



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 DAVE



February gets its name from the word "februare," meaning "to purify." This is likely because February was the traditional month of cleansing in Rome, when people repented of holiday excesses.

By now the hectic pace of the holidays has begun to settle down, and life returns to some semblance of normalcy. Of course, for us normalcy doesn't mean we sit back, prop our feet up and read a good book or watch some not so good TV. Just the opposite really.

DEEP and HWEEP, environmental education programs with 3rd, 4th, and 7th graders from local schools, swing into high gear again as do Sea Center Texas school programs. Our intern program also really gets rolling as they begin their field classes after completing the introductory sessions. If you are involved in any of these programs you know just how rewarding and how much fun they are.

February also brings a large outreach event the end of the month - Sea Center Texas Nature Day. This is a fun event not just because we get to meet and influence so many families, but also because Sea Center Texas is such a wonderful place to spend some time.

As some of you know, the invasive emerald ash borer made it into Arkansas last summer. Where this invasive treads, ash trees die. They seem to have a scorched earth policy when it comes to ash. In preparation for the Texas invasion, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has given high priority to collecting and preserving ash seeds to repopulate Texas ash species. Several of our members participated in collecting seeds of the predominate species in our county, the green ash. Marlies Greenwood was so successful that Minnette Marr, the project leader, recognized Marlies for the huge number of green ash samaras she collected. Thanks Marlies and the team, the little bug is on its way.

In another relationship with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Peggy Romfh sent them 344 photos from our gallery last year. She heard back that they have finished adding them to their plant database, noting that for several of the species they had no or only a couple of photos. They didn't even have some of the plants listed before receiving these photos. Great work Peggy.

To wrap up, I guess the best way to put February in play is ready, ... set, ... GO!
—Dave

Dave Brandes is the President of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at brandes@tmn-cot.org



Fourth-graders on the boardwalk at DEEP. Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, January 29, 2015.

Photo by Richard Schaffhausen.
More photos at:
<http://tinyurl.com/p533c33>

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, February 11, 2015
AgriLife Building, Angleton**



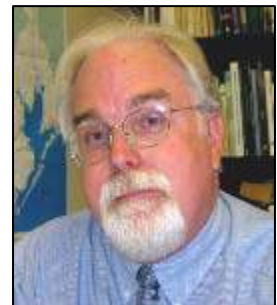
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Refreshment Team: George and Anne Bettinger, Chris Kneupper, Jerry Krampota, Ken and Linda Sluis
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	General Meeting and Quiz Quiz: <i>Dragonflies</i> by Jerry Eppner <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i>
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Program: <i>The Geo-ecology of the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas (soils, wetlands, prairies, forests, prime farmland etc)</i> Speaker: Dr. John Jacob, director of the Texas Coastal Watershed Program, and Professor and Extension Specialist, Texas A&M Sea Grant Program and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service <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 http://tmn-cot.org/Advanced/index.html</i>

Dr. John Jacob is the director of the Texas Coastal Watershed Program, and Professor and Extension Specialist with a joint appointment with the Texas A&M Sea Grant Program and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service through the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Science. His current project, Coastal CHARM (Community Health and Resource Management), focuses on enabling coastal communities in Texas to improve quality of life in cities and towns while preserving and enhancing the natural coastal environment.

Jacob holds B.S. and M.S. degrees from Texas Tech University, and a Ph.D. from Texas A&M University, all in soils and natural resources. He is registered as a Professional Geoscientist with the State of Texas and is a Professional Wetland Scientist.

Jacob is a recognized expert on Texas wetlands, having been active in consulting and research aspects of wetlands for more than 20 years. Jacob is co-author of the Texas Coastal Wetland guidebook, as well as the Texas Sea Grant *Resilient Coast* series on the built environment and wetlands

The Texas Coastal Watershed Program provides education and outreach to local governments and citizens about the impact of land use on watershed health and water quality. The TCWP currently has seven 7 staff members with programs in sustainable urban planning, watershed management, habitat restoration, sustainable landscapes, and water quality issues.



Past projects include the development of the “Eco-Logic” Habitat map of the 8-county Houston region. Jacob was a lead participant in one of the first published research projects following the Supreme Court *Rapanos* decision addressing the issue of the hydrologic (and therefore regulatory) significance of a large class of wetlands on the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas. Most recently, he and his staff developed the CHARM model, a GIS-based user-friendly model that enables users to develop growth scenarios and to see in real time the effects of their choices in terms of ecosystem services, for example. Part of this project involved perfecting the “weTable”, an innovative high-tech, low-cost participatory GIS platform.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator.

A couple timesheets have already been submitted with 2015 time. Thanks and congratulations. If you haven't started your 2015 timesheet, now would be a real good time to do so. Remember, it is far easier and more accurate to record your time during the year on a regular (weekly) basis than to spend hours in December trying to remember what the heck you did in May.

When we finally closed the books on our chapter's 2014 accomplishments, we had logged 16,782 hours of Volunteer Time and 1896 hours of Advanced Training hours during 2014. This gives us 154,257 cumulative hours of VT as a chapter. That is significant. We wound up the 2014 year with 95 active members. We also have seven members that have progressed into the Inactive category, but three of those have already told me they intend to return to Active status in 2015. This would be a good thing.

At the January meeting, we recognized a number certifications, recertifications and VT milestones. I also reminded folks that if they suspect they have earned an award, and I have not recognized them, then let me know so I can check the records and correct them, if necessary.

Well, I didn't even get out of the room before Ed Barrios and George Bettinger told me they had recertified, but were not recognized. Sure enough they were correct, and so were my records, but it was just an oversight on my part. Sorry about that gentlemen. Your names will be called in February.

NEWS FROM THE JANUARY CHAPTER MEETING

ANGLETON, TEXAS – January 14, 2015. The Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter, at its monthly meeting held here today, honored several of its members for their achievements. President Dave Brandes and Membership Coordinator Jerry Eppner presented Past President Mike Mullins with an engraved knife in recognition of his service as Chapter President in 2013-14 (Fig. 1). Training Coordinator Roy Morgan and President Brandes recognized three members of the Intern Training Class of 2014 as *Certified Texas Master Naturalists* (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Chapter President Dave Brandes, Past President Mike Mullins (holding knife) and Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator. Photo: Richard Schaffhausen.



Fig 2. Training Coordinator Roy Morgan, Interns Sherri Wilson, Sheree Muzny, and Lou Golish, and Dave Brandes, President. Photo: Richard Schaffhausen.

PHOTO GALLERY UPDATES

by Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

Dabbling Ducks - 'A Little Dab Will Do Ya'

The old Brylcreem ad comes to mind every time we see dabbling ducks with heads down and butts up, munching away on aquatic vegetation. December – February are great months to view and photograph ducks, as many of them migrate to the Southern USA in winter. With all the rain this year, waterfowl are more spread out across Refuge lands and more of a challenge to see.

Dabbling Ducks are members of the Family Anatidae (ducks, geese, swans). They include

- American Black Duck
- American Wigeon
- Blue-winged Teal
- Cinnamon Teal
- Gadwall
- Green-winged Teal
- Mallard
- Mottled Duck
- Northern Pintail
- Northern Shoveler
- Wood Duck

<http://tinyurl.com/flywaysus>



Dabbling Ducks, such as the Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) feed by **tipping heads down, tails high in the air, to reach aquatic plants** and invertebrates below the surface. They cannot dive deep below the surface.

Photos: P. Romfh (L) and Dave Brandes (R), Brazoria NWR.



Dabbling Ducks, such as the Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), **take flight by springing straight up into the air.**

Photo: P. Romfh, Freeport Ponds

Genus Anas



The American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) is a small dabbling duck with a short bill. The American Wigeon was formerly known as "Baldpate" because the white stripe resembled a bald man's head.

Photo: P. Romfh, Brazoria NWR



Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) winter as far south as South America. The Blue-winged Teal is among the latest ducks to migrate northward in spring and one of the first to migrate southward in fall.

Photo: David Plunkett, Brazoria NWR



Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*) (shown with Blue-winged Teal) make a concealed nest beneath matted, dead vegetation.

Photo: David Plunkett, Brazoria NWR.



Mottled Duck (*Anas fulvigula*) is the only dabbling duck adapted to breeding in Southern marshes. Ducklings are often seen in late spring. Photos by P. Romfh, Brazoria NWR



Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) have an intricate pattern of gray, brown, and black. They will steal food from diving ducks as they surface.

Photo: P. Romfh, Brazoria NWR



Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*) are often seen at the edges of the marsh or mud flats rather than in open water.

Photo: P. Romfh, Brazoria NWR



Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is the most familiar duck breed in the USA. It is the ancestor of nearly all domestic ducks.

Photo: D. Brandes, Brazoria NWR

Tockonhono Naturalist NATIVE SHADE-LOVING WILDFLOWERS

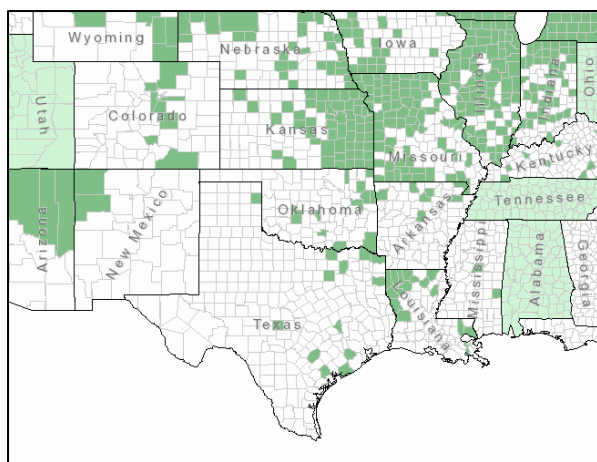
By Chris Kneupper

So, you think that use of Texas native wildflowers requires a sun-drenched prairie situation. Indeed, most of them do, but I want to share with you a few species that enjoy moist shady places, which may have a place in our flower beds, gardens or pastures in Brazoria county.

Purple Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum dasycarpum*) is a herbaceous perennial that emerges from its root in late winter with delicate bright-green foliage that is almost like Maiden-hair Fern. As the weather warms, it sends up one or more fast-growing stalks (2-6' tall) which set many dangling white flowers. The "purple" in the name seems to come from the fact that the stalks turn a maroon-purple color, although I have noticed these only turn this color when the plant is exposed to significant sunlight.



The range map indicates a spotty distribution in Texas, usually confined to moist places, but is found in Brazoria county, although it's native to much of the U.S. & Canada.



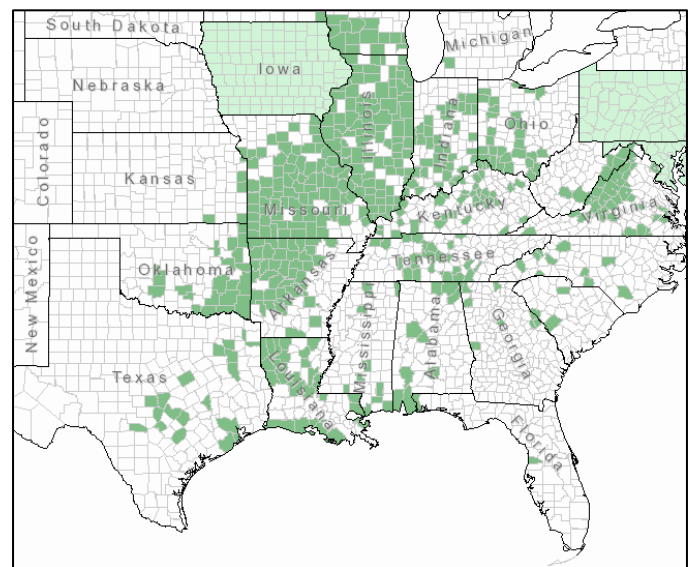
Range Map of Purple Meadow-rue (Source: USDA)

Another interesting resident of our local woodlands is Heart-leaf Skullcap (*Scutellaria ovata*). I've encountered this species at several places in thick woodland along the

San Bernard River. There is also a thick patch at GCBO in the butterfly garden area.



It is a relative of and closely resembles *Salvia* species, but is a perennial at home in the shade. It also has the interesting habit of dying away in the summer but regrowing in the fall and sometimes blooming again. Its range is also spotty but is found in Brazoria county. It is hard to establish from seed, but spreads readily by roots once established.



Range Map of Heart-leaf Skullcap (Source: USDA)

The next species is a relatively unknown and rare species, Texas Umbrellawort (*Tauschia texana*). I have encountered it at the Betty Brown unit of the SBNWR, upriver north of Sweeny and the Romfhs have reported it at Hansen County Park and elsewhere. It is in the parsley/dill family and consequently is host plant for a number of butterflies, and seems to be an important early nectar source. It is a

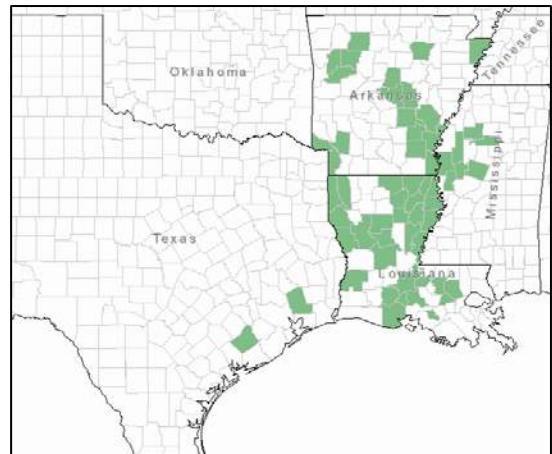
Tockonhono Naturalist, continued

herbaceous perennial, emerging in late winter and blooming in the early spring. The flowers are small bright-yellow umbels atop short spikes. When found, it is usually in large colonies underneath deciduous trees, which allow it to receive dappled sunlight during its growth period. By May, it dies away as other plants overgrow its location, and it isn't seen again until the next winter.

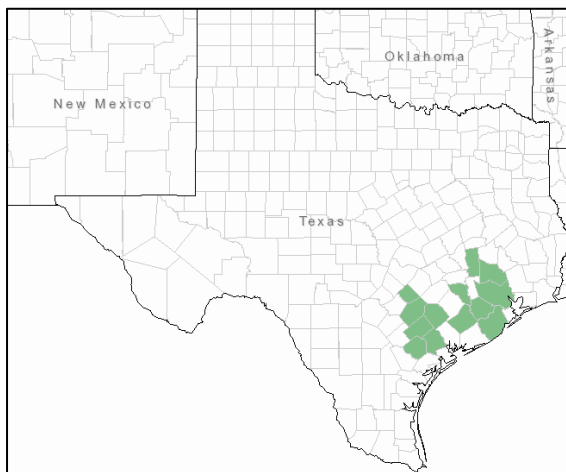


Endemic to only the mid-coast region of Texas, this charming little plant is reported in some circles to be endangered and/or rare, so it may deserve a place in your garden or woodland.

in the spring atop numerous spikes. Tear-drop-shaped seed capsules follow which contain hundreds of tiny tiny seeds. Unlike the species above, the species can be occasionally found for sale at native plant nurseries or plant sales at local arboretum or nature centers. The range map also shows a spotty distribution, and I cannot explain the absence of Gulf Coast Penstemon from the map, since I find it fairly commonly throughout Brazoria county.



Range Map of Gulf Coast Penstemon (Source: USDA)



Range Map of Texas Umbrellawort (Source: USDA)

One of the better known species on my list is Gulf Coast Penstemon, also known as Brazos Penstemon or Sharp-sepal Beardtongue. (*Penstemon tenuis*). This seems to be our local native Penstemon species but, unlike other Penstemon species, tends to prefer wooded areas with dappled shade. The small purple-lavender blooms occur



Last, I'd like to introduce you to Common Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*). Although not happy in full woodland shade, I have observed it in areas with some trees but also open grassy areas, or along the edge of the wood. It blooms in late spring through summer, and is noted for small lavender flowers growing sequentially out of the side of a large cylindrical cluster on top of a stem. It is a host plant for Clouded Sulfur Butterfly, and is a nectar plant for bees and other butterflies. It is native to the entire U.S., although it is reported in Texas only in the eastern part.



In summary, I hope to interest you in looking for and perhaps trying these native wildflowers, since many of them are unique to only our area, and provide sustenance to our native butterflies, bees and other insects.

CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Vice President/Program	Leo Novak, Lake Jackson
Secretary	Linda Sluis, Richwood
Treasurer	Gerald Forrest, Damon
State Representative	Ed Barrios, Lake Jackson
Past President	Mike Mullins, Sweeny
Training Coordinator	Roy Morgan, Lake Jackson
Membership Coordinator	Jerry Eppner, Lake Jackson
Volunteer Service Coordinator	Pete Romfh, Houston
Advanced Training Coordinator	Peggy Romfh, Houston
Outreach Coordinator	Ruby Lewis, Angleton
Chapter Host	Vacant
Publicity Coordinator	Richard Schaffhausen, Alvin
Publications Coordinator	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Class of 2014 representatives	Joycelynn Grigson, Angleton
	Breana Kitchen, Richwood

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- 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/>
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- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator

