

2012 Annual Report for Hill Country Chapter
Appendix to page 3: Other Chapter Awards and Successes

1. Our New Class Recruiting brochure received the “**Judges Choice**” award as the “**Outstanding Chapter Brochure**” at the Texas Master Naturalist Statewide Annual Meeting in Navasota in October. This brochure was a joint effort of our newsletter editor Kristie Denbow and our Communications Director Paula Smith.

2. Our Land Management Assistance Program volunteers (12) visited 29 properties totaling 2,183 acres with 38 Direct Contacts in 2012. Since inception in 2004, specially-trained volunteers have visited 321 properties having a total of over 27,000 acres. This project received the Third Place award at a previous TMN Annual Meeting. Project ID: CC-05-A *Project Coordinator: Jim Stanley*

3. Texas Wildlife Association Distance Learning Program New Record: On October 22, 2012, HCMN member Cathy Downs set a new record for our Chapter and for the Texas Wildlife Association statewide by teaching 6,246 students and 190 teachers in 174 schools in one day about “The Magic of Monarchs” on a live television broadcast in the Texas Wildlife Association Distance Learning Program. Cathy had to repeat the program four-times in succession to reach all of these enthusiastic school children and teachers. Project ID: CC-12-A *Project Coordinator: Koy*

4. Our Texas Wildlife Association L.A.N.D.S. (Learning Across New Dimensions in Science) project teaches school children about nature and wildlife in schools and at field days across Texas. In 2012, 21 of our members reported a total of 676 volunteer hours on this project with 815 Direct Contacts, including: 1 Teacher Training event, 1 Project Wild Training, 2 Teacher/Volunteer Workshop trainings and 6 Field Investigation Days with students in the field.

From inception in September 2009 through 2012, our members have volunteered 2,163 hours and have had 2,427 Direct Contacts teaching school children on this project. TWA proudly hosts a Volunteer Appreciation luncheon every year in the spring where many HCMNs are recognized for their long and hard work put into the program. Project ID: CC-12-A *Project Coordinator: Koy Coffey*

5. Afterschool Nature Classes: Hill Country Master Naturalists have been providing a nature study program once a month during the school year for students who are enrolled in the after-school program that provides safe care for students of working parents at the Kroc Center (the Salvation Army Center in Kerrville). We have planned and executed a variety of programs with the intention of encouraging young students to appreciate nature and the desire to become good land stewards now and in the future. Our initial programs began in Jan 2010 – June 2010 and were planned for K through 5th graders. In Sept 2010 – May 2011 we planned programs for grades 3rd – 5th. After-school programs from Sept 2011 – May 2012 were provided for 4th and 5th graders. We are continuing nature study programs with this age group through this school year, Sept 2012 – May 2013.

We have planned and executed programs on a variety of subjects such as recycling by nature and by man, learning the water cycle, good watershed practices, water insects ID, plant ID, mammals, bats, etc. We use a variety of hands-on methods of study such as scavenger hunts, puppet shows, bug bingo, etc. Our volunteers have fun with the kids and enjoy sharing what they know. The stories the kids share with their parents about nature as they walk to their cars to go home inspire us. *by Martha Miesch – Project Coordinator - Project ID KR-13-A*

In 2012, 20 members reported 273 volunteer hours with 311 Direct Contacts. In 2010 – 2011, volunteers reported 374 volunteer hours and 621 Direct Contacts for a total of 647 volunteer hours and 932 Direct Contacts.

6. Junior Naturalist programs To date, Riverside Nature Center’s Junior Naturalist (JN) program has trained three groups of 1st-3rd graders, totaling 32 students between 2010 and 2012. We have an ongoing club for our students who have earned their JN badges, which currently has 12 students enrolled and I am serving as the leader. This club meets at least once a month for activities that expand upon what we learned in their

training and does various service projects. Susan Sander will be working with a new group this year (I believe that begins in February and will be open to 3rd-5th graders). At the state level, we had another session at the TXMN State Meeting where interested individuals from across the state came together to share experiences and ideas of what a Texas Junior Master Naturalist program might look like. We have been gathering input online, as well, through a Google Group page: <https://groups.google.com/group/TexasJuniorNaturalist?pli=1> . Most recently, we've begun assessing members' talents & interests and forming "action teams" to take on various components of the project (curriculum & materials development, administrative, etc.) *by Stephanie Perry, Project Coordinator*

Junior Naturalist volunteer hours are reported under Youth and Adult Education at Riverside Nature Center, Project ID: KR-02-A with several other educational activities. Thus volunteer hours are not available for this individual project.

7. Last Chance Forever, the Bird of Prey Conservancy and Muleshoe Farm and Ranch Trust Volunteer Project Volunteers are involved with Muleshoe Farm and Ranch in the development of the trails, gardens and restoration of a 100-year working farm and ranch. Each year we hope to continue the trails to showcase over 1,250 acres of the farm. Plans include bird feeding stations with blinds for photographers, permanent raptor flight enclosures for rehabilitation of injured birds, and a medicinal herb garden in addition to the butterfly garden started last year. Several large trees have been donated and some purchased to replace the large oaks that died from oak wilt. In the past year we have begun a Falconry training program in which volunteers are trained and practiced in the ancient art of falconry. The aim is to have a group of trained volunteers who can present to a group the benefits of raptors and promote their conservation.

Two Bird of Prey Celebrations were hosted on the farm this year; one included a nighttime walk down the hiking trail. Owls and other raptors were shown in their natural night environment. During the Bird of Prey presentation, trained Master Naturalists presented the birds and flew and caught falcons, hawks and even a Bald Eagle. The feelings of holding and then the exhilaration of calling a magnificent bird to land on your hand is something that has touched each one of the Master Naturalists that participated in almost a spiritual way. Each of us has bonded with the natural world of the raptors in a way that just observing them could have never achieved. John Karger, the founder and Executive Director of Last Chance Forever, has given of his time and knowledge to all of the volunteers at the Farm and has instilled a love of the land and animals that surround us even in some of our small urban locations. His vision of Last Chance Forever and Muleshoe Farm and Ranch is a living, learning, educational and research center that can be utilized by Master Naturalists from across the state as well as students and the public.

In the coming year some of the projects include finishing a 500 gallon water catchment system for the house and gardens. Creation of a curriculum for classes for children as well as adults that give advanced training in the subjects of conservation and restoration of the land is planned. A continuing study program of native grass restoration will be aided by a grant to restore overgrazed fields. A butterfly and Monarch Monitoring Station will be established and plant and bird counts will continue. Plans are being made for a falconry experience program introducing the public to the wonders of the Birds of Prey, the ancient art of falconry, raptor biology and conservation. *by Cynthia Burgin, Project Coordinator, Project ID: KL-09-A*