



SEPTEMBER 2018

# THE HAYS HUMM

Newsletter of the Hays County Chapter  
Texas Master Naturalist



**Tom Jones & Betsy Cross**

Delivering the News







## MEET YOUR MASTER NATURALISTS



### **Christine Byrne**

**About Myself:** I am a wife, mom of 3 kids, registered nurse and an active master naturalist since 2011. My happy place is outdoors and in nature. As the master naturalist coordinator for Blue Hole, I spend most Wednesdays from October - April working in the park with a great core group of volunteers.

**You May Not Know:** I once attended a one-room public school in North Dakota that had no running water, and one teacher that taught grades 1-5. Truly little house on the prairie. My dream is to some day hike the Appalachian Trail.

**Favorite MN Activity:** Upland restoration. We are focusing now on keeping our grasslands cedar free and opening up areas where new cedar has taken over to encourage more native grass growth.

**Bird I Identify With:** Blue Bird. My son's Eagle Project was to make the Blue Bird boxes at Blue Hole. I am kinda partial to that bird. It has been a joy to monitor the boxes for the last 3 years.



### **Susan Nenney**

**About Myself:** Trips to Grandma's Louisiana farm kick-started my love of the natural world. A Masters in Public Health (UT Health Science Center at Houston) kept me working in social work, health writing and PR for 30+plus years in the big city. But a rural life kept calling, so we bought our Wimberley place. I landed a contract job in marketing at Texas Parks & Wildlife, put our property under wildlife management and joined the 2005 Master Naturalist class. That's when the fun began! I love our rural environment and being so close to nature. I'll never be an expert in that world but love being around those who are. Every day I'm reminded that "everything is connected".

**You May Not Know:** A late-career dream job with Friends of Blue Hole means my personal and philosophical interests match right up. Just like the park - it's a natural place to be.

**Favorite Master Naturalist Activity:** Love working on the Blue Hole volunteer team.

**Bird I identify With:** My heart goes out to geese and cranes migrating across the autumn skies.

# CHAPTER NEWS

## CHAPTER BOARD

President – Anne Child  
Vice President - Mary O'Hara  
Secretary - Tracy Mock  
Treasurer - Larry Calvert  
Past President - Beth Ramey  
State Representative and Volunteer  
Service Projects Director - Dixie Camp  
TPWD Advisor - Gordon Linam  
New Class Director – Mark Wojcik  
Advanced Training - Beverly Gordon  
Calendar - Beverly Gordon  
Historian – Dana Martensen  
Webmaster and Membership Director  
-Jane Dunham  
Communications Director - Art Arizpe  
Outreach Events - Roxana Donegan  
Host Committee - Mary Dow Ross  
Newsletter– Tom Jones, Betsy Cross  
Willett Project - Candy Spitzer  
Agrilife Sponsor- Jason Mangold

## **MN BOARD MEETING**

Thursday September 13, 6:30pm –  
8:30pm  
Where: Agri-Life Extension office  
200 Stillwater Drive Wimberley, TX 78676.

## **CHAPTER MEETING**

September 27, 2018  
Lutheran Church of the Resurrection  
101 W Spoke Hill in Wimberley  
6:30pm dinner & announcements  
7:00pm presentation  
Speaker: Dr. Tania Homayoun Texas  
Nature Trackers Biologist, TPWD

Goodwill donations are greatly  
appreciated to cover our food costs!  
Kindly RSVP to [vp@haysmn.org](mailto:vp@haysmn.org)  
Approved for 1 hour AT:

## **ADVANCED TRAINING CALENDAR**

Click the link below for more opportunities  
<http://haysmn.org/calendar-at.html>

## **PROJECT CALENDAR–**

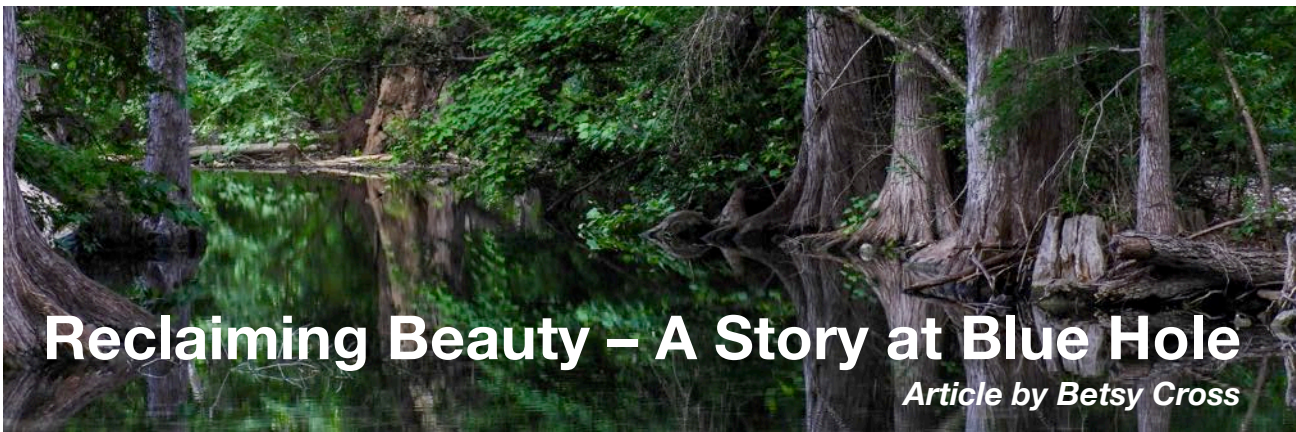
<http://www.haysmn.org/calendar-projects.html>

## **THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR PHOTOS!**

Deb Bradshaw  
Betsy Cross  
Tom Jones  
Susan Nenney  
Meagan Whitehouse

Christine Byrne  
Beverly Gordon  
Jackie Mattice  
Training Team  
Dan Zin





# Reclaiming Beauty – A Story at Blue Hole

Article by Betsy Cross

As a new resident of Hays County and recent member of HCMN, I often find myself visiting local landmarks and natural settings for the very first time. Such was the case in March when I attended the raptor demonstration by Last Chance Forever at Blue Hole and had a conversation with Susan Nenney, Executive Director of Friends of Blue Hole and a graduate of the HCMN Class of 2005. Susan subsequently met with Tom Jones and me at Blue Hole, taking us on a private tour and sharing the story of how the park came to be – a success story which started with a few inspired citizens supported by the efforts of a community of concerned leaders and our very own HCMN members.



Tom Jones and Susan Nenney

**A Brief History of Blue Hole** Originally, Blue Hole Regional Park was part of the 500-acre Dobie farmstead. The six-acre swimming hole area, under private ownership at the time, was an accessible, unsupervised, popular gathering place for locals. As the years passed, the once healthy riparian ecosystem became overused, littered, and was in serious disrepair. Then in 2003 the property went on the market. Plans were afoot to surround the deteriorating swimming hole with a 350-home residential development, complete with condos and a tourist lodge. A group of fast-acting citizens, however, jumped to the rescue, purchasing the property and eventually helping the city

raise the funds to repurchase it. Ultimately, the threat of urban sprawl that would ever-change the landscape and culture so treasured by the residents of this small community was averted. A continuing momentum to preserve and restore this unique space led to additional extraordinary action and funding for a full Master Plan created by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and a Task Force of stakeholders. The next decade saw the vision of restoration coming to fruition, and Blue Hole Regional Park in its present form was born – including a restored swimming area, paved parking, bath houses, park office, picnic area, amphitheater, playscape, upland road, volleyball, basketball, and soccer facilities, pavilion and restrooms. In addition, all lighting is dark-sky certified, and the use of cedar and stone harvested from the park itself along with the construction of a rainwater collection system have contributed to an onsite sustainable ecology.

“The thing I like most is the attention to detail...and to keep the park as close to natural as it can be. The intentional reuse of indigenous materials is one of the landmarks of this place. Old pieces of concrete are now picnic tabletops. At the pavilion, there are three corner posts that mimic the three-oak tree natural spot.”  
– Susan Nenney

## Role of HCMN in the Development and Restoration of Blue Hole

HCMNs have had a significant hand in the improvement and ongoing restoration of this recovering 126-acre property. Christine Byrne is Project Coordinator for the Blue Hole Workgroup, Project 604.

The HCMN workgroup has a very close relationship with the employed staff at Blue Hole. The work of the core volunteers includes:

- trail maintenance
- seed harvesting
- removal of invasives - Johnson grass, Ligustrum, Chinaberry
- replanting/reseeding of natives – inland sea oats, milkweed, native grasses
- maintenance of gardens at the gatehouse and playground
- upland restoration – removing young cedars, reverting to savanna, building berms to decrease run-off
- implementing fire-wise strategies – removal of dead cedar
- cedar cutting for wildlife habitat enhancement

Blue Hole also has eight bird boxes, which need to be checked weekly from February-September. Christine is proud to report that one of the boxes has routinely produced four clutches of Bluebirds each season. More than 50 Bluebirds have fledged from this single box over a three-year period.



Planting 300 antelope horn milkweed in the park in May. Helping to make Wimberley a Monarch Watch certified city



Volunteers meet on Wednesday mornings, October-April, at 8:00 AM at the ticket house  
**The first workday this fall will be on October 3<sup>rd</sup>**

“There is something for everybody! Some like to teach children, some like to educate adults, and some like the more manual work of trail maintenance, native planting, or upland restoration and removal of invasive plants.”

*Christine Byrne*



Deb Bradshaw coordinates a group of enthusiastic Master Naturalists who lead a free one-hour tour at 9:00 AM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month.

"I love to share things I've learned about this beautiful place. No booking is required. Participants just turn up at the gate to the swim area by 9:00. We cover the history of the property, its ecology, and the sustainable development of the park. We'd love to have more help with the tours!"  
*Deb Bradshaw*

Jackie Mattice coordinates the Wimberley Outdoor Educators. Each November before the Thanksgiving week of vacation, Wimberley Outdoor Educators takes all public school 7<sup>th</sup> graders to Blue Hole.

"The students circulate through three different stations: (1) a water station where they learn how the swimming hole was formed and the kind of organisms that live in the water, (2) a plant station where they learn to recognize several different plants found locally, and (3) a cliff station which focuses on the geology, including erosion, deposition, and soil formation. If you are interested in earning volunteer hours by joining our team, please reach out to me!" – *Jackie Mattice*

In 2017, Blue Hole was named "Most Improved Project" of the HCMN Chapter. As anyone who has ever participated in one of these worthy projects will tell you, there are endless opportunities to develop your skills as a Master Naturalist at Blue Hole working with some of the most experienced naturalists and experts in the State of Texas.

These diverse projects truly offer opportunities for everyone. You will be the beneficiary of these experiences, and all the while you will be adding to the expansion of the original vision of conservation and reclamation at this landmark site.

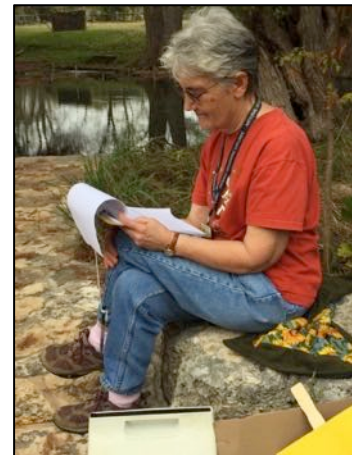
If you are inspired by the success story at Blue Hole and want to be part of a special team of volunteers, contact one of these experienced project coordinators.



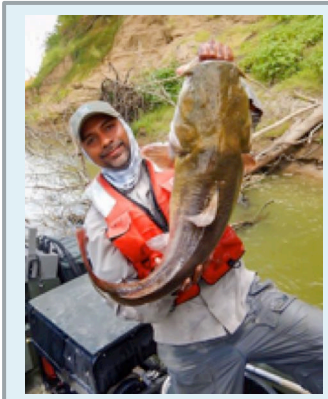
Christine Byrne  
Blue Hole Workgroup  
[texasbyrnes@yahoo.com](mailto:texasbyrnes@yahoo.com)  
512.924.7866



Deb Bradshaw  
Blue Hole Tour Guides  
[debradshaw@yahoo.com](mailto:debradshaw@yahoo.com)  
713.504.6464



Jackie Mattice  
Wimberley Outdoor  
Educators  
[texasmattice@gmail.com](mailto:texasmattice@gmail.com)



**ARCHIS GRUBH**  
Sampling on the  
Trinity River

Aquatic Biologist  
TPWD

Fish Hatchery  
San Marcos, TX



# BUG PICKIN'

Article by Tom Jones

I was at the 2017 HCMN Summer Social when I first heard about the Bug Picking Project. I was talking with Hiram Perez and he mentioned MN Project 1501 at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Fish Hatchery in San Marcos. He said that picking bugs turned out to be a lot of fun. I knew I wanted to try this out since I was looking to build some volunteer time to meet my Training Class requirement. But it was over a year later before I finally

volunteered to pick some bugs.

When I arrived early in the morning, Archis Grubh, Aquatic Biologist, introduced himself. Archis is a biologist with TPWD and does research on aquatic invertebrates and their diversity. He collects samples from the Texas Rivers and once they are back at the lab, HCMNs and other volunteers help separate the aquatic invertebrates from the sediment and detritus. Basically, the work involves picking bugs (aka aquatic invertebrates) and placing them in vials filled with ethanol. My sample was from the Guadalupe River near Hochheim, TX.



Typical Work Station

Can you find the aquatic invertebrates...and pick them out?

Once sorted, Archis identifies and counts the sorted bugs, creating a database to support a variety of statistical analyses of aquatic invertebrates. This provides key information to gauge the health of the river and the fish population. When the abundance of aquatic invertebrates goes down, it can impact fish species since invertebrates are a primary food source. Some indicator taxa of aquatic invertebrates are also used to determine water quality and the stream health.



Storage vaults where aquatic invertebrate samples are stored.



Archis estimates he spends about 30% of his time in the field and 70% in the lab. He is quick to point out the huge supporting role provided by the HCMN Team.


If you are interested in more information or volunteering you can contact Archis at :  
<mailto:Archis.Grubh@tpwd.texas.gov>

**MN PROJECT 1501**

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**San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center**

**Project Description:**  
Habitat restoration, native species studies and species control studies.

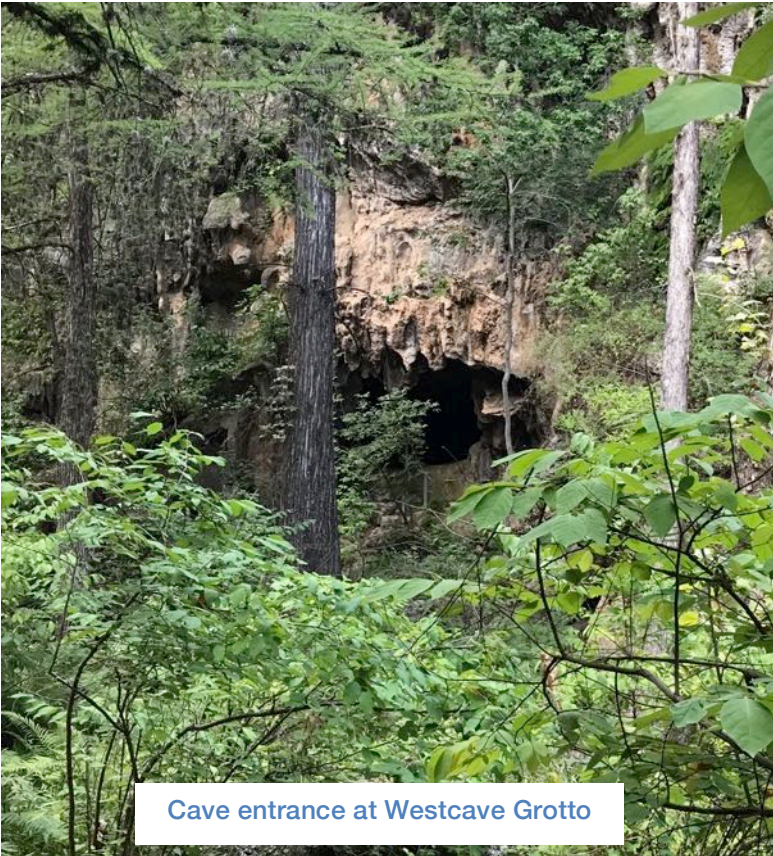


Archis Grubh and Tom Jones in the lab.





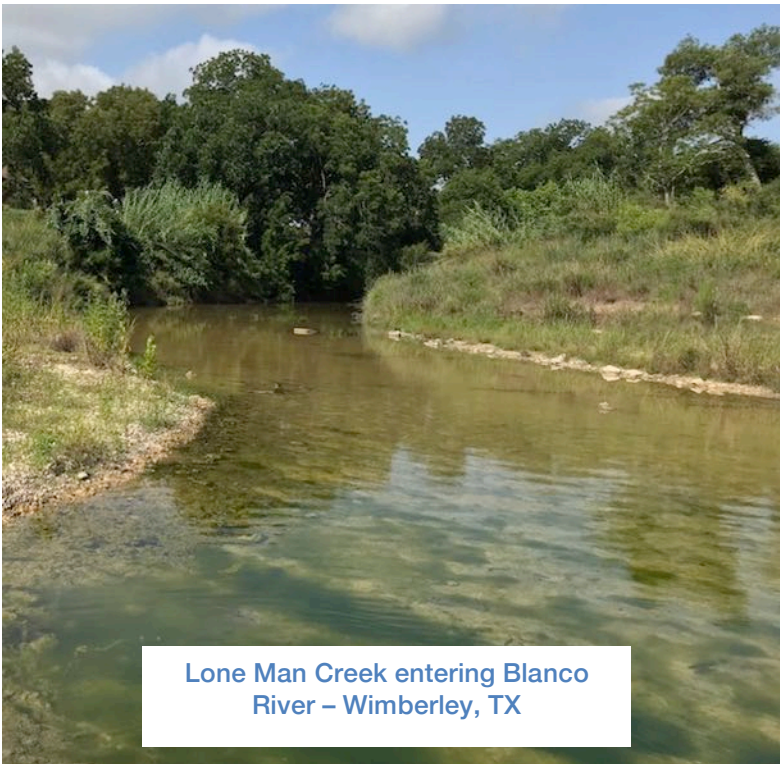
Water moccasin swimming in Westcave plunge pool



Cave entrance at Westcave Grotto



**TOM JONES  
GALLERY**



Lone Man Creek entering Blanco River – Wimberley, TX



# WHY I LOVE VOLUNTEERING AT WESTCAVE PRESERVE

Article by Beverly Gordon



Westcave Preserve Grotto

Most everyone in our Hays County Master Naturalist chapter has been on a tour of the grotto at Westcave Preserve. This field trip has been part of the training class for several years. I joined the Westcave volunteer team right after such a field trip. What I enjoy most about my volunteer time as a guide is introducing others to this Hill Country gem. Most everyone who experiences Westcave's unique ecosystems and learns about its geology, diverse flora, and human history tell me how wonderful this place is and how great the tour was for them. Visitors come from all over the United States and the world.

I also volunteer and work with the conservation team. The once a month workdays involves trail building and maintenance, invasive plant removal, and other similar outdoor activities. A current project underway now is the completion of the butterfly garden with a deer fence and planting beds that will soon show the stages of a butterfly's development. A large walk-in bird viewing

station is also planned, projected to start this fall.

Whether leading tours or working at the desk in the outdoor discovery center, introducing visitors to all the center has to offer, the hours fly by. More volunteers are needed. Please consider being a tour guide or a desk volunteer. Public tours are every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting. HaysMN hours earned can be all day or for a couple of hours. Learning the desk duties is quick and easy. Learning to be a tour guide is done at your own pace. There is a script and multiple opportunities to shadow another guide for a few tours and a final evaluation when you are ready.

If you are interested in this volunteer opportunity go to the website [westcave.org](http://westcave.org) and click the menu option "Getting Involved". I will also be happy to answer any questions you might have. I can be reached at <mailto:atcom@haysmn.org>.

**Beverly Gordon, HaysMN AT Director**



Beverly at Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center.



Children learning about movement of the Sun at Westcave Preserve

## MN PROJECT 913 Westcave Preserve

*Started in 2009*

### Project Description:

Habitat restoration, trail building & maintenance, leading tours, desk duties.

2017 VT hours = 1287  
Rank #2



**Hays  
County  
Master  
Naturalists  
at work**




**2018 SUMMER REUNION  
August 11, 2018  
HCMNs Get Together**



T E X A S  
**Dixie Camp**  
NATURALIST




**Christine Byrne – Blue Hole Project**

**SUMMER REUNION**

Your Newsletter Team, along with almost 100 Master Naturalists attended the HCMN Summer Reunion. Betsy was supporting Bonnie Tull at her bluebird booth along with a display of DIY birdhouses. Tom was giving demos of the new Chapter Website. The attendance at the annual event totaled 114, which included 98 MNs. This represents an increase in attendance of over 10% from the 2017 event. Michelle Camara was the speaker and she made a great presentation on her work as founder of the Southern Wildlife Rehab Center. All in attendance had an opportunity to pet a skunk, possum, bat, toad and more. A big Thank You to all whose efforts made the event a success.



**Michelle Camara**  
Founder  
Southern Wildlife Rehab

**Hays MN  
Web Site**



Coming online soon!



**Dick McBride – TMN Service Award for 5000 hours**





Bluebirds! Bonnie Tull & Betsy Cross



Paul, Tom, Beverly  
Westcave Team Selfie



Quincy Kennedy-Jacobs Well



Sarah Carlisle & Mel Seib at WOE Booth.



Paul Vickery – Education Director Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center

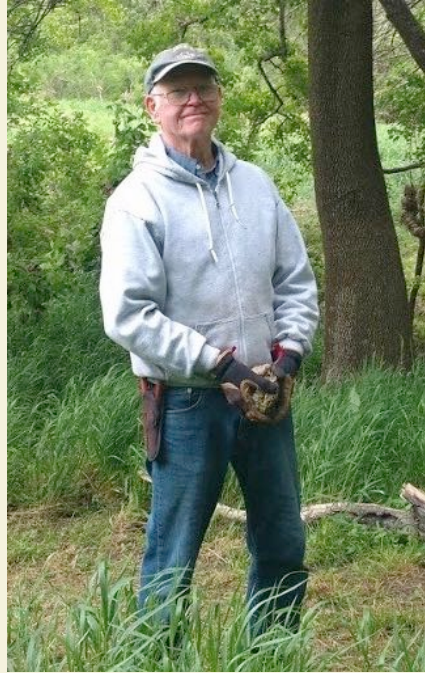


Tom Jones & Jaime Kinscherft  
Canyon George Guides



Social time during a lunch of Miss Reds Poppy Seed Chicken





**DICK McBRIDE**  
**5000 hour Service Award**

**Making a difference for Texas Natural  
Resources in San Marcos, Hays County and the  
State.**

**CONGRATULATIONS**



Meagan Whitehouse  
Gallery





# VOLUNTEER HOURS vs. PROJECT

2018 Through end of July

Article by Tom Jones

Data from Anne Child

Rank	Proj.	Category	VT
1	501	HCMN Training Committee	815
2	401	Administrative	787
3	602	Emily Anne Theater	709
4	603	Jacobs Well	624
5	406	LBJ Wildflower Center	526
6	426	Austin Water Utility	431
7	424	San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance	420
8	1501	San Marcos Aquatic Resources Ctr.	417
9	405	San Marcos Discovery Center	304
10	1108	Light Pollution Education & Outreach	290
11	803	Hays County Rainfall Project	279
12	1701	Gault School of Archeological Research	277
13	704	HCMN Outreach	269
14	809	Wimberley Outdoor Educators	248
15	407	San Marcos River Foundation	228
16	604	Blue Hole	224
17	701	Great Backyard Bird Count	213
18	1010	Charro Ranch Part	211
19	802	Blanco Watershed Water Quality Monitoring	183
20	403	Texas Parks & Wildlife	147

## 5 Takeaways on VT Data

1. Total VT for first half of 2018 = 8588 hrs.
2. The top 10 projects accounted for 5,322 VT hours for a 62% total.
3. Projects ranked 11-20 accumulated 2226 VT hours.
4. Total VT hours for the top 20 projects listed accounted for 7,548 hours. This amounts to an 88% share of all VT through the end of July.
5. Projects located in the Wimberley area had 23% of VT time as compared to San Marcos projects which came in at 16%.

## VT Hours by Training Class Year

Year	# Volunteers	VT, hrs	Members with 40+ VT hrs.
2018	40	1028	10
2017	19	1377	10
2016	13	918	7
2015	10	384	4
2014	8	395	1
2013	9	1163	7
2012	9	217	2
2011	9	476	5
2010	7	1073	5
2009	4	377	4
2008	3	126	3
2007	3	280	2
2006	4	210	1
2005	6	136	
2004	2	161	1
2003	3	102	1
2002	1	152	2
2001			
2000			
1999	3	49	

The Top 5 ranked Training Class's for highest VT midway through 2018 are:

Class Yr.	VT hrs.
1. 2017	1377 hrs.
2. 2013	1163 hrs.
3. 2010	1073 hrs.
4. 2018	1028 hrs.
5. 2016	918 hrs.

The above top 5 Classes account for 5560 hrs.



**Cypress Creek Watershed Walk – Fall Schedule  
Jacobs Well Natural Area  
Wimberley, Texas**

The focus of the Watershed Walk is on the geology, stream characteristics and groundwater flow along Cypress Creek within the Jacobs Well Natural Area. These are the forces that shaped Hays Co. and the TX Hill Country. During the Walk you will take a close look at the Cypress Creek watershed, how it works and the important role it plays in the Wimberley Valley. We will examine the creek bed tracing the many water pathways and their contribution to the watershed. The tour highlights the unique underground cave system that created Jacobs Well and the interesting history of this Wimberley icon. The hike finishes with a discussion of the water

resource issues in Wimberley and Hays County.

There is high level of interest regarding Cypress Creek and Jacobs Well. The Jacobs Well Natural Area will offer watershed walks to the Public once a month from September to

December 2018. For Master Naturalists the hike qualifies for Advanced Training or Texas Waters Specialist credit.



Advance reservations for the Watershed walks are recommended.

**For more information or to sign up contact:  
Tom Jones  
281.380.2802  
<mailto:wimberleytom@gmail.com>**

**2018 Fall Schedule**

September 21	Friday	10:00-11:30a
October 20	Saturday	10:00-11:30a
November 16	Friday	10:00-11:30a
December 8	Saturday	10:00-11:30a





## VMS Review - Posting of Volunteer and Advanced Training Hours:

Volunteer project numbers and descriptions are found on the website at this link: <http://www.haysmn.org/currentprojects.pdf>.

Service opportunity category codes & description are found on the website at this link. [http://www.haysmn.org/TXMN Federal Categories.pdf](http://www.haysmn.org/TXMN%20Federal%20Categories.pdf)

There has been a great deal of confusion in the past between the category codes:

RM- Natural Resource Management and  
NPA-Nature/Public Access.

For assistance, please review this link for detailed examples to distinguish between the two.

When reporting service, the date defaults to the current date and usually needs to be changed.

- AT hours do not include drive time.
- When describing Advanced Training time, include the name of the presenter and topic.
- Volunteer Project hours do include drive time.
- When describing Volunteer Project time, include location, if not in the title, and detail of service performed.

# YOU'RE INVITED!

Better Lights for Starry Nights  
An afternoon of Dark Sky education and celebration!

Sunday  
September 30  
2:00-5:00pm  
Wimberley  
Community  
Center  
Wimberley, TX



hillcountryalliance.org



## SAVE THE DATE

Texas Night Sky Festival

MARCH 30 – 31, 2019



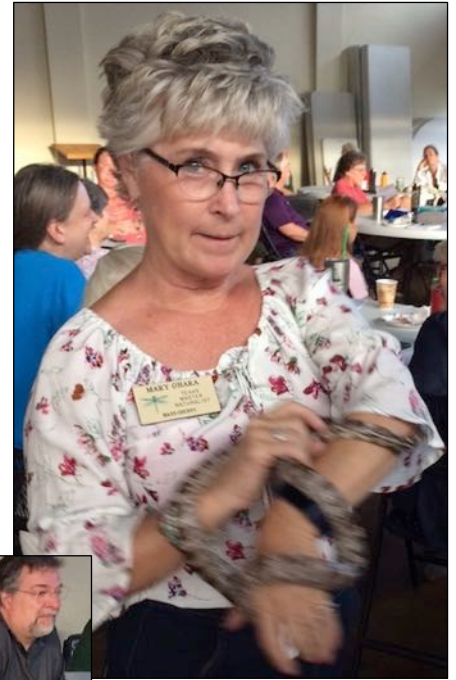
<http://www.TexasNightSkyFestival.org>

# TEXAS NIGHT SKY FESTIVAL

*Celebrate the Night*



# Training Team Gallery Snake Night







**Link:** <https://txmn.org/20th-anniversary/>

**Website:**

<https://txmn.org/2018-annual-meeting/>

**Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistProgram>

**Annual Meeting Agenda Matrix**

<https://txmn.org/files/2018/07/TMN-Agenda-Matrix-7-27.pdf>



**WESTCAVE**  
OUTDOOR DISCOVERY CENTER

**LINK TO WESTCAVE**

<https://westcave.org/>

**LINK TO EVENTS & BIRD WALKS**

<https://westcave.org/events>

**VOLUNTEER AT WESTCAVE  
PRESERVE**

<https://westcave.org/get-involved/volunteer>



**Save The Date**

**March 30 & 31, 2019**

Dripping Springs Ranch Park

1042 Event Center Drive

Dripping Spring Texas

Link: <http://www.TexasNightSkyFestival.org>



**LINK TO JWNA WEBSITE:**

<http://www.co.hays.tx.us/jwna.aspx>

**FACEBOOK LINK:**

<https://www.facebook.com/JacobsWellOfficial/>

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:**

[quincy.kennedy@co.hays.tx.us](mailto:quincy.kennedy@co.hays.tx.us)



## HCMN on FACEBOOK

Find us, like us, share with us! Click icon for HaysMN Facebook page.  
<https://www.facebook.com/HaysCountyMasterNaturalists>



## NEWSLETTER

Do you have some awesome photos or want to share a volunteer experience? Let us know! We are looking for interesting items for the newsletter. Contact Tom Jones  
[wimberleytom@gmail.com](mailto:wimberleytom@gmail.com)  
or Betsy Cross  
[betsy.cross@sbcglobal.net](mailto:betsy.cross@sbcglobal.net)

## 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.

<http://groups.google.com/group/haysmn>

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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

<http://www.haysmn.org/calendar-projects.html>

## HAVE YOUR PROJECT ADDED TO THE CALENDAR

Send requests to [calendar@haysmn.org](mailto:calendar@haysmn.org)

**LINKS** to Chapter Partners, Program Sponsors, Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapters and Other Sites of Interest

Link: <http://www.haysmn.org/links.html>



Blue Hole-T. Jones