



Conservation Insider

June 2022

Hello Friends, Partners and Volunteers!

As our population grows, more and more land is being converted for human needs. Currently, Texas has over 29 million residents (2020 Census), the population of Texas is predicted to reach 40 million residents by the year 2050.

It's obvious to most of us that our Hill Country home is becoming much more populated. Comal County's estimated 2022 population is 180,413 with a growth rate of 4.68% in the past year according to the most recent United States census data. This is why we need to continue our effort to Keep Comal Wild!

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## CCCA NEWS

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW PARTNERS!**

## Preserve Our Hill Country Environment Foundation

Preserve our Hill Country Environment (PHCE) Foundation is a 501 (C)(3) nonprofit organization created by an all-volunteer group of neighbors to preserve, protect, and restore the land, water, air, wildlife, distinct features, and quality of life in the Texas Hill Country.

More information at: [www.preserveourhillcountry.org](http://www.preserveourhillcountry.org).

## Defenders of Wildlife

**Defenders of Wildlife** is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. Our vision is that diverse wildlife populations in North America are secure and thriving, sustained by a network of healthy wild lands and waterways. Defenders' Texas program is dedicated to the conservation of native wildlife and habitats throughout the state. Learn more at: <https://defenders.org/>

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## SAVE THE DATE

### Tuesday, July 19th, 6:00 - 7:30 PM

**LOCATION:** McKenna Events Center, [801 W. San Antonio St, New Braunfels, TX](#)

**WHAT:** Community Program on “Water: The Next 20 Years” with Mr. Roland Ruiz, General Manager of Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA).

**EVENT INFO:** This is the HOT TOPIC for all of us who live in Comal County and South Central Texas! *Mr. Roland Ruiz serves as General Manager for the EAA, our regional groundwater agency that manages one of the world's most prolific artesian aquifers. In his presentation on “Water: The next 20 Years,” Mr. Ruiz will expound on all the amazing things our Edwards Aquifer Authority is accomplishing to ensure we have water well into the future!*

As General Manager for the past 10 years, he has focused on creating a shared value around effective management of the aquifer, especially in the face of environmental, economic and regulatory demands that are certainly affected by drought, population growth and the competing interests around these issues. He seeks to transform the EAA culture into a dynamic and service-minded operation that values collaboration, transparency and responsiveness.

Free and open to the public.

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## Other News

### AN INVITATION FROM TEXAS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION - OPEN HOUSE

On Friday, June 24th we are pleased to be hosting a Grand Opening and Open House at our Headquarters in New Braunfels. We encourage folks to stop by from 9 AM-3 PM for a tour of our facilities, including our recently finished outdoor amphitheater. This new space will not only beautify the headquarters but will serve as an extension of our education and outreach mission.

Grand Opening & Open House

[6644 FM 1102](#)

[New Braunfels, TX 78132](#)

June 24th ~ 9 AM - 3 PM

### HILL COUNTRY LAND, WATER, AND NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN: Survey & Gift Card Raffle

Help shape the future of the Hill Country! The Texas Hill Country Conservation Network is working on a big, new project and needs your help. Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this survey and give your input on the process to create a Land, Water, and Natural Infrastructure Plan for our Texas Hill Country. Added bonus? You'll also be entered for the chance to win a \$75 gift card!

Take the survey and let us know what you care about!

Take the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9WWXXW8>

Responda la encuesta: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9WWXXW8?lang=es>

### GET INVOLVED WITH GEAA

Our partner organization GEAA is beginning its planning process for urging the Texas Legislature to give some limited land-use authority to the counties in the Hill Country when they convene the 2023 legislative session next year.

The first step in GEAA's process is to gather folks who are interested in assisting in this effort. All interested people are welcome.

Contact: Annalisa Peace at [Annalisa@aquiferalliance.org](mailto:Annalisa@aquiferalliance.org)

### HEADWATERS AT THE COMAL *(article from Community Impact Newspaper)* By Lauren Canterberry | 10:30 AM Apr. 13, 2022 CDT

Headwaters at the Comal was awarded a \$1.2 million grant from the New Braunfels Economic Development Corp. to be used in the construction of a facility that will house meeting and conference spaces.

In 2014, New Braunfels Utilities adopted a master plan to redevelop its 16-acre property located at [333 E. Klingemann St.](#), which later came to be known as The Headwaters at the Comal.

The project is being completed in phases, according to city documents, and the \$8.4 million Phase 1 was completed in 2017.

Phase 1 included a natural stormwater management system, restoration of riparian habitats, the construction of an amphitheater, walking trails, the Comal Springs overlook and retrofitting an outdoor pavilion.

The Headwaters is currently fundraising for Phase 2, which will construct the 6,400-square-foot Center at the Headwaters facility. The facility is expected to cost \$8 million with an additional 20%-30% of construction cost increases anticipated over time for a total cost of \$9.11 million-\$9.68 million.

:Continue reading at: <https://communityimpact.com/austin/new-braunfels/environment/2022/04/13/headwaters-at-the-comal-gets-12m-grant-for-further-redevelopment/>

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CCCA JUNE SPOTLIGHT

Keep Comal *Wild* !

The biggest threat to wildlife and habitat today is the break-up of large land holdings into smaller tracts. This division of ownership and associated change in land use is referred to as land fragmentation. As intact ranches become smaller "ranchettes", wildlife populations are subject to many pressures including loss of open space from development, increased hunting pressure, proliferation of potential predators (dogs, cats and other carnivores), and introduction of exotic species, to name a few.

Fragmentation can cut wildlife off from their food sources, water, and shelter, and make it difficult to locate suitable nesting sites and mates for breeding.

A Pandemic Window That Had Lessons & Meaning
Written by Frank Dietz for the Herald-Zeitung, June 6, 2022

Here on a Comal County legacy ranch where we are privileged to abide, the day of radical public shutdown to seek control of the spreading Covid-19 remains quite vivid in my mind. It was akin to the sudden silence that hovered throughout the country on infamous 9-11. Infrequent flights in the flyways above us were notable for an extended period. Our own going and coming was at a sustained minimum along with the flow of traffic on the roadways nearby. We have settled into some of the social and family modifications that came with covid protectiveness and we are beginning to explore modified future activities cautiously.

Upon reflection, the pandemic has provided us with a window to any number of things long taken for granted or barely noted. In particular, both in the open grazing areas and the wooded stands for wild and pasture life a rich new world has emerged. In reverence and celebration, I want to take note of some of what our “pandemic window” has provided. Imagine a trek with me for observation and wonder purposes. Continue reading Frank’s article at:

<https://comalconservation.org/keep-comal-wild.html>

CONSERVING TEXAS WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES DIVERSE LANDS, DIVERSE SPECIES, DIVERSE CULTURES

Article by Defenders of Wildlife

The largest state in the continental US and second only to California in terms of biodiversity, Texas has a rich variety of species, habitats and cultural communities that make it a special place. However, protecting the state’s native animals and plants is uniquely challenging because 97% of the land in Texas is privately owned. Recognizing the ecological significance of the state’s wildlife and the importance of investing in rural and urban communities, Defenders works in high-priority areas to maximize benefits for wildlife, habitat and people.

Texas Hill Country: Deep in the Heart The Texas Hill Country sits atop the Edwards Plateau, a geographic region at the crossroads of the high plains to the west and north and the lower-lying coastal plains to the south and east. Located in the heart of Texas, this region, which is known for its scenic hills, canyons, rugged terrain and vast network of rivers and creeks, is home to numerous imperiled species—and to rapid urbanization and oil and gas pipelines. Defenders works in this dynamic area to conserve and restore habitats and watersheds for wildlife. We partner with landowners, community organizations and state and federal agencies. We also identify and apply conservation tools that can help attain our shared goals of preserving the region’s ecological integrity for future generations of Texans.

Species Spotlight: Golden-cheeked Warbler One of the most rapidly growing urban corridors in the US traverses the Texas Hill Country. It stretches over 100 miles between the San Antonio and Austin metropolitan areas and through old-growth juniper, oak and shrubland habitats. This is the only place in the world where the endangered golden-cheeked warbler breeds. Defenders and its allies are fighting to defend federal endangered species protection for this rare migratory bird that winters in southern Mexico and Central America. We are working with Defenders’ Center for Conservation Innovation to assess the loss of its breeding habitat and to protect what remains.

Private Lands Conservation Our planet’s incredible array of wildlife occupies an equally diverse variety of habitats, from the frozen tundra to the sizzling desert. When these habitats are threatened, so too are the plants and animals that call these places home. For decades, Defenders of Wildlife has served a leading role in shaping smart policies to conserve, protect and restore wildlife and habitats on lands and waters across the country . A large portion of our habitat work focuses on our national wildlife refuges, national forests, national monuments, and other public lands and waters, as these areas represent some of the last, best places for wildlife to thrive. We also work extensively on private lands in partnership with private landowners and state and tribal agencies to encourage people to protect and restore key habitats on private, tribal and state lands.

Private lands support more than two-thirds of the species listed under the Endangered Species Act, with ten percent of listed species occurring only on private lands.

In addition to more than 1,600 federally protected species in the United States, states have identified an additional 11,700 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs), many of which also depend on private lands. Conservation of these forestlands, wetlands, grasslands, rangelands and riparian areas is essential to protection and recovery of these fish, wildlife and plant species, particularly in rare and declining habitat types—tall and shortgrass prairie, longleaf pine forests and bottomland hardwood forests. Unfortunately, increasing conservation needs exceeds the current investment at the federal, state and local levels for wildlife conservation on private lands.

Read more at: <https://comalconservation.org/keep-comal-wild.html#conserving-texas>

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. Founded in 1947, Defenders of Wildlife is the premier U.S.-based national organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of imperiled species and their habitats in North America. Defenders' approach is direct and straightforward – We protect and restore imperiled species throughout North America by transforming policies and institutions and by promoting innovative solutions.

HABITAT LOSS

Article by National Wildlife Federation

Habitat loss—due to destruction, fragmentation, or degradation of habitat—is the primary threat to the survival of wildlife in the United States. When an ecosystem has been dramatically changed by human activities—such as agriculture, oil and gas exploration, commercial development, or water diversion—it may no longer be able to provide the food, water, cover, and places to raise young that wildlife need to survive. Every day there are fewer places left that wildlife can call home.

Major Kinds of Habitat Loss—

- **Habitat destruction:** A bulldozer pushing down trees is the iconic image of habitat destruction. Other ways people directly destroy habitat include filling in wetlands, dredging rivers, mowing fields, and cutting down trees.
- **Habitat fragmentation:** Much of the remaining terrestrial wildlife habitat in the U.S. has been cut up into fragments by roads and development. Aquatic species' habitats have been fragmented by dams and water diversions. These fragments of habitat may not be large or connected enough to support species that need a large territory where they can find mates and food. The loss and fragmentation of habitats makes it difficult for migratory species to find places to rest and feed along their migration routes.
- **Habitat degradation:** **Pollution, invasive species,** and disruption of ecosystem processes (such as changing the intensity of fires in an ecosystem) are some of the ways habitats can become so degraded, they no longer support native wildlife. Continue reading at: <https://comalconservation.org/keep-comal-wild.html#habitat-loss>

REBECCA CREEK SALAMANDERS

Article from My Canyon Lake Newspaper, By Stephanie Johnson, May 6, 2021

Lizard-like amphibians with elongated bodies and tails, short limbs and external gills are the focus of scientists keeping tabs on groundwater health in Rebecca Creek.

In April, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) staff headed out to the area with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) scientists to collect salamanders to help determine what species are present and whether they warrant federal protection under the Endangered Species Act.

GBRA shared photos of the expedition on Facebook today. It says spring salamanders who live there are Texas natives, an endemic species whose distribution is restricted to spring headwater habitats.

Rebecca Springs is a middle Trinity spring that helps provide baseflow to the Guadalupe River and inflows for Canyon Lake Reservoir. Located in northeastern Comal County, it flows from the base of the Cow Creek limestone bluff into Rebecca Creek, a tributary to the Guadalupe River above Canyon Lake.

Salamanders rely on clean, flowing springs like Rebecca Creek to maintain healthy populations.

“Salamanders are sensitive critters,” the conservation group Hill Country Alliance explained online. “With external gills and limited habitats, they are good indicators of groundwater health. They rely on clean, clear, flowing springs to maintain healthy populations. Pollution and contaminants from surface water can drastically alter water quality. Hill Country residents rely heavily on groundwater, and the status of salamander populations can tell us how we’re balancing resource protection-and-development.” Read the full article at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/keep-comal-wild.html#salamander>

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Article by Texas Parks and Wildlife

Wildlife conservation is the wise use and management of natural resources, without wasting them or exploiting them. It regards wildlife as a renewable resource, which properly managed, replenishes themselves indefinitely. This is in contrast to wildlife preservation which is the saving of natural resources without any consumptive use of them.

North American Model - is a concept that evolved through the early decades of the 20th century. It has guided the conservation and management of fish and wildlife resources in North America. There are seven core principles. Read more at [https://www.comalconservation.org/keep-comal-wild.html#wildlife conservation](https://www.comalconservation.org/keep-comal-wild.html#wildlife%20conservation)

All the above articles and MANY more are available to read in the June Spotlight section of our website at: <https://www.comalconservation.org/keep-comal-wild.html#HC>

Stay safe, stay healthy, enjoy nature! See you next month.

Comal County Conservation Alliance

<https://www.comalconservation.org/>

Info@comalconservation.org

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