

TMN – COT
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, November 2, 2011
AgriLIFE® Extension Office, Angleton, Texas

Attendees: Ed Barrios, Barbara Burkhardt, David Brandes, Marty Cornell, Sandy Henderson, Mary Holler, Mary Helen Israel, Ed Johnson, Jerry Krampota, Ruby Lewis, Neal McLain, Tom Morris

Start Time: President Barbara Burkhardt call to meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

Agenda: The proposed agenda was presented by Barbara Burkhardt and accepted.

Action Items: Barbara Burkhardt led a discussion on items outstanding from the October board meeting, to wit:

- ✓ Mary Helen Israel agreed to check with Affairs to Remember on the status of the gratuity from the Cradle of Texas tenth anniversary luncheon, and if not included, to notify Sandy for payment. We did not include a gratuity in our payment and thus Treasurer Sandy Henderson will send Affairs to Remember a check for \$125.00, an amount agreed to at the October board meeting.
- ✓ Barbara Burkhardt will work within the Facts 500 word maximum guidelines to compose a press release on our 10th anniversary celebration. This task was finished by Barbara Burkhardt with the help of Neal McLain. [The article, along with eleven captioned photographs, was published in The Facts on Sunday, November 6th.]
- ✓ Ruby Luis will check with the City of Lake Jackson for our permission to participate in their November 19th Festival of Lights as an associate of the Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges. The City did agree to our participation and will locate our booth next to those of Friends and Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue.
- ✓ Marty Cornell admitted that he was in the fixin-to stage of composing the content for our state project; the Dow Woods Trail development. He committed to having this done by the end of next week. The completed state project board and a descriptive write-up of the project were transported by Barbara Burkhardt to the state meeting.
- ✓ Tom Morris will take photos of our chapter's gifts to retiring Assistant TMN State Coordinator Sonny Arnold. Done. The gift of a shadow box of Lightening Whelks in their various life cycle stages and the accompanying book on sea shells was very much appreciated by the Arnolds. Sonny's thank you note read: "The gift from the Cradle of Texas is much appreciated. Liz is exploring the house to find a prominent place to hang the Lightening Whelk. What a Great addition! The Encyclopedia will be of great value on one of our shelling expeditions."
- ✓ Tom will lead the development of a response proposal to GCBO on their desire that COT organize and run a "Bio Blitz" on a series of nature topics to be held on one Saturday per month, with a different topic to be given each month. This topic is addressed below.

Minutes: Secretary Marty Cornell offered the minutes from the October board meeting as revised by e-mail additions and corrections. These revised minutes were approved with no further changes after a motion by David Brandes and a second by Ed Barrios.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Sandy Henderson reported a balance of \$4,965.65. Income during October consisted of the return of the \$100.00 deposit from the Lake Jackson Civic Center for the rental of a room for our 10th anniversary luncheon. Expenditures in October were \$375.00 for out-of-pocket expenses for this same affair. Total expenditures for this event exceeded income from the sale of commemorative T-shirts and lunch tickets by \$226.00, thus falling below the \$500 authorized by the COT board.

2011 State Meeting: Barbara Burkhardt reported on the 2011 state meeting of Texas Master Naturalists. She commented that the affair went off well considering that Sonny Arnold retired and that State Coordinator Michelle Haggerty had recently returned from maternity leave. The 275 attendees was the largest gathering of TMN at the Mo Ranch venue and the second largest of all of the annual TMN state events, exceeded only by the gathering in San Antonio.

The number of entrants into the art and photo contests was way down from recent years, however proceeds from the silent auction were the highest ever, exceeding \$3,000.

2011 State Meeting (continued) Our chapter's project display on the Dow Woods trails attracted a lot of interest, and most of our 50 copies of handouts were distributed. However neither COT nor any of the other traditional winners (e.g. Galveston Bay chapter) received an award for their entries in this year's project fair. COT's scrapbook, assembled by Mary Holler and Kathy Speights, did win **first prize**, and the board congratulated them for their winning entry. **Mary was asked to write a note describing this prize for our newsletter.**

Over the last year, three new chapters have joined the community of Texas Master Naturalists; the Long Leaf chapter graduated their first class, the Bo 'd Arc chapter was formed in Fannin County, and the Blue Grass chapter was initiated in Grayson County.

Barbara reviewed several items covered at the Presidents' Breakfast:

- The State of Texas is working with Samaritan Technologies to develop a new database to handle data and statistics from all associated departments and organizations, including TPWD and anything associated with AgriLIFE (4-H, etc). Sea Center Texas is currently involved in the pilot testing of the program. For all TMN chapters, projects must be registered into this database and all chapter statistical data, such as AT and VT, will be logged directly into this system (details of the protocol for doing so are pending.). One rationale for this new system is that the state will have instantaneous statistics and not need to depend on reporting organizations to submit their data in a timely manner. Barbara noted that this new process was very poorly received by the TMN chapters, many of who have developed their own spreadsheet capability.
- The chapters were informed that chapters must pay for the travel expenses of any instructors invited from TPWD or AgriLIFE to present at chapter meetings. This is due to extreme cuts in their budgets this year and to expected further cuts in 2012. Chapters were encouraged to have regional training when outside instructors are used. This policy stimulated a discussion of the COT board on the possible need to increase the fee for intern training to cover outside speakers. Sandy Henderson noted that training fees in 2011 have yielded a net gain of \$182.60. It was concluded by consensus that our reserves were sufficient to cover instructor travel expenses as might occur in the near term, and thus that an increased fee is not currently warranted.
- The state will impose a fee of \$10 per person attending, or 10% of the cost, of seminars or special programs where a fee is charged to participants. This fee does not apply to TMN training of interns or the general membership.

The 2012 State Meeting will be held on October 26-28 at Camp Allen, a 950 acre Episcopal church camp and meeting center near Navasota (<http://www.campallen.org>). This facility has several types of rooms for rent, including cabins, bunk houses, and hotel-style accommodations.

2012 has been declared by *The United Nations Environment Programme Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP-CMS)* and *The Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS)* as the **International Year of the Bat**. TMN has thus chosen the 2012 recertification pin to be the Mexican Free-tailed bat.

Membership Chair Jerry Eppner is on vacation, but it was noted that during October, Kathleen Murray has certified and that Kerry Magee has recertified.

Programs: Program Chair Mary Holler stated that next Wednesday's general meeting will feature Thomas Adams of our local USFWS. Thomas will discuss edible wild plants in his talk "Where to find wild edible plant food in the fall and winter if the entire food distribution system collapsed and you had to survive with no food in the stores."

The general membership meeting on December 14th, after the election of officers for 2012 at the Angleton AgriLIFE building, will adjourn to the home of Ed Barrios for the traditional Hog Wild Party. **Ed will send out the invitation and directions.**

Dave Brandes confirmed that he will give a lecture on plankton at our January, 2012 general meeting. Mary Holler has invited Heather Biggs, a biologist and private consultant, to speak at our February meeting about Galveston Bay and its feeder waterways.

Suggestions for future topics included"

- "Soils",
- "Civil War Confederate blockade runners Acadia and Dinbigh"
- "Mosquitoes."

Barbara Burkhardt will ask the general membership for other suggestions on meeting topics.

ConocoPhillips: Mary Holler reported that a change of management has further delayed the re-initiation of the ConocoPhillips environmental education program, but that James Aston and his EE crew are plodding on. Mary continues to work on a booklet to guide the CP volunteers

Outreach Chair Ruby Lewis commented that the Dow Woods Grand Opening in October was very successful, with about 150 visitors attending the trail walks and opening ceremonies. Ruby led a talk on snakes and how to handle a close encounter with one at the Danbury library on October 15th. She had adequate volunteers helping her at last Sunday's "Spooktacular" at Sea Center Texas, which was also successful although attendance was down from last year. Ruby substituted for Curtis Jones at the Angleton library Nature Night with her talk on reptiles. 46 people attended, including 28 adults (three COT members). Curtis was called away at the last minute on USFWS business.

Upcoming November outreach begins with the November 5th Heritage Day at Brazos Bend State Park.

On Saturday, November 12th, 10:00 to 4:00, the Brazoria County Parks Department will feature Nature Day at Hanson Riverside County Park in cooperation with COT. Smoked pig will anchor a lunch to be served to volunteers. There are still vacancies needing volunteers; Ruby will canvas the membership at next Wednesday's general meeting to fill these slots. Equipment for several of the activities will be borrowed from the USFWS; **Ed Barrios will include a container of binoculars for a trail walk as part of this equipment inventory.**

Per the aforementioned City of Lake Jackson Festival of Lights on November 19th, Ruby has sufficient volunteers to handle the COT booth.

The Chapter Annual Report is due to the state on January 15th. Because of cutbacks, volunteer service is even more important, and the impact of this effort is measured by volunteer hours reported. It was noted that the value of our hours will be raised from the current \$10 per hour equivalent to over \$20 per hour equivalent (to match the value acknowledged by the federal government). **Barbara Burkhardt will cover this reporting need at the general meeting in a plea to turn in hours.**

Nominating committee: Past President David Brandes submitted the nominating committee's recommendations for next year's officers and committee chairs; **David will present this at the November general meeting.**

2012 Slate of Officers

| Office | Incumbent | Nominee(s) |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| President | Barbara Burkhardt | Dave Brandes and Barbara Burkhardt |
| Vice President | Mary Holler | Mary Holler |
| Secretary | Marty Cornell | Marty Cornell |
| Treasurer | Sandy Henderson | Sandy Henderson |
| Membership Director | Jerry Eppner | Jerry Eppner |
| Training Director | | Ed Johnson |
| State Representative | Ed Barrios | Ed Barrios |
| Past President | Dave Brandes | |
| Committees | Incumbent | Nominee |
| VT Chair | Neal McLain | Neal McLain |
| AT Chair | Tom Morris | Tom Morris |
| Outreach Chair | Ruby Lewis | Ruby Lewis |
| Chapter Host | Jerry Krampota | Jerry Krampota |
| Webmaster | Neal McLain | Neal McLain |
| Newsletter | Mary Helen Israel | Mary Helen Israel |

Intern Training: Ed Barrios moved, Tom Morris seconded, and the board unanimously approved the appointment of Ed Johnson as Training Director. A discussion ensued on the format to use for the next series of classes. The consensus evolved that consecutive classes over twelve weeks would be one option, starting at the beginning of February, but they could also be spread over a six-month period. The training director is obligated only to fulfill the requirements as outlined in our Policies and Procedures, but otherwise has the discretion to conduct the classes and set schedules as he/she prefers. Ed Johnson was encouraged to combine intern training when practical with chapter general meetings, especially if outside trainers are engaged.

Ed requested an update on the status of in-progress interns; **Barbara Burkhardt will provide him with that information.**

It was noted that new interns need to be informed of their need to have a background check made if they intend to work with children as a COT volunteer or a volunteer of one of our partners. This requirement should be conveyed during one of the introductory training classes.

Previous action of the board allows for interns to turn in pristine state curriculum books at the end of their training and get a \$30.00 refund. However no one has ever taken advantage of this provision. Dave Brandes moved and Ed Barrios seconded the motion to drop this option; the motion passed.

GCBO Project, Bird/Bottomland Blitz: Tom Morris met with Felipe Chavez and Carol Jones at GCBO to discuss our involvement with them in developing and executing this program. GCBO agreed to provide the publicity and promotion (indeed the announcement of the "Blitz" was made by Carol Jones in her column in the Saturday, November 5th edition of The Facts.). We agreed to a six-month trial program, starting on Saturday, December 10th, from 9:00 to 11:00, and continue on the second Saturday of the next five months. The first topic will be a mini Christmas bird count (led by Tom, Jerry Eppner, and Tom Taroni), teaching the objectives and protocol of such counts. Kirby Rapstein, with Mike Lange of the USFWS, will cover Trees and Shrubs at the January 14th session; Warren Pruess will discuss Lichens and Mushrooms on February 11th; Ed Barrios will teach "Insects of the Forest" on March 12th, GCBO's Cecilia Riley and Carol Jones will cover migration on April 7th, and Thomas Adams of the USFWS will address wildflowers and prairie habitat on May 12th.

GCBO will insure that a staff or board member will be present at each session, and will develop docent guides for the topics.

It is thought that each session would be worth one hour of advanced training for attending COT members.

Other stuff:

Dave Brandes noted that the salt water life session in the INEOS environmental education program needs help acquiring live specimen. David has an agreement with Sea Center Texas to hold such specimen as volunteers might collect before the session; the returned animals will become part of the SCT touch tank collection.

Barbara Burkhardt adjourned the meeting at 4:52 pm.

Marty Cornell

Secretary,
Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter
