



# Chapter News

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is coordinated by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Texas Master Naturalist programs serve all people without regard to socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MIKE



Woooo hoooo !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
A new Year is upon us. By the time you read this many of us will have made and broken numerous New Year's resolutions. Oh well, we are only human and can look forward to doing it again next year.

We have several new board members with Becky, Roy and Gerald joining the board's ranks. I would like to personally thank Marty, John and Ed for their devoted service to the chapter as they leave the board.

While on the subject of the board, I want to remind all chapter members that you are welcome to attend any or all board meetings. The board typically meets on the first Wednesday of the month at the AgriLIFE building at 10 am. Occasionally this does change so check the calendar for exact time and location.

Now, you have a little more time to catch your breath, but not much. A new class starts at the end of the month and we have twelve interns as of now. You still have time to convince your friends and neighbors of what they are missing and why they should join. Also, volunteering opportunities will be ramping up as we go forward. We have some really neat Advanced training lined up.

We will try to keep plenty of opportunities for volunteering, learning, sharing and most important fun available to all chapter members during the year. I look forward to being there with you. As always if you have any questions or suggestions on how to improve some part of our chapter do not hesitate to let me or any other board member know or come see us and tell us about it.

—Mike

*Mike Mullins is the President of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at [mcmprm@embarqmail.com](mailto:mcmprm@embarqmail.com)*

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Chair

As of late December, 77 members have submitted timesheets. For 2013, chapter members have submitted 13,061 hours of volunteer time.

This is great, but we are still about a 600 hours off the final 2012 VT tally. A couple of heavy hitters are still out there, however.

Members to be recognized at the January General Meeting for recertifying for 2013 include Marlies Greenwood, Candace Novak, Archie Pratt, Louis Peltier, Carolyn Schlein and Bob Woods. Candace also reached the 500 hr VT milestone. Great job Naturalists!

As mentioned in a recent communication, to remain active in the chapter, members must submit time sheets documenting general meeting attendance and volunteer activity in 2013. **Final 2013 time sheets must be submitted by January 7, 2014. Hours accrued during 2013 can only be submitted on a 2013 time sheet and cannot be carried over.**



**Texas Master Naturalist Program  
Cradle of Texas Chapter  
General Meeting and Advanced Training  
Wednesday, January 15, 2014  
AgriLife Building, Angleton**



<b>8:30 AM - 9:00 AM</b>	<b>Fun and Fellowship</b> Refreshment Team: TBA
<b>9:00 AM - 9:50 AM</b>	<b>General Meeting</b> <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i>
<b>10:00 AM - 12:00 PM</b>	<b>Program:</b> <i>Forest Birds Study Group Research Results and Methodology</i> <b>Speaker:</b> Jim Renfro, TMN-COT Member <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"><i>This training is approved for Advanced Training. The number of approved hours will be announced at the meeting and will be available after the meeting at <a href="http://tmn-cot.org/Advanced/index.html">http://tmn-cot.org/Advanced/index.html</a></i></div>



Jim Renfro is a member of the TMN-COT Class of 2001, the first intern training class offered by the chapter. He qualified for certification in December 2001 and has recertified every year since.

Jim's volunteer activities have included service as Chapter Training Chair (2002-03), team instructor of the "Birds & Birding" class at Brazosport College's Adult Life and Learning Program (2006-09), and team instructor of "Introduction to Ornithology & Bird Identification" for Chapter Interns (2006-09). He served as field trip leader and bird bander at Migration Celebration (1995-2009).

Jim has served as team leader for several data-collection projects including bird censuses for USFWS (collecting data used to determine wildlife populations in the Columbia Bottomlands), breeding bird surveys (collecting data used by USGS and USFWS in determining North American bird population distribution).

Jim received his M.S. in Chemistry from Sam Houston State University family. In 2001, the University awarded him its *Service Award*. Following are excerpts from the citation:

*Renfro was employed with Dow Chemical Company in Freeport for almost 30 years. He has also been with Sea Lion Technology and he served as director of the SHSU/TRIES Environmental Technology Development and Commercialization Center.*

*He has been recognized for his service to his hometown area and was selected as "Unsung Hero" for Volunteerism by the Brazosport Facts newspaper. He has provided community service as the president of the Lake Jackson Lions Club, member of the Lake Jackson Parks Board, City Council and Zoning Board, and he currently serves on the Lake Jackson Planning Commission.*

*Even with a busy schedule of volunteering for Sam Houston and his home community, Renfro has found time to serve as a high school and junior college football official for almost 30 years. His appreciation for nature is reflected in his membership with the Brazosport Birders and Naturalists for which he has served as president. He has also served as a volunteer naturalist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.*

—Source: <http://tinyurl.com/koy7fvz>



Jim shares his knowledge far and wide. In the photo at left, Jim is shown demonstrating bird banding techniques with a group of cub scouts from Pack 442, based in Friendswood.

Photo: *County Life Online* March 26, 2013

## Election Report: Officers and Directors for 2014

ANGLETON, TEXAS – December 11, 2013. The membership of the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter, at its regular monthly meeting here, unanimously elected the following slate of officers and directors to serve the Chapter during 2014:

- **President** Mike Mullins, Sweeny
- **Vice-President** Peggy Romfh, Houston
- **Secretary** Becky McClendon, Lake Jackson
- **Treasurer** Gerald Forrest, Damon
- **Membership Director** Jerry Eppner, Lake Jackson
- **Training Director** Roy Morgan, Lake Jackson
- **State Representative** Ed Barrios, Lake Jackson

Past President Barbara Burkhardt of Lake Jackson will continue in this position.

Elected officers assumed their new positions immediately following the election. Officers serve as voting members of the Chapter's Board of Directors.

All appointed officers and standing committee chairs have agreed to continue serving in their present capacities during 2014.

- **Advanced Training Chair** Tom Morris, Lake Jackson
- **Calendar Editor** Andy Smith, Lake Jackson
- **Chapter Host** Jerry Krampota, Alvin
- **Historian** (vacant)
- **Newsletter Editor** Neal McLain, Brazoria
- **Outreach Chair** Ruby Lewis, Angleton
- **Volunteer Service Chair** Pete Romfh, Houston
- **Webmaster** Neal McLain, Brazoria



### Elected Board Members

Jerry Eppner (*Membership Director*), Mike Mullins (*President*), Barbara Burkhardt (*Past President*), Gerald Forrest (*Treasurer*), Becky McClendon (*Secretary*), Peggy Romfh (*Vice President*). Not shown: Roy Morgan (*Training Director*), Ed Barrios (*State Representative*). Photo: Schaffhausen

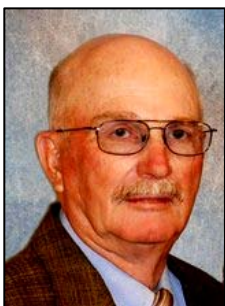


Check out the 2013  
Hogwild photos  
<http://hogwild10.blogspot.com/>



## In Memoriam

Chapter News recognizes the passing of two longtime friends. Although neither was a member of the TMN-COT, both were dedicated naturalists and active supporters of efforts to preserve the natural world.



**Jack Crabtree.** Jack is the former manager of San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. He previously served as manager of Tishomingo NWR in Oklahoma; as Biologist at Wichita Mountains NWR, also in Oklahoma; and as fisheries biologist for Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, based in Austin..



**Sarah Heller** Sarah is a former Public Relations Manager for the Dow Chemical Company's western division. After retirement, she was an active volunteer with the Brazosport Planetarium and Nature Center, and for several years served as Public Relations Manager for Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges and Migration Celebration.

## Photo Gallery Monthly Highlights – January Newsletter

By Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

Plant species added to the galleries this month include Anacahuita (Mexican Olive), Goldenrain Tree, Annual Seepweed (Seablite), and Glossy Privet.

Insect species added include Queen caterpillar and the Leaf-footed Bug – *Acanthocephala* species.

Bird species added include La Conte's Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Marsh Wren, Monk Parakeet, Gull-billed Tern, Snow Goose, King Rail, and White-tailed Hawk.

Thanks to Tom Taroni for his photo contributions this month.

### Leaf-footed Bugs – A Plant Pest with “Leafy Legs”

Thanks to help from AgriLife Extension Agent John Gordy, we have identified a third species of Leaf-footed bugs in Brazoria County. There are likely other leaf-footed bug species that have not yet been found or photographed. These large Hemiptera (20 – 35 mm) are distinguished by distinct leaf-like patterns on their tibia and a large pronotum. The leaf-footed bugs are important as crop pests.

From Left: *Leptoglossus phyllopus*, distinguished by the straight white or pale yellow bar crossing the back

(Photo P. Romfh); *Leptoglossus zonatus*, distinguished by two yellowish spots on the forward part of the pronotum and a zigzagging white band across the wings (Photo D. Brandes); and *Acanthocephala declivis*, distinguished by two small shining blunt tubercles along midline (see photo close-up) and broadly expanded pronotum. (Photos P. Romfh) The tibial patterns are unique in each species.

These leaf-footed species are polyphagous (eat many plant species).



### Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake Devours Prey

This photo of a Western Diamond-Backed Rattlesnake devouring a red-winged blackbird was taken by Tom Taroni a couple of years ago at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary. Tom recently submitted the photo for the Photo Gallery.

A favored habitat of the rattlesnake is the cactus and saltgrass that grows behind sand dunes. It is the most abundant and widespread venomous snake in Texas. The diet of the rattlesnake includes cotton rats, mice, lizards, small birds, jack rabbits, and ground squirrels.

..The lateral head stripes are definitive for this species.



### Duck, Duck, Goose!

Thousands of geese were seen at San Bernard NWR during the recent Christmas Bird Count, including the blue morph (blue goose) and the more common white morph (snow goose). The birds migrate from their summer grounds in arctic and sub-arctic North America; many spend their winters along the Texas coast. Snow geese have adapted to take advantage of waste grain along their migration routes, resulting in a population of 5 – 6 million, a number that may be environmentally unsustainable. (Photo by P. Romfh)



## Eagle Scout Project for Reforestation of Otto Tract – Part 2

by Chris & Carl Kneupper

As reported in an article in the November 2013 issue of *Chapter News*, the reforestation project was being planned to plant tree seeds at the Otto Tract unit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This project occurred successfully as planned on 14-Dec-2013.

Under the supervision of Thomas Adams (USFWS Botanist), Carl Kneupper fulfilled his Eagle Scout requirement of a service project by collecting locally-native tree seeds in the period of August-December 2013, and then by directing a small group in the planting of these seeds. Some TMN members graciously collected and provided seeds over the fall period, which was of great help since native seed was scarce this year.

Twenty people attended the seed-planting event on 14-Dec-2013, with sixteen acting as planters, including three members of the TMN-COT chapter, two USFWS staff, eight Boy Scouts and two adult Scouters. Also, a Refuge Junior Naturalist trainee and his father also participated.

Large amounts of native tree seeds were planted in the southern two-thirds of the prairie section, along with other woodland plant species. Larger tree species included native oaks (Live, Bur, Shumard Red and Water), Pecan, Black Walnut, Red Cedar, *Texas Honeylocust*, Green Ash, and Sycamore. Smaller or understory species included Cherry Laurel, Mexican Plum, Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum, Eastern Persimmon, *Coral Bean*, *Hercules Club*, Western Soapberry, Carolina Buckthorn, *Indigo Bush*, Possum-haw Holly, Box-elder Maple, Green Hawthorn and Downy Hawthorn. Vine species included Green-brier, Purple Passionflower (host plant for Gulf Fritillary butterfly), Yellow Passionflower (host plant for Julia butterfly), Carolina Snail-seed Vine, Pepper-Vine, Milkweed Vine, *Deer Pea Vetch*, *Least Snoutbean* and Swamp Leatherflower.

Perennial species included Red Buckeye, Coralberry, Palmetto, Turk's Cap, *Drummond Rattle-box*, *Hemp Sesbania* and *Bagpod*. Minor amounts of Yaupon Holly, Cedar Elm, Hackberry, Swamp Milkweed, Gulf Coast Penstemon, Common Selfheal, Lyre-leaf Sage, Purple Meadow Rue, Heartleaf Skullcap, American Wild Carrot, Pleat-leaf Iris, Inland Sea Oats, Giant Bristlegrass and Knot-root Bristlegrass were included for the sake of diversity. This list is somewhat different than the initial target list, but collections were made as seed was found available. As an interesting twist, many locally-native legume species (nitrogen fixers) were included, shown in *italics* above, as an experiment to "self-fertilize" the new forest, and thereby provide rapid growth. Many of these legume species are not expected to compete successfully once a woodland develops, but should thrive for the next few years in an interim period.

Thirty "planting sets" were prepared, which included a planting rod made from a 4' section of 3/8" steel re-bar and (triple) plastic grocery bags containing the larger- and medium-sized seeds. These were used by about a dozen of the planters to plant seeds individually by hand every few steps as the planters moved north from the south end of the prairie. Small seeds were placed into a separate bag, which were simply scattered on the return leg. A minor amount of seed was leftover, but claimed by USFWS staff for other plantings in the near future.

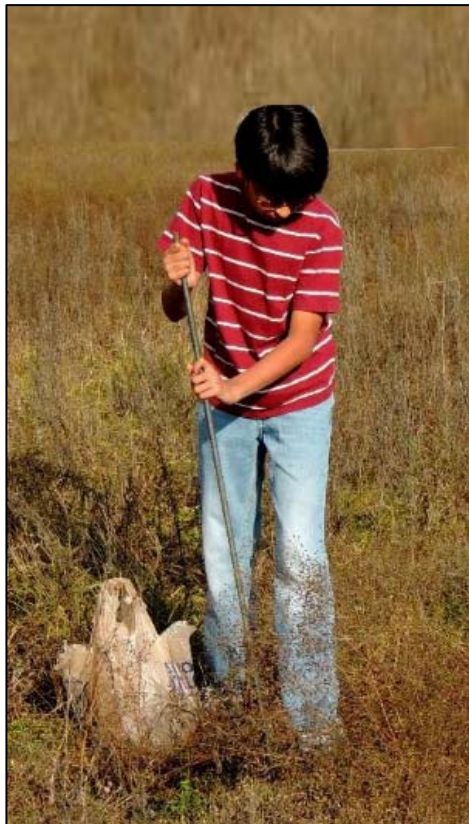
After the planting, a lunch of gumbo, hot links, hot dogs, fruit, chips and cookies was provided. We were especially fortunate with the weather, being warmer and partly cloudy, after a week of sometimes-dreary weather. A cold front moved through late in the afternoon, after the planting was done. More photos on Page 6.



Eagle Scout Project for Reforestation of Otto Tract – Continued



Carl Kneupper (second from right) briefing fellow scouts about seed planting Photo: Christy Kneupper



A refuge junior naturalist plants a seed. Photo: Denis Mudderman



Carl uses a poster to show the various types of seeds being planted. Photo: Christy Kneupper

## USFWS Updates on Cranes, Wetlands and Prescribed Burns

The USFWS Refuge Friends Newswire stories from December include updates on continuing coastal wetland losses in the USA, learned migration behavior of young whooping cranes, and coordinated use of prescribed burns. To read the full stories, go to

<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/newswire/>.

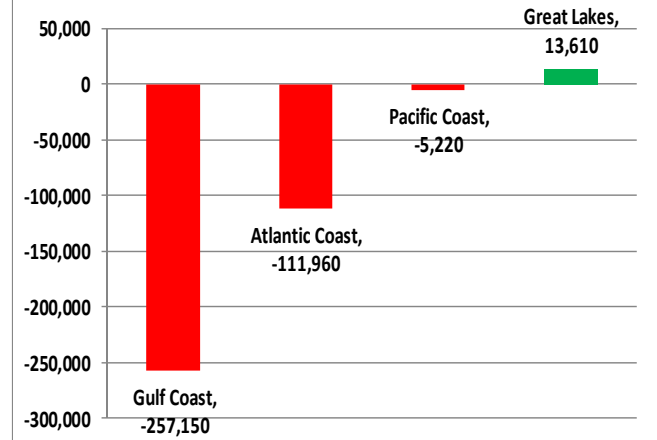
**Older Whooping Cranes Are Better at Migrating:** A study published in the journal *Science* and co-authored by a Necedah NWR biologist found that young whooping cranes learn their migration route from older cranes and get better at it with age. Data was analyzed from the Eastern flock of whooping cranes that migrates south in the fall from Necedah NWR and Horicon Refuge in Wisconsin to Florida.

**Gulf Coast Wetland Loss is Largest in USA:** The USA is losing

wetlands in coastal watersheds at a significant rate, according to a new report by the USFWS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Gulf Coast losses were attributed to losses of saltwater wetlands from coastal storms in combination with freshwater wetland loss due to urban and rural development.

**Prescribed Burns:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy have a new partnership that will increase and better coordinate controlled burn activities

### Wetland Acres Lost 2004 - 2009



— also known as prescribed fire — to enhance wildlife values.

## TMN – COT Members Participate in Christmas Bird Counts

TMN-COT members participated in the 114<sup>th</sup> annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), including sites at Brazos Bend State Park, San Bernard NWR, Freeport, Mad Island Marsh, and Brazoria. Early results suggest that, in spite of a wetter year, the Texas counts are slightly lower than in 2012. Newer volunteers were paired with experienced volunteers to create small teams that scoured marsh, prairie, woods, rivers and creeks, coastal areas, roadsides, and backyard bird feeders to find all possible bird species.

Participants employed all possible modes of transportation during the CBC in Texas, including foot-power, car, canoe, boat, swamp buggy, and airboat.

Data from last year's CBC (see table below) shows that three of the top Texas sites were in Matagorda and Brazoria Counties, where TMN-COT members are active participants. About 60 million birds were seen during the CBC for the USA last year.

2012-2013 CBC Rankings (113 <sup>th</sup> Annual Count)		
Rank	Count Circle	# Species
1	Matagorda – Mad Island	232
4	Guadalupe River/McFadden Ranch	212
9	Freeport	196
13	San Bernard	193
18	Port Aransas	183
All other count circles in the top 20 were located in California. [Source: Audubon annual report]		



Photos: Pete Romfh

### San Bernard Christmas Bird Count 2013

**Top:** Swamp buggy navigates across a marsh with a team on board.  
**Above:** TMN-COT members Tom Morris, Peggy Romfh, Dick Schaffhausen, Ken West, Howard Allen and Mike Mullins search for birds.

### CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

President	Mike Mullins, Sweeny
Vice President/Program	Peggy Romfh, Houston
Secretary	Becky McClendon, Lake Jackson
Treasurer	Gerald Forrest, Damon
State Representative	Ed Barrios, Lake Jackson
Past President	Barbara Burkhardt, Lake Jackson
Training Director	Roy Morgan, Lake Jackson
Membership Director	Jerry Eppner, Lake Jackson
Volunteer Service Chair	Pete Romfh, Houston
Advanced Training Chair	Tom Morris, Lake Jackson
Outreach Chair	Ruby Lewis, Angleton
Chapter Host	Jerry Krampota, Alvin
Calendar Editor	Andy Smith, Lake Jackson
Webmaster	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Facebook Editor	Dick Schaffhausen, Alvin
Intern representatives to Board	Chris Kneupper, Brazoria; Dick Schaffhausen, Alvin

Chapter Advisers	Connie Stolte (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department) John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service)
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Newsletter Editor	Neal McLain
Newsletter Writers	Mike Mullins, Peggy Romfh, Jerry Eppner, Neal McLain

Website	<a href="http://tmn-cot.org">http://tmn-cot.org</a>
Facebook	<a href="http://facebook.com/TMN.COT">http://facebook.com/TMN.COT</a>
Email Listserv	See details below

**TEXAS A&M**  
**AGRILIFE**  
**EXTENSION**



### MASTER NATURALIST EMAIL LISTS

#### **TMN-COT Chapter list**

- Instructions [http://tmn-cot.org/Email\\_Lists/index.html](http://tmn-cot.org/Email_Lists/index.html)
- Send messages to [TMN-COT@googlegroups.com](mailto:TMN-COT@googlegroups.com)
- Message Archive <http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail>
- All messages are sent immediately.

#### **State Master Naturalist list**

- Instructions <http://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmn-listserv/>
- Subscribe [listserv@listserv.tamu.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.tamu.edu)
- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator