). Check to make sure you have given a positive response to the three spots where you "accept these terms." Continuing to the second page, check to make sure your birthdate is given. If you don't enter something here, the default birth date becomes Aug. 1, 1901 (I don't think we have any MNs who were really born on that date). When you get to page 5, click on "Accept and Finish," and the process is finished on your side. Questions? Please feel free to contact me at [membership@haysmn.org](mailto:membership@haysmn.org).

Jane Dunham –  
 Membership Chair, Hays MN

## THANK YOU HOPE SHIMEK

As I hand off my position as newsletter editor, I find myself starting to miss it a bit. However, I know the new co-editors, Tom Jones and Betsy Cross will be amazing! They both have a great enthusiasm that I am sure will be apparent in the future editions of The Hays Humm. I am thankful to have been involved in our Chapter the way I have been, as it provided a great way to keep up and in touch with everything.

I enjoyed the newsletters as a whole, but my favorite contribution was sharing my nature photos with everyone, which I will continue to do. Perhaps I will even decide to write an article or poem here and there. In the future I hope to be able to participate in more outdoor volunteer activities than I have been. Here is to an awesome Texas Master Naturalist Chapter, a fantastic new newsletter team and a little bit of change! See you out there.

EDITORS NOTE: It will take 2 of us to fill Hope's role publishing the Newsletter.



Hope T. Shimek  
Class of 2014, The Monarchs

### Upcoming Texas Waters Webinar-Thursday, February 15th, 2018, 6:00pm-7:00pm CST "Urban Stream/Bayou Management/Challenges"

Greetings everyone, - The next Texas Waters Webinar is only two weeks away! The February 15th webinar will cover small stream dynamics, stream urbanization, and potential projects related to managing urban streams. The webinar relates to material from Chapter 8: Human Caused Instruments of Watershed Change of the Texas Waters: Exploring Water and Watersheds curriculum. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/water-education/texaswatersprogram>

If you would like to register to attend the webinar, click the link below. If you are unable to attend the live presentation, the recorded webinar and associated PowerPoint will be available for download from the Texas Waters Specialist Page after the event.

Weblink: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2083110927904056835>

About the speaker: Mateo Scoggins has worked in stream ecology for the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department for over 20 years. He helped develop a robust biological monitoring program and has focused the latter part of his career on solutions to water quality problems in central Texas streams, including a ban on coal tar sealants, riparian restoration, and urban storm water management. He has an MS in Aquatic Biology from Texas State and is a Certified Senior Ecologist with the Ecological Society of America.

### Qualifies for TX Waters Specialist AT



## Bluebird Project 702 for 2018

*Submitted by Bonnie Tull*

Project 702 is a perfect one for people who are interested in birds and particularly Bluebirds, as they can work independently as much or as little as they like. It primarily involves mounting Bluebird nest boxes in likely habitat and then monitoring them through the spring and summer months to optimize the success of Bluebirds and any native hole nesters that might also use the nest boxes. Results can be reported to the Cornell Nestwatch program for even more beneficial scientific effect. Bluebird nest box trails were started all over the country back in the 1950s, when Bluebird numbers were found to be in sharp decline due to the competition from English House Sparrows and the loss of old fence posts that provided nest holes. Since then Bluebird numbers have recovered significantly. There are actually three species of Bluebirds all in the Thrush family: Eastern, Mountain, and Western, but the only ones that nest in Central Texas (with few exceptions) are the Easterns.



One Christmas while vacationing in Fredericksburg, I spotted a flock of Bluebirds and was charmed by their beautiful color, sweet song, butterfly like flight patterns, and cooperative social behavior. I was hooked forever and started a nest box trail where we were living in Maryland.

On moving back to Texas, I wanted to attract Bluebirds to my own property and began to put up nest boxes in a trail from good habitat at the front of our neighborhood leading a couple of miles to my house at the back of the neighborhood. I feel that the trail inside the neighborhood has been wildly successful. Bluebirds are here where they were not before.

I've enjoyed designing and building different styles of nest boxes, and I've altered some commercially available boxes for our Texas heat attempting to counter it by adding more roof shade and ventilation. The main things to consider, when building or buying an Eastern Bluebird nest box, are the size of the hole entrance, the minimum diameter of the floor space, and the minimum distance from the floor to the hole opening. They also need to be easily opened for cleaning and monitoring, and it's best to baffle them against predators. The other factor affecting Bluebird attraction is the surrounding habitat. It needs to be as open as possible. They love to nest in short grass fields or in treed areas that are open underneath, as they are primarily ground insect eaters tending to perch in clear areas like wires on fences and power lines or on the lower branches of trees, where they can easily see the ground. We can have Bluebirds nesting here from February through July, and they are capable, in a good year, of producing three broods of 5 fledglings each.

For more detailed information, I recommend that you consult the several excellent web sites regarding Bluebirds: [sialia.org](http://sialia.org), [nabluebirdsociety.org](http://nabluebirdsociety.org), [texasbluebirdsociety.org](http://texasbluebirdsociety.org), [nestwatch.org](http://nestwatch.org). I've written documents encapsulating much of what you will learn on those web sites, so if you are interested, I can email them to you. I also have plans available for one of the PVC nest boxes I designed. Please call or contact me at 512-663-2092 or email: [bonehead.tull@gmail.com](mailto:bonehead.tull@gmail.com), if you would like additional info or explanation. And happy Bluebirding!



## Discovering Spiny Hackberry

*Marilyn Brister*

I like to know the names of trees, shrubs, and grasses on my rural property, and I thought I had some acquaintance with most of them after living here for 20 years. However, last May I was walking along my road and noticed something that I had never seen before. Orange berries brought my focus to a bush that I had walked past many times; I had just thought of this bush as “that sticker bush”. I had never seen it with orange berries. When I tried to look for its picture in various tree books, I did not find a match. A fellow Master Naturalist took on the challenge of finding it and came up with the result of spiny hackberry.

Spiny hackberry (*Celtis ehrenbergiana*), sometimes called desert hackberry (and other names), is a thorny bush that can grow up to 15 feet high. It has small, somewhat rough green leaves, each leaf having three prominent veins and the leaf toothed or sparsely toothed along the margins. The leaves are simple, arranged alternately along the stem up to 2 inches long and ½ to 1 inch wide. Its bark is smooth and whitish gray. I found this bush

growing under a medium size mesquite tree. I found another spiny hackberry under another mesquite tree about 10 feet away and another under a large mesquite tree about 100 feet away, all of these growing in Del Rio clay. According to various websites this bush can grow in a variety of soils.

According to the website <http://rangeplants.tamu.edu>, this shrub provides excellent food and cover for wildlife. The fruit is eaten by a number of birds and mammals, and the leaves provide food for deer. It is also useful for erosion control and in landscaping can be useful as a screen, background, or informal hedge. The North American Butterfly Association names it as a good food source for Emperor, American Snout and Red-bordered Metalmark caterpillars, and writes that it is somewhat attractive as a nectar source. February through May the plant produces inconspicuous small white flowers. I have never noticed them, but will watch for them this spring.

The spiny hackberry is not like its cousin, the common hackberry tree, which has brittle wood and makes many berries which later come up as undesirable saplings in gardens. Various native American groups used the hard and flexible wood of the spiny hackberry for making tools, cradle boards and bows. The berries, or drupes, were often eaten off the bush or were ground up for food. I think this is an attractive and unusual plant unless it is growing where you do not want a thorny bush.



## WIMBERLEY OUTDOOR EDUCATORS

Water Fair at Jacob's Well Elementary School - January 10, 2019.

The Wimberley Outdoor Educator team put on a Water Fair at Jacobs Well Elementary School for the fifth graders. Master Naturalists manned display booths throughout the School. Each booth highlighted an important element of water and how it impacts our lives. A list of the education stations is below along with the Master Naturalists presenting the topic.

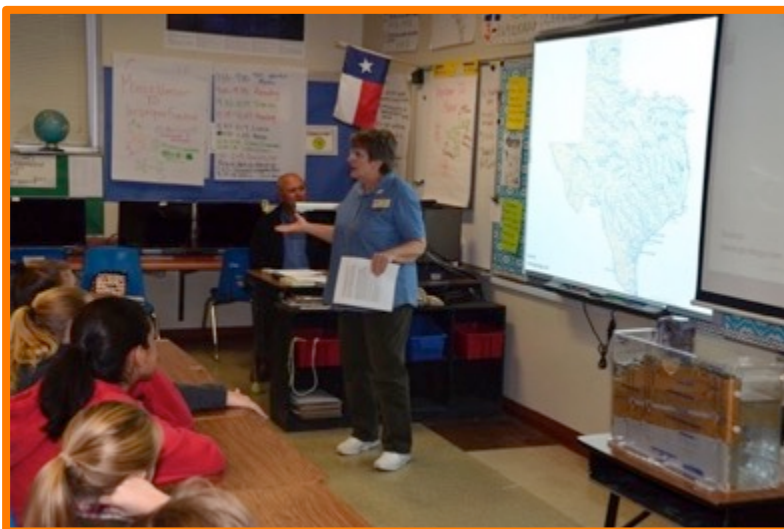


Where in the World is the water -- Jackie Mattice, Jean Richmond, Leigh Peterson

Aquifers -- Paula Glover, Hiram Perez, Sarah Carlisle

Watershed--Susan Evans, Tom Jones, Helen Foster. Also working this station was Gracy Belle Broussard who is not a Master Naturalist.

Water Game—Irene Bonde, Keith Collignon, Becky Denton, Betty Mac, Connie Boltz



A big Thank You to Jane Dunham who took these great photos

## ADVANCE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

### Cypress Creek Watershed Walk - Jacobs Well Natural Area

Tom Jones - Hays Co. MN 281.380.2802 (talk & text) - [wimberleytom@gmail.com](mailto:wimberleytom@gmail.com)

#### 2018 Schedule

February 16 - Friday 10:00-11:30a

March 17 - Saturday 10:00-11:30a

April 28 - Saturday 10:00-11:30a

May 19 - Saturday 10:00-11:30a

The focus of the Watershed Walk is on the geology; stream characteristics and groundwater flow along Cypress Creek at the Jacobs Well Natural Area in Wimberley. These are the forces which shaped Hays Co. and the TX Hill Country. The Jacobs Well Watershed Walk will characterize the Cypress Creek watershed and how it works. It will examine the Geology, tracing the many water pathways and how they shape and influence the watershed. The tour will highlight the unique underground system that created Jacobs Well and provide some of the interesting history of this Wimberley icon. The hike will finish with a discussion of the water issues facing Hays County and the future.



There is high level of interest regarding the Cypress Creek Watershed and Jacobs Well. The Jacobs Well Natural Area will offer watershed walks to both the public and Master Naturalists once a month from February to May 2018. This hike is available for MN or Texas Waters Specialist Advanced Training credit (one time only). Advance reservations for the Watershed walks are recommended. For more information or to make a reservation please contact Tom Jones.







For More Information click this link: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>



**How many birds will you find?**

**21st Annual Great Backyard Bird Count  
February 16-19, 2018**

**Join in!** Count birds in your backyard, local park, or wherever you spot a bird, and submit your observations online.

**[birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org)**

Cedar Waxwing  
Photo: Jane Tomer/GBBC



Sponsored in part by:





## Message from Dixie Camp

Hello Hays County Master Naturalist Naturalists. We have been invited to participate in the following volunteer opportunity and advanced training opportunity sponsored by the Comal County Master Gardener Association. For the volunteer shifts, Volunteer Service hours may be reported for Hays County Master Naturalist Direct Outreach, Project # 704. For the mandatory training session, two hours of Advanced Training may be earned. If you have any questions, please call Dixie Camp at 512-517-3111

### INSECT EXPO 2018

February 22, 2018: All volunteers working with students at Insect Expo February 27 - 28, 2018 must attend mandatory training at the AgriLifeExtension Office Classroom at 325 Resource Drive in New Braunfels.



**SIGN UP INFO:** Volunteers must sign up for a morning or afternoon training session with Mary Helen Phillips at: <mailto:maryhelenophillips@usa.net>

**TRAINING SESSIONS:** Training sessions are 9:30 am to 11:30 am or 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Insect Expo: McKenna Event Center - 801 West San Antonio Street, New Braunfels, TX 78130  
Volunteers may sign up for a morning or afternoon shift with Mary Helen Phillips at [maryhelenophillips@usa.net](mailto:maryhelenophillips@usa.net).

February 26, 2018: set up 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

February 27, 2018: volunteer stations. shift 1 8:30 am to 11:30 am shift 2 10:30 am to 1:30 pm

February 28, 2018: volunteer stations shift 1 8:30 am - 11:30 am shift 2 10:30 am - 1:30 pm

## Wimberley Birding Society

Wimberley Birding Society is pleased to present raptor expert Steve Hoffman as the speaker for our next meeting, which will be on Feb. 19 at 10 am at the Wimberley Community Center.

**Master Naturalists are invited to attend this program on hawk migration and claim one hour of AT.**

**Steve Hoffman** began his career as a federal Wildlife Biologist, working for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in SE Arizona (1978-1980), earning his M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from Utah State University in 1979, and then worked as an Endangered Species Specialist for the US Fish & Wildlife Service in Albuquerque (1980-1987). In 1986 he founded HawkWatch International (HWI), a not-for-profit with a mission to study and conserve hawks, eagles and other birds of prey in western North America. In 2000 he left HWI and returned to his birth state of Pennsylvania to become Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Pennsylvania. He moved to Bozeman, Montana in 2004, and served as Executive Director of Montana Audubon from 2006-2016. After his retirement in 2016, he founded Merlin Birding & Nature Tours. Steve has authored 40 scientific papers/book chapters on raptors and other wildlife-related topics, and has given hundreds of presentations on raptors to audiences throughout the U.S.

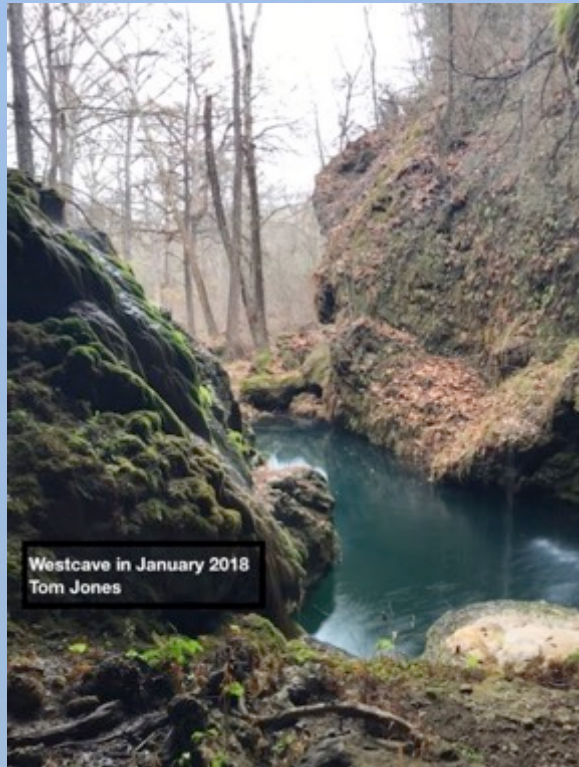
## Master Naturalist Projects Activate Jacob's Well Natural Area

*taken from the Wimberley valley watershed Association-Watershed News*

Thanks to Master Naturalist volunteers and County staff, Jacob's Well Natural Area saw many improvements in 2017 for both the Jacob's Well Nature Center (JWNC) and surrounding area, providing a much richer experience for visitors. The Center has been painted and refreshed with new photos and exhibits and a continuously playing video showing features and conditions within the well. The Restoration Rangers and staff have cleaned out the landscaping around the building, refurbished the keyhole garden, and installed a rain garden that absorbs overflow from the rainwater harvesting cisterns.

These features assist the Jacob's Well Interpretive Guides (JWIGs) with interpretation of the site and demonstration of water conservation techniques. Without the Nature Center, displays, videos and enthusiastic volunteers, many visitors would miss the stories about Jacob's Well and its importance to the Wimberley Valley and beyond.





**GOT SOME GOOD SHOTS:** Submit them to the Newsletter Team and we will post in the next edition.



### Hays MN Forum

Join the Forum! It's a great way to connect with fellow naturalists, ask questions, and learn from each other. Click the Forum link.

<https://groups.google.com/forum/!forum/haysmn>

Contact [web@haysmn.org](mailto:web@haysmn.org) if you have suggestions or questions!

### Volunteer Opportunities

Watch your e-mails for upcoming opportunities! Check out the Projects Calendar for more information.

New volunteer idea form.

<http://haysmn.org/proposalform-vol.html>

### Volunteer Hours!

Don't forget about the upcoming opportunities like volunteering for the Butterfly Festival!

Watch your e-mails for opportunities!

What have you done this spring? Write an article, share a photo and send it to the Newsletter Team!. It qualifies for Volunteer Time.

[Tom Jones](#)  
[Betsy Cross](#)

WE ARE ON FACEBOOK!  
Find us, like us, share with us!



[Facebook Link](#)

Happy  
Valentine's  
Day

## Sponsors



## AGENCIES OF INTEREST

### Bamberger Ranch

[bambergerranch.org](http://bambergerranch.org)

### Native Plant Society of Texas

[www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org)

### San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance

[www.smgreenbelt.org](http://www.smgreenbelt.org)

### San Marcos River Foundation

[www.sanmarcosriver.org](http://www.sanmarcosriver.org)

### Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

[www.tceq.state.tx.us](http://www.tceq.state.tx.us)

### Texas Outdoor Women's Network

[www.townsanmarcos.org](http://www.townsanmarcos.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

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

### Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority

[www.gbra.org](http://www.gbra.org)

## Partners

### Texas Parks & Wildlife --

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>

### Texas Master Naturalists -- <http://txmn.org/>

### Texas AgriLife --

<http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/>

### Hill Country Alliance --

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

### Wildlife Society at TX State --

<http://www.bio.txstate.edu/Graduate-Programs/M-S--Wildlife-Ecology-Program-/Student-chapter/>

### Dark Skies -- <http://idatexas.org/>

### Hill Country Photography Club --

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

### YMCA Dripping Springs-

<https://www.austinyymca.org/branches/springs-family-ymca>