



Chapter News

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Officers and Directors

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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



We had stepped out to watch the dozen young Eastern Bluebirds that were splishing and splashing in the bird bath when one hummingbird, chasing another away from the feeder, grazed the top of my head. I turned to my wife and told her I nearly had a

hummingbird stuck dead center in my forehead. Well, she allowed as how unless that hummingbird's beak was made out of something that could penetrate a geode, like diamond or something, that it was the hummingbird that was in danger. I dutifully thanked her for her reference to me having crystals of knowledge but she quickly explained she was referring to the rock on the outside and hollow on the inside.

Now being one that accepts a challenge like that I figured I would do a scientific experiment to see if a hummingbird could stick in my forehead. I would get Dave Brandes to write the hypothesis, Ed Barrios to give me a testing procedure, Marty to put the results in a scientific format and Neal to publish. After reflecting on this for a few seconds I realized first that all of the above would agree with my wife's assessment and second I didn't want to put any of our migrating visitors in danger. So her statement wins by default.

Right now we have the Bluebirds, 12+ young Cardinals, Chickadees, Wrens and every day more and more hummers. We are entering that magnificent time when these tiny visitors come by for a little assistance. For the last week they have probably doubled daily around our feeders.

After catching our breath in August, we plunge back in to opportunities. The school programs are cranking up. For those of you that would be more comfortable with your

hands in the dirt, the retention pond wetlands project is taking shape plus, a possible project to plant/sow milkweed seed on some of the refuge property.

Every day we go forth and teach or plant or talk or practice our passion, we leave behind a small legacy. We have left some knowledge or action that makes this area we live in better. As the quote by John Muir "*When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.*" So everything we do ripples throughout.

Stay cool, be safe and c'ya soon!!

—Mike

Mike Mullins is the President of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at

Mcmprm@embarqmail.com

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator

As of August 30, 56 members have submitted timesheets with a total of 6965 hours of volunteer time. The chapter has now accumulated 141,448 hours. VT since inception.

Seems the summer heat has put a dent in just more than the rain. Only one member reached a VT milestone this month. Congratulations to David Plunkett for certifying as a Texas Master Naturalist. Also, we all know David is very active in a number of programs, so he will also be recognized for reaching the 250-hour VT milestone. Pretty good for a 2014 intern. Well done, David.

The fall volunteer season and, hopefully, some cool weather are approaching, so be thinking what would be fun and rewarding and prepare to go out to do great, fun things

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, September 10, 2014
AgriLife Building, Angleton**



8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Refreshment Team: Brazoria County Library System
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	General Meeting <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i>
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Program: <i>Mushrooms: Who ate that tree?.</i> Speaker: Teri MacArthur, Horticultural Coordinator, Jesse H. Jones Park, Humble <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 the meeting at http://tmn-cot.org/Advanced/index.html</i>

Teri MacArthur, an expert mycologist and previous speaker at TMN-COT, will present at the September, 2014 meeting on the topic “Who Ate That Tree?”

Her presentation will include a discussion of the role of fungi in forests. It will touch on some of the more common mushrooms you might see in a forest and contrast them with primary decomposers in other ecosystems. She will also talk about the diversity of mushrooms and fungi and how beneficial they are to the environment, and thus to us.

Teri MacArthur has been a nature lover since childhood and a Texas Master Naturalist since 2001. She currently serves as President of the TMN Heartwood Chapter in Montgomery County and as Horticultural Coordinator at Jesse H. Jones Park, Humble. Fungi are her special interest.



Teri examines a species in the woods at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson, with the TMN-COT Class of 2012 interns.

Photo: Pete Romfh



Teri leads a tour of Jesse H. Jones Park at the Park’s Arbor Day Celebration for the community, January 18, 2014.

Photo: Andrew Buckley,
The Humble Observer.

<http://tinyurl.com/n5dysoe>



**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
Bonus Advanced Training
Wednesday, September 17, 2014
AgriLife Building, Angleton**



8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Refreshment Team: Ed Barrios, Dave Brandes, Joycelynn Grigson
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Program: <i>Monarchs and Milkweeds</i> Speaker: Cathy Downs, Texas Master Naturalist, Country Chapter <i>This training is tentatively approved for 3.00 hours Advanced Training. The number of approved hours will be announced at the meeting and will be available after the the meeting at http://tmn-cot.org/Advanced/index.html</i>



Cathy Downs is a Texas Master Naturalist with the Hill Country Chapter. She was born and raised in New England and retired to Comfort, Texas in 2004.

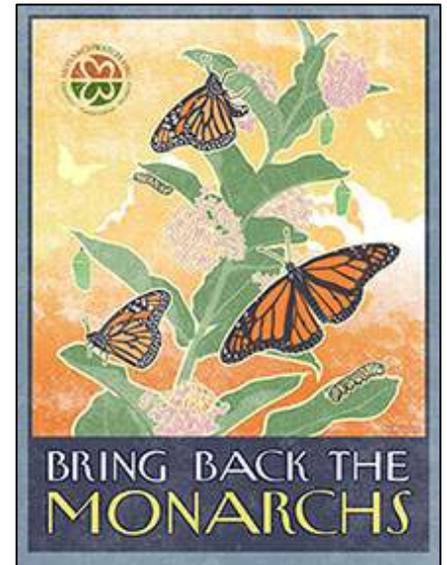


Cathy is a Conservation Specialist with *Monarch Watch* (<http://www.monarchwatch.org>), currently chairs the Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas (BBMT) program for the *Native Plant Society of Texas* (<http://www.npsot.org>) and is a certified Monarch Larval Monitoring Project educator. Cathy raises caterpillars for education as well as propagating native milkweeds. She hosts workshops and live Butterfly Pavilions at Nature Centers and State Parks throughout Texas.

Where have all the Monarchs gone?

Texas provides critical habitat on the primary migration pathway of Monarchs to and from their wintering grounds in Mexico. The availability of native milkweed host plants, essential to assure successive generations continuing north, has declined in Texas. Herbicide-resistant crops, mowing of roadsides, parks and open areas, and continued drought have all had an impact on the number of Monarchs surviving the southern journey to Mexico.

Overwintering resources for Monarch butterflies are also diminishing. Shelter and water needed by the overwintering butterflies are declining in Mexico and illegal logging has already eliminated a number of former colony sites. Continued thinning of the forests and outright deforestation reduces the availability of water for both the butterflies and the people.



Topics covered

Cathy's workshop will cover the following topics::

- Monarch anatomy, biology, and life cycle. Live specimens will be used wherever available.
- Migration decline and the reasons for the habitat decimation.
- Identify several local native milkweeds and talk about the importance of native and non-systemically treated milkweeds in the Monarch habitat and why that is crucial to Monarch survival.
- Identify native nectar plants and the importance of fall blooming plants to increase lipid and energy levels for overwintering Monarchs.
- Resources, seeds and handouts - How can I help?

Barbara Burkhardt and Dave Brandes earn President's Call to Service Award

ANGLETON, TEXAS -- August 13, 2014. At its monthly chapter meeting held today at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, two Chapter members were awarded the President's Call to Service Award. This award recognizes Americans who have dedicated at least two years, or 4,000 hours over the course of their lives, to serve others. The award includes of lapel pin, a certificate, and a letter of congratulations signed by the President of the United States.

The following members received the award:

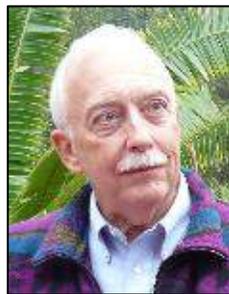
- **Barbara Burkhardt**, Class of 2003
- **Dave Brandes**, Class of 2006.

The Texas Master Naturalist State Office was the Certifying Organization for these awards. Chapter Membership Coordinator arranged for the presentations and Chapter President Mike Mullins presented the awards to Barbara and Dave.



Barbara Burkhardt

Barbara is currently the Chapter's Past President. She has served the chapter in numerous capacities including State Representative (2005-06), Secretary (2007), and President (2011-12). She is a certified Texas Master Naturalist and a certified Texas Master Gardener. She is a dedicated gardener, and often opens her backyard garden to Chapter members for study and research.



Dave Brandes

Dave has served the chapter in several capacities including Training Co-Chair (2007), President (2008-09), and Past President (2010-11). Dave is active participant in our Environmental Education programs where he has taught class sessions at DEEP, GCBO's Birds & Bottomlands Blitz, and our now-defunct program at INEOS. Dave currently serves on the Board of Directors of Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.



The presentation of the award: Mike Mullins, Barbara Burkhardt, Dave Brandes, Jerry Eppner



After the award ceremony it was time to cut the cake.

Tockonhono Naturalist Local Milkweeds - Food for Butterflies?

By Chris Kneupper

The purpose of this article is to discuss some locally native milkweed species, and their use as host plants for our local “milkweed butterflies” (Monarch and Queen), in support of our chapter’s September special AT day on 17-Sep-2014 where milkweed seeds and plants will be given away. Many local gardeners are aware of the Mexican or Tropical Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*), and they report it is used by Monarchs as a host plant.



Mexican or Tropical Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*)

However, I’d like to also introduce you to our local natives which may find a home in your garden, pasture or patio. By growing the native types, we can add diversity to our gardens and grow seed to help restore native populations.

Native Milkweed Species

There are several milkweed species found in Brazoria Co., and a few additional species found in the region. The Plant Resources Center at the University Of Texas has specimens of six milkweed reported from Brazoria County:

Asclepias lanceolata (Fewflower or Red Milkweed)

Asclepias linearis (Slim Milkweed)

Asclepias longifolia* var. *hirtella, also known as

Asclepias hirtella (Tall Green Milkweed)

Asclepias perennis (Aquatic or Shore Milkweed)

Asclepias verticillata (Whorled Milkweed)

Asclepias viridis (Green Milkweed, Antelope Horns)

Of these, the most prevalent and most well-known seems to be Green Milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*). This species is very widespread in North America and is commonly cited as a Monarch host. In our area, though, many folks report it is only reluctantly used by Monarchs; perhaps their migration does not coincide with this milkweed’s growth season in our area. In the wild, I find this species to have a large tuber, not unlike Louisiana Iris, but found deep in the soil (6-8”), making it hard to transplant.



Green Milkweed or Antelope Horns (*Asclepias viridis*)

Aquatic Milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*) seems to have a favored habitat in the bottom of shallow wet roadside ditches, where it suffers from mowing and hot dry conditions during the summer. I have found its roots are shallow, spreading into small clumps, and is easy to transplant. It seems to happily grow in pots, even tolerating salty well water and partial shade. A good addition to our home flower beds!



Aquatic or Shore Milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*)

Unlike other milkweeds, the seeds of Aquatic Milkweed do not have silken tufts, making it easier to collect seed. Monarch caterpillars placed on adjacent Green and Aquatic Milkweed plants will favor the Aquatic Milkweed. In the 5th (last) instar stage, Monarch caterpillars are ravenous and will consume flowers, leaves and green stems of this species. Queen butterflies use it as a favored host plant in the summer.



Tockonhono Naturalist, continued

Another locally common species is known as Slim Milkweed (*Asclepias linearis*). This species appears to be more of a prairie dweller, unlike the water-loving Aquatic Milkweed. Its habit might be described as tall and spindly, and is hard to notice amidst tall grasses, except when it blooms. The leaves (resembling short pine needles) are opposite, and two occur perpendicular to the stem at far-spaced nodes. The seed pod is upright, long and slender, having seeds with silken tufts that help scatter seeds.

Slim Milkweed (*Asclepias linearis*)

Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) is very similar to Slim Milkweed, except that the leaves are shorter, more numerous and more upright, causing its single spire to sometimes resemble a branch on an XMAS (fir) tree. Unlike Slim Milkweed which favors heavy clay soils and is endemic to coastal Texas, this species favors well-drained permeable soil in our area (e.g., Nash Prairie, Alvin area) and is widespread across the eastern U.S.

Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*)

An interesting species which is apparently uncommon in our area is the Fewflower or Red Milkweed (*Asclepias lanceolata*). Native across the southeastern U.S., this species has flower color similar to Mexican Milkweed and is a known Monarch host plant. It is unusual in that it is reported to live even in brackish water areas. It has been reported in western Brazoria county and along Chocolate Bayou, but I have yet to observe a specimen. If we can locate a local population, perhaps we can propagate for personal use and for the local wildlife refuges.

Fewflower or Red Milkweed (*Asclepias lanceolata*)

Milkweed Pests

One pest is a common complaint among milkweed growers, a bright-yellow aphid that infests the stems, flowers and underside of leaves usually along the tender growing tips. Various countermeasures are discussed on the Internet, but gently mashing the stem tip between fingers tends to destroy most of the aphids. If done regularly before a large infestation, this can control them. Other methods are to rub them with a Q-tip soaked in rubbing alcohol or spray a 3% soap solution.



Milkweed or Oleander Aphids

Another group of pests which gather especially on milkweeds are the Milkweed Bugs. Three species are common, known as Small Milkweed Bug (*Lygaeus kalmii*), Large Milkweed Bug (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*) and Milkweed Leaf Beetle (*Labidomera clivicollis*). The first two look like squash bugs but have bright red-orange & black patterns, and feed on seed pods (not injurious to the plant except if collecting seed). The beetle looks like a large ladybug, and both grubs and beetles consume leaves and stems. All can be squished by hand.

L to R - Large Milkweed Bug (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*), Small Milkweed Bug (*Lygaeus kalmii*), Milkweed Leaf Beetle (*Labidomera clivicollis*)

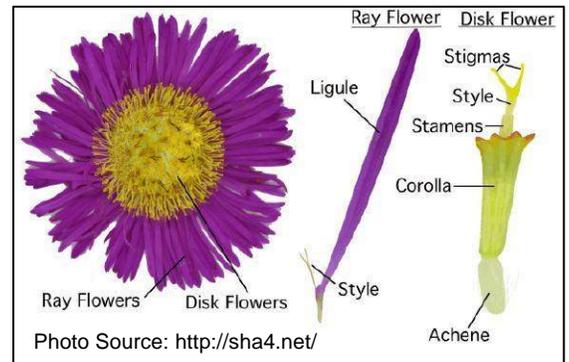
Photo Gallery Update – Composite of Composites

By Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

Late summer and early fall is a great time to enjoy the many composite flowers that bloom in Brazoria County. The Plant Family Asteraceae is also known as the Composite Family (AKA Aster Family) because the inflorescence is crowded into compact heads that look like single flowers. Each flower head is made up of a few to hundreds of small individual flowers. The two kinds of flowers are **disk flowers** and **ray flowers**. There are three types of composites:

1. Flowers include disk flowers and ray flowers (RAYS AND DISKS).
2. Flowers have only disk flowers (NO RAYS).
3. Flowers have only ray flowers (NO DISKS)

Some examples from the TMN Photo Gallery are shown below.



RAYS and DISKS



Left: Mexican Hat (*Ratibida columnifera*). Above: Butterweed (*Cress-leaf Groundsel, Packera glabella*), Camphor Daisy (*Rayjacksonia phyllocephala*), Eastern Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), Indian Blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*)

NO RAYS



Left: Gayfeather (Blazing Star, *Liatris* sp.) Above: American Basket Flower (*Centaurea americana*), Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), Rosy Polifax (*Palafoxia rosea*), Yellow Thistle (*Cirsium horridulum*),

NO DISKS

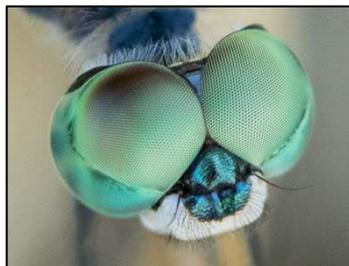


Left: Texas Dandelion (*Pyrrhopappus pauciflorus*), Potato Dandelion (*Krigia dandelion*)

Photo Gallery Photos by Denis Mudderman, Dave Brandes, Peggy Romfh. See Photo Gallery for more examples.

FUN FACTS:

Up to 30,000 elements known as facets or ommatidia make up the compound eyes of a dragonfly. The dragonfly can see in all directions at once, giving it acute sensitivity to movement. Dragonflies cruise at about 10 mph but their estimated max speed is about 30 mph.



Blue Dasher Dragonfly, Brazoria NWR, P. Romfh

FUN FACTS:

The wood stork feeds in a unique way by holding its bill open under water and waiting for the touch of a fish. It can close its bill in 25 milliseconds! Wood storks eat a lot of fish – the average nesting pair and two fledglings consume over 400 lb of fish in a breeding season. (Source: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com>)



Wood Stork, Brazoria NWR, P. Romfh

Take Part in Creating stormwater Wetlands for Water Quality, Habitat, and Fun

by Mary Carol Edwards, Stormwater Wetland Coordinator, Texas Coastal Watershed Program

Current view of the John Hargrove Environmental Complex in Pearland, site of proposed Pearland Nature Center

Photo by Pete Romfh



I have seen some amazing flora and fauna while working in the wetlands, but one of my favorite species is humans. It is tremendously satisfying to see young students tentatively wade into their first wetland restoration experience and come out several hours later muddy, happy, more knowledgeable and connected to the land. Former children of any age can experience this too, while doing something vitally important for the local environment.

My organization, the Texas Coastal Watershed Program (TCWP), is a part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Texas Sea Grant. We coordinate grant-funded projects which improve water quality and community resilience along the Texas Gulf Coast. You may be familiar with the wetland restoration effort led by my colleague Marissa Sipocz at Sheldon Lake State Park. Another of these projects, the Stormwater Wetland Program, demonstrates how wetlands can be used in flood control basins to clean run-off water naturally, while providing natural habitat and parkland in Brazoria, Galveston, and lower Harris counties.

This is important for several reasons. First, the bad news. Most of the waterways in this area have been designated as impaired, often due to stormwater runoff carrying sediment, fecal bacteria, fertilizer compounds, and other contaminants from paved and developed areas. This contributes to fish kills, and trouble downstream such as oyster

bars and beach closures. At the same time, the coastal prairie and wetland complex which once blanketed our region has been reduced to a mere 1% of undisturbed prairie¹

Now for the good news. Wetlands filter and clean water naturally through a number of biochemical and physical processes. They also attract and support wildlife; about half of North American bird species spend part of their life cycle in the wetlands². Stormwater detention basins are required for new commercial, suburban and road development in the region, but generally wetlands are not included. As the benefits of wetlands created in flood control basins are shown, we can improve the standard for stormwater basins and make a positive impact on water quality and natural habitat.

Although stormwater wetlands are still cutting-edge for our area, they have been put to use in many states. Have a look at the American Public Works Association's Project of the Year: the Alewife Stormwater Wetland in Cambridge, Mass.

<http://tinyurl.com/ponwuw4>

Closer to home, planning has been underway for several local stormwater wetlands. A wetland is being designed for the existing 52-acre basin at the John Hargrove

Environmental Complex in Pearland. This is the site of the proposed Pearland Nature Center. While the islands in the basin already attract herons and cormorants, a wetland will add much needed habitat. It will be designed so that it will also cleanse runoff from the adjacent neighborhoods, and overflow from nearby Mary's Creek in 10-year storm events. It is situated in the Clear Creek watershed. An estimated start date for planting will be spring of 2015, but plant collection and propagation will begin in advance.

In Alvin, TCWP facilitated the design of wetlands into the proposed 15-acre stormwater detention basin at Kost and South Street. This is the first of three new stormwater detention basins to relieve flooding along the M1 canal, part of the Mustang Bayou watershed. We are hoping that the stormwater wetland portion of the project will go ahead as planned, pending deliberations by the new City Council in early September.

continued on Page 9



Photo courtesy Mary Carol Edwards

Mary Carol Edwards will be the featured speaker at the October TMN-COT meeting.

Take Part in Creating stormwater Wetlands for Water Quality, Habitat, and Fun

by Mary Carol Edwards, Stormwater Wetland Coordinator, Texas Coastal Watershed Program
continued

Exploration Green Park is a 200-acre redevelopment of the defunct golf course in Clear Lake City. The master plan includes a chain of lakes and stormwater wetlands, in addition to amenities such as ball fields and a complete trail system. In order to provide the thousands of wetland plants that will be needed in each of the five phases of construction, TCWP facilitated a wetland nursery which has recently been constructed adjacent to a tree nursery at the park.

Another project will be the replanting of the floating wetlands at Clear Creek I.S.D.'s Education Village in League City. Currently, you can see three rafts made of plastic fibers floating on the surface of the campus stormwater detention pond. They are one of the first demonstrations in Texas of floating wetlands, which have been used elsewhere for various habitat and water quality improvements. Shortly after the wetlands were planted and launched last fall, with great work from students and Master Naturalists, nutria arrived and ate most of the new plantings! This fall we will replant using test plots of species nutria are reputed to avoid, and those we know they will eat. Students will monitor the plots as part of a hands-on science experience.



Egret rookery on proposed site for Pearland Nature Center

Photo by Pete Romfh

Are you wondering how you can participate in creating these wetlands? There will be field collecting expeditions for seeds and plants, preparing and potting the collected plants, germinating seeds, dividing and propagating plants, depending on the plans for each site. We will, of course, plant the wetlands when excavation or other preparations are complete. There will be opportunities to mentor students or community volunteers in any of these tasks. Monitoring for water quality and flora and fauna surveys will also be performed. Send a note to me at mcedwards@tamu.edu to sign up and for more information.

Starting September 4, 2014, we will hold regular Thursday morning volunteer hours to field collect and propagate native wetland plants in the nursery. See the TMN-COT calendar for more information about this opportunity:

<http://tmn-cot.org/Calendar/>

Send a note to me at mcedwards@tamu.edu to sign up and get weekly updates on volunteer activities.

Those who have participated in events with Marissa Sipocz and the TCWP Wetland Restoration Team will find this familiar work. It is also play — an opportunity to let your inner child get happily muddy and helpful!

¹ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey. 1999. *Paradise Lost? The Coastal Prairie of Louisiana and Texas*.

http://www.nwrc.usgs.gov/prairie/paradise_lost.pdf

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2006. *Economic Benefits of Wetlands*. Office of Water. EPA843-F-06-004.

Send a note to Mary Carol at mcedwards@tamu.edu to sign up and for more information. You may volunteer every week or as often as you like.



Some of the proposed stormwater wetlands plants, from left to right, include Coastal water hyssop, *Bacopa munnieri*, Jointed Flatsedge, *Cyperus articulatis*, and Powery Alligator Flag, *Thalia dealbata*.

Photos by P. Romfh

Kids Day at Brazos Mall

Photos by Ed Johnson via Facebook

LAKE JACKSON — Saturday, August 9. Today was Kids Day at Brazos Mall. This was a Tax-Free weekend so lots of kids (and their parents) showed up. The Cradle of Texas Chapter joined forces with Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges to publicize our activities. As usual, our members were accompanied by an assortment of exhibits

including turtles, snakes, a baby alligator, and a display of animal skins. TMN-COT members Ed Barrios, David Plunkett, Ed Johnson, Ruby Lewis, Georgia Monnerat and Carole Wenny were on hand to demonstrate the animals and had out literature promoting Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges and the Texas Master Naturalist program.



Ed Barrios demonstrates animal pelts



Carole Wenny with a Speckled King Snake wrapped around a water bottle



David Plunkett shows off a baby alligator



Georgia Monnerat shows kids the proper way to hold a turtle: "hold like a hamburger"



Ruby Lewis with the baby alligator

More photos <http://tinyurl.com/MallKidsDay2014>

CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

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Vice President/Program	Peggy Romfh, Houston
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MASTER NATURALIST EMAIL LISTS

TMN-COT Chapter list

- Instructions http://tmn-cot.org/Email_Lists/index.html
- Send messages to 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
- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator



<http://facebook.com/TMN.COT>