



Chapter News

CONTENTS

- Page 1**
President's Message
Membership Report
- Page 2**
Next General Meeting
- Page 3**
Nominating Committee Report
- Page 4**
Christmas Bird Counts
- Page 5**
Photo Gallery Update
- Page 6**
Tockonhono Naturalist
- Page 8**
KBR Kids Day in photos
- Page 10**
Officers and Directors



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

Chapter News is published by Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter.

Contact us at
Texas A&M Agrilife
Brazoria County Office
21017 County Road 171
Angleton, TX 77515-8903
979-864-1558 (Angleton)
979-388-1558 (Brazosport)
281-756-1558 (Alvin)
979-388-1566 (Fax)

<http://tmn-cot.org>

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



Fellow Chapter members ... During the year in chapter meetings and newsletters you learned that you could go into the Columbia Bottomlands under some Cumulonimbus clouds at civil twilight along Bastrop Bayou and see some yellow and black crawdads with the name Jasmine. You may

have formed a theory about fresh water in the marshes or wondered about the moss in a pond while watching a monarch go by. But you definitely would have seen bluebirds while banding at the Big Pond. You would have also found out about mushrooms and that you can't stick turkey feathers in certain ones.

But whether you know it or not as you read this and the cirrus clouds come blowing in from the north and the temperature begins to drop you would be entering a state of torpor while sitting on the porch of your plantation listening to the sounds of frogs and eating invasive fresh fish and mountain oysters.

All kidding aside we have had a great year and learned all kinds of neat things. Our chapter is blessed with talented volunteers who give freely of themselves.

As we enter this holiday season enjoy your family and everything we have to be Thankful for. We live in a wonderful place that has very few equals if any for diversity and opportunity. Share your joy with someone. Be safe and careful over the holidays.

—Mike

PS: we have a few more opportunities this year including a possible rescue at Gerhart Prairie. Additional information will go out as available.

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 October 30, 69 members have submitted time sheets with a total of 8600 hours of volunteer time. The chapter has now accumulated 145,880 hours VT since inception.

Now that the fall volunteer season is picking up, timesheets are starting to come in, but we still lack a few "first-timers." Come on, guys, you can do it.

At the November general meeting, we will recognize the following members:

- **Recertifying:**

Julia Geisler
Phil Huxford
Leo O'Gorman
Jim Renfro
Shelia Williams

- **Volunteer milestones:**

Anne Bettinger, 250 hours.

- **Interns certifying:**

Larry Kirby
Breana Kitchen

So if you haven't yet turned in a timesheet for 2014, or haven't done so in quite a while, now would be an excellent time to do so.

If you were really hoping you could recertify for 2014, but are finding yourself short on Advanced Training hours, several of our members have reached that goal using the webinar-based AT that we instituted this year. Go to the website, pick a pre-approved webinar (pre-approved is important), take the course, record the completion certificate number and record the AT on your timesheet in the webinar column. How simple is that?

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, November 12, 2014
AgriLife Building, Angleton**



8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Refreshment Team: Roy Morgan, Ruby Lewis, Lorna Witt
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>The Antebellum Plantations of Brazoria and Matagorda Counties</i> Speaker: Johnney Pollan, Brazoria County Archaeological Steward for the Texas Historical Commission <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>

Johnney Pollan is a Texas Archeological Steward for Brazoria County. In this capacity he represents the Texas Historical Commission.

Pollan has been a member of the Texas Archeological Society since 1981. In this capacity he served as arrangements coordinator ("camp boss") for two TAS field schools held at the Lake Jackson Plantation site.

He presently serves as the Curator of Archeology for the Brazosport Museum of Natural Science. He is a charter member of the Brazosport Archeological Society and currently serves as its treasurer.

Pollan holds a BS Degree in Engineering Science from Trinity University and worked as an engineer at the Dow Chemical Company for 31 years. His interest in archeology began as a youth when his cousin, famed San Antonio stoneware potter Harding Black, would tell stories of the Witte Museum's digs in the lower Pecos River in the late 1930's.

Pollan has been our guest speaker in the past. He has covered such topics as the field work at the Lake Jackson Plantation and the archaeological investigation of *La Belle*, a historic ship that sank in Matagorda Bay in the late 1600s. For over three centuries the wreckage of *La Belle* lay forgotten until it was discovered by a team of state archaeologists in 1995 .

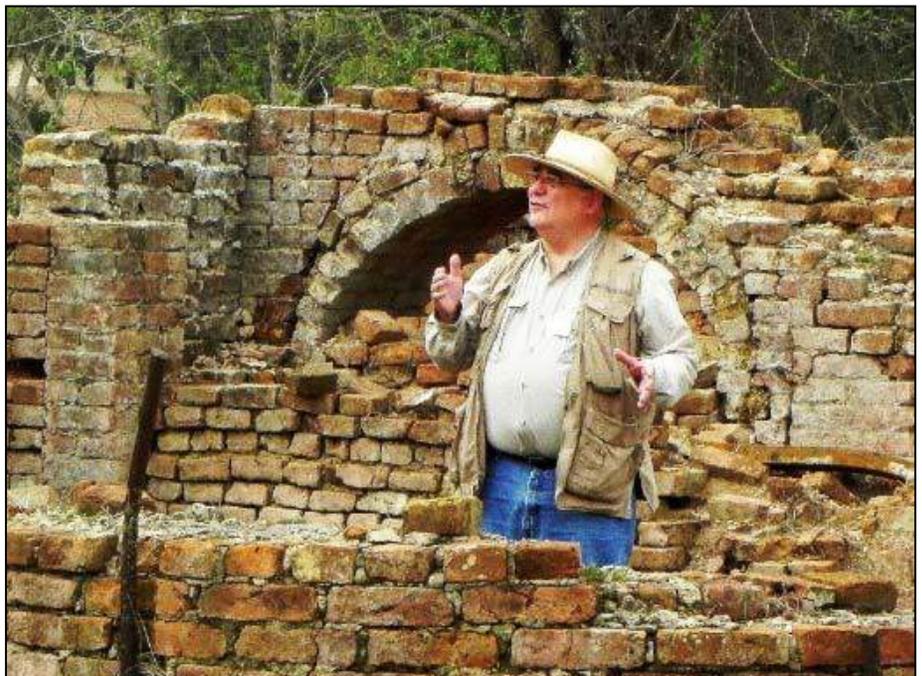
Pollan regularly teaches the archaeology segment of our training class.



Johnney Pollan

Right: Johnney Pollan standing amidst the ruins of the sugar house at Lake Jackson Plantation..

Below: Roger Allen and Johnney Pollan at Lake Jackson Plantation, Class of 2013 Intern Training field trip, February 2013.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Nominating Committee Chair Barbara Burkhardt reports that the Committee has compiled a complete slate candidates for Chapter Officers and Directors for 2015. The slate will be listed in the December issue of this publication.

The Election will take place at the December General Meeting. Nominations from the floor will be accepted at that time.

Burkhardt also notes that some nominees are presently serving in same positions for which they have been nominated. Although they have agreed to continue serving in their positions, they "wouldn't mind moving on."

So if you would like to be nominated to a board position, please contact the Nominating Committee Chair:

Barbara Burkhardt
979-297-4386
bburkhardt@sbcglobal.net

PARTNER NEWS - GCBO

LAKE JACKSON, TEXAS – October 22, 2014

The Brazosport Chamber of Commerce hosted a Ribbon Cutting ceremony today for Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's new office and research building known as the *Cecilia Riley Avian Conservation Science Center*. In the photo below, the board members and guests gathered at the main entrance for the ceremony.



GCBO Board of Directors and representatives from the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Cecilia Riley Avian Conservation Science Center. At center, GCBO Executive Director Cecilia Riley stands ready to cut the ribbon. Also shown are three TMN-COT members: Mickey Dufilho (GCBO Board President, next to Riley), Cherie McBride (GCBO Board member, to the right of Dufilho), and Dave Brandes (GCBO Board Secretary, in green shirt, to the right of McBride).

Photo: GCBO via Facebook.

STATE MEETING HONOREES

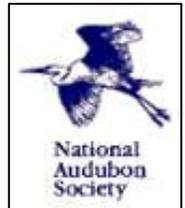
HUNT, TEXAS – October 15, 2014. The Texas Master Naturalist Program held its annual meeting here today at the Presbyterian Mo-Ranch Assembly. Five Texas Master Naturalists, representing three Master Naturalist chapters, were recognized for reaching the 4000-hour volunteer-hour milestone.



Texas Master Naturalist 4000-hour honorees. From left: Robert Theimer (Rio Brazos Chapter), Carol Lee (Rio Brazos Chapter), Ed Barrios (Cradle of Texas Chapter), Justina Dent (Cradle of Texas Chapter), Paul Meredith (Mid-Coast Chapter).

Photo: Joycelynn Grigson

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 2014-15



The 115th annual Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for December 14, 2014 to January 5, 2015. Organized by the National Audubon Society, this all-volunteer effort takes a snapshot of bird populations to monitor their status and distribution across the Western Hemisphere. The results are compiled into a database that is shared with federal, state, and private authorities. Past data can be viewed at the Audubon's website. Counts are open to birders of all skill levels. Novices are placed in groups with more experienced birders.

There is NO FEE to participate in Christmas Bird Counts! The annual CBC report will be an online publication and National Audubon will rely on donations for funding.

— Houston Audubon

TMN-COT VOLUNTEERS PLEASE NOTE

As of the date of this issue of *Chapter News*, the 2014-15 Bird Count Schedule has not been completed.

Detailed information is posted on the FOBWR Christmas Bird Count Page:

<http://refugefriends.org/BirdCounts/>

And on the calendar at:

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

Participation in any Audubon-accredited bird count is approved for volunteer hours *provided that* you sign in and participate in the counting activity. "Counting activity" includes all time spent in the field plus training meetings, travel between count sites (if any), meals, and the countdown dinner.

TMN-COT members may claim:

- **Volunteer hours:** all counting activity.
- **Travel:** round-trip travel time to/from the meeting point, not to exceed the total number of hours claimed as volunteer time.

Timesheet code: OTHER.

Some introductory words

by Tom Morris, David Plunkett, and Neal McLain

The Audubon Christmas Bird Counts is a North-, Central-, and South-American campaign to count as many birds and species within a fixed circle 15 miles in diameter. The first Christmas Count was in the Northeast in 1900 on Christmas Day.

Christmas Bird counts are supported by Houston Audubon and are accredited by the National Audubon Society. For a complete list of all Texas Bird Counts see the Houston Audubon website at:

<http://tinyurl.com/BirdsBirdsBirds>

Bird Counts were started to counter a popular "sport" of killing as many birds as one could on Christmas Day. The data from the counts are compiled in a database and results are printed annually and the raw data is available to researchers and amateurs. Population trends have been used to help protect species that show marked decreases.

A typical count day requires a lot of walking — two to three miles — and you are exposed to the elements a good part of the day. However, in case of bad weather such as rain, we resort to birding by car. In the evening we meet at a "countdown for dinner and to tally results.

Good hiking shoes, hat, rain gear, repellent, layers, water, light snacks, and binoculars are the basics.

Less experienced birders are welcome to participate. If you wish to participate, please contact the Count Coordinator as soon as possible. Names of coordinators will be posted on the TMN-COT calendar when available. The coordinator will assign you to a specific group, and let you know where to meet your group on the morning of the count.

Every Bird Count is named for something — a city, a park, or some geographic feature — located inside the 15-mile-diameter circle. These names can sometimes be confusing. For example, the Brazoria Bird Count is named for the City of Brazoria, but it includes a much larger area. Similarly, the Freeport Bird Count is named for Freeport, but it also includes a larger area.

During these counts, we typically meet early in the morning, around 6:30 am and work in small groups with at least one knowledgeable birder in each group. Each group covers a specified territory in the morning, and usually covers another in the afternoon, with a break for lunch. Less-experienced birders thus have an opportunity learn from experienced colleagues.

PHOTO GALLERY UPDATES

by Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

Thanks to Mike Mullins, Susan Conaty, and Chris Kneupper, who have provided photos of some interesting plant and animal species found in Brazoria County. Fall is a great time to observe late-blooming flowers, migrating birds, and other species.

A 'Tail' to Tell



Photo by Mike Mullins, Sweeny

Photo by P. Romfh, Brazoria NWR

(1)The color of the Canebrake Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) darkens toward the rear of the body, becoming **black on the tail**. The tail of the Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*) is distinguished by prominent **black and white bands**.

(2)On the Canebrake Rattlesnake, a dull, reddish-brown stripe extends along the back on the forward part of the body. The snake is marked with jagged-edged, dark brown crossbands. The Diamond-backed Rattlesnake has diamond markings, each one edged first with black and then white.

The Canebrake (AKA Timber rattlesnake) prefers moist lowland forests and hilly woodlands near permanent water sources such as rivers or ponds. In Texas, it is listed as a threatened species. The Western Diamond-back is widespread in Texas and prefers sparsely vegetated, arid terrain.

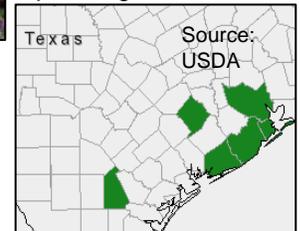
Liatris Light up the Nash



Photo by Susan Conaty, Nash Prairie

There are three species of *Liatris* that bloom on the Nash Prairie Preserve. The last to bloom is Coastal Gay-feather (Bracted Blazing-star, *Liatris bracteata*) whose flower head is a lax terminal spike typically containing 10 – 14 flowers that are widely spaced with the stem evident.

In the USA, *Liatris bracteata* is found only in Texas coastal counties in coastal prairie grasslands.



Nuts for Nuts!



Photo by C. Kneupper, Lake Jackson

The acorns of the Bur Oak are the **largest** of any North American oak, hence the name *Quercus macrocarpa*. The acorns are an important food source for wildlife, and heavy nut crops are borne every 3-5 years. The large seed crop every few years overwhelms the ability of seed predators to eat the acorns, thus ensuring the survival of some seeds.

Magnificent Mushrooms!



Photos by Mike Mullins

Late summer rains in Brazoria promoted the growth of many mushroom species in yards and woods. Although many are difficult to identify, Mike Mullins found a significant clue to identification of this mushroom that appeared under his green ash tree in Sweeny. The **Green Ash Bolete**, *Boletinus merulioides*, is associated closely with and found **ONLY** under ash trees. In warm weather, when rainfall is sufficient, they can be prolific. The caps are light brown, dry, and felt-like. The mushroom is edible.

Tockonhono Naturalist FLOWERING DOGWOOD IN BRAZORIA COUNTY?

By Chris Kneupper

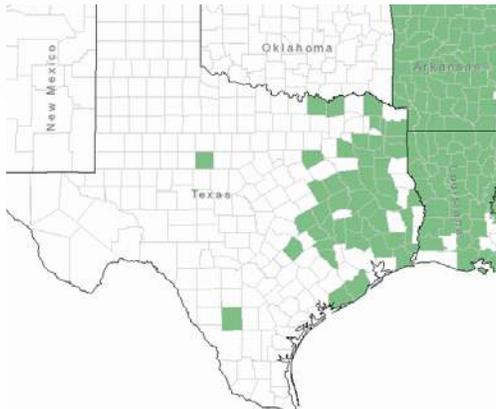
Yes, you heard right! Who woulda thunk it? Indeed, there are Flowering Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) growing wild in Brazoria County!! No, I'm not talking about its ugly cousin called Rough-Leaf Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*), which is akin to a big thicket-prone weed in these parts.



Photo: Chris Kneupper

Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Brazoria Co., Mar-2014

The accepted range of Flowering Dogwood is large, over much of the eastern U.S., but Brazoria County sits near the extreme southwestern corner of its range.



Range of Flowering Dogwood in North America
source: USDA PLANTS Database

The map indicates that Flowering Dogwood is found in Brazoria and Matagorda counties, but I have never encountered it as a native in either county, except in one location - along the San Bernard River in western Brazoria County. For at least 20 years, I have occasionally spotted specimens in early spring (usually March) when they were flowering and the other trees had not yet filled the understory with green leaves. It is typically confined to the sloping banks of the river or drainages into the river, in loamy alluvial soil.

In trying to grow this species on my own property, I must have bought (and killed!) at least a dozen dogwood saplings. Obviously, specimens from elsewhere do not like the alkaline and impermeable soils of our area.

The Plants Resources Center at the University of Texas has a single specimen in their herbarium reported from Brazoria County north of Sweeny, but no specimens from Matagorda County. In March 2014, equipped with my brand-new certification as a Texas Master Naturalist (har, har!), I was dedicated to exploring again for this locally-rare species. The hypothesis was that any local specimens might be an adaptation, and should be propagated and tested further. Indeed, I was able to find a grove of 14 trees in a heavily wooded drainage about 100 yards from the San Bernard River. The presence of a large grove indicates that specimens may have been propagating for many generations.

The location was near Well's Nursery, which is located approximately where the river crosses State Highway 35 west of West Columbia. So, I called Gary Wells, and discussed the possibility whether his nursery might have the equipment and skills to propagate cuttings from this grove. He told me that he was aware that such dogwoods occur in a number of locations upstream of his location. I was hoping to share cuttings with him, and grow a modest number of plants for distribution around the county. In this way, we might test whether this is indeed a local adaptation.



Photo: Chris Kneupper

Flowering Dogwood in Brazoria County, Mar-2014

Tockonhono Naturalist, continued

More information on this species can be found at the Native Plant Database maintained by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The link is: http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=COFL2 ... or, at the USDA PLANTS Database: <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=COFL2>



Photo: Chris Kneupper

Flowering Dogwood in Brazoria County, Mar-2014

Dogwood trees can grow as large as 40 feet high, although they are usually smaller. Their bloom comes in March to June before or just as the leaves emerge in the spring, although in Texas it is March. The leaves are typically ovate in shape with the tip being acuminate, and they occur opposite on the twigs. In northern areas, they develop respectable red color in the fall.



Photo: Wikipedia

Leaves of Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

The fruit is a drupe shaped like a football which occurs in clusters at the center of the former bloom. Originally green, it becomes blushed with red in the fall and eventually all red. The stone inside is almost as big as the fruit, but has rounded ends. It can be collected as soon as the flesh softens, that is, if you can beat the birds to them. The stone is actually a two-seeded capsule. It

can be cleaned of the skin and flesh, and then air-dried for a short period. Stratification of the stone is reported to assist germination, by storing in a paper bag inside the refrigerator for at least a month. Dogwoods prefer a fertile moist soil with a light texture and a pH of 6-7, and do best when shaded from afternoon sun or other heat sources (near roads, air-conditioning compressors, etc.).

Interestingly, the distinctive “flowers” of this species are formed not by true flower petals, but by four large bracts which are mostly white but sometimes with a touch of green. They also have a distinct notch at the apex, often stained a brownish-red color. The true flowers are small and inconspicuous at the center of the bloom, as many as 20 individual flowers in a cluster at the center. These are originally green but turn yellow when fully open.



Photo: Chris Kneupper

Early-stage Bloom of Flowering Dogwood

It is also reported that the flowers can be poorly pollinated by the tree’s own pollen, failing to develop viable seed.

Our hypothesis about the San Bernard grove is that they may have derived from seed dropped by migrating birds as they moved south in the fall, perhaps eating some Dogwood fruit in east Texas and pooping them out as they migrated through the woods along the river. The rich alluvial soil there was amenable to sprouting, and a small population developed which may have gone through many generations. Although I have sought seed or young seedlings on the forest floor for many years, I have yet to find any. Perhaps the few specimens do not pollinate each other successfully, and fertile seed is relatively rare.

Many cities hold Dogwood festivals to celebrate the bloom in the spring (Atlanta GA, Charlottesville VA, Fayetteville NC, etc.) but the closest for us is Woodville and Palestine in Texas (held in late March). If we can propagate some from the local grove, maybe Sweeny can have such a festival someday!

If anyone knows of other local specimens, please let us know.

KBR KIDS DAY 2014 PHOTOS

Photos by Richard Schaffhausen



Left – Butterfly Encounter.



Above – Baby alligator.



Right – David Plunkett at the FOBWR exhibit.

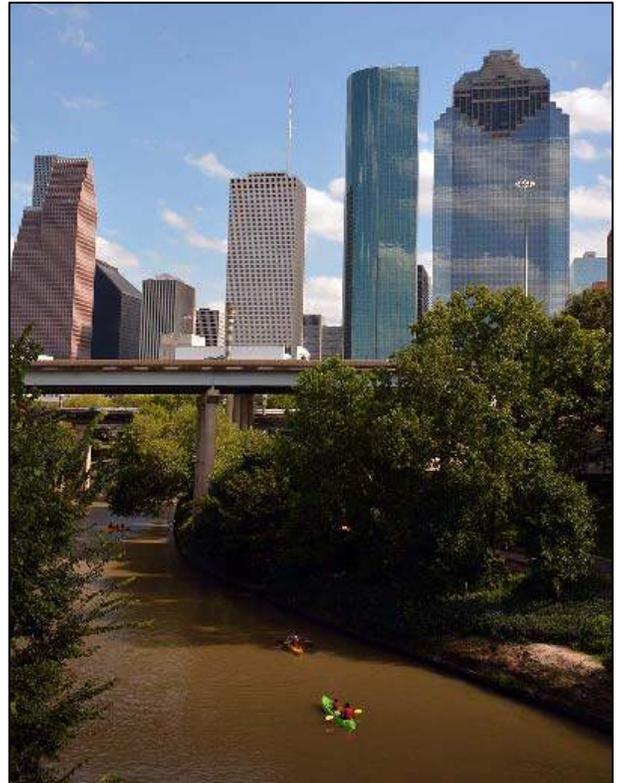


Bottom – Morning orientation meeting.



KBR KIDS DAY 2014 PHOTOS

Photos by Richard Schaffhausen



Above – Kayaks on Buffalo Bayou
Above left – Kids love turtles!
Left – Jeanne Manry with visitors
Below – What a crowd!



CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

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
Acting Training Coordinator	Roy Morgan, Lake Jackson
Membership Coordinator	Jerry Eppner, Lake Jackson
Volunteer Service Coordinator	Pete Romfh, Houston
Advanced Training Coordinator	Tom Morris, Lake Jackson
Outreach Coordinator	Ruby Lewis, Angleton
Chapter Host	Jerry Krampota, Alvin
Webmaster	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Class of 2014 representatives	Joycelynn Grigson, Angleton Breana Kitchen, Richwood
Chapter Advisers	Connie Stolte (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department) John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service)
Newsletter Editor	Neal McLain
Newsletter Writers	Barbara Burkhardt, Jerry Eppner, Chris Kneupper, Neal McLain, Mike Mullins, Peggy Romfh,
Website	http://tmn-cot.org
Facebook	http://facebook.com/TMN.COT
E-mail Listserv	http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail



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

