



# Chapter News

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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 DAVE



March is a frustrating month, where winter and spring seem to be in constant battle. Spring's tactic seems to be guerilla warfare, sneaking in with quick attacks only to have winter beat it back. Maybe this is appropriate since the word "March" comes from the Roman "Martius" and named for Mars, the god of war. The Anglo-Saxons called this month "Hlyd monath", meaning stormy or rugged month, also seemingly appropriate. March was originally the first month on the Roman calendar, changed in 1752 when the Gregorian calendar was adopted. I think I prefer the Roman calendar with the new year beginning in spring and ending with winter. It just seems more appropriate with all the new flora and fauna in spring, and the dormancy and die-back in winter. I sure hope spring wins soon. I hear its strength is increasing.

March is also spring break at our schools, which means a respite for all of us that work with the kids at our refuges. Actually, we get a two-week break, since week one is testing in our schools and week two is the actual break.

The second half of March will be another story, with many learning and volunteer opportunities. Be sure to check our calendar and tune up the gear in anticipation of warmer weather.

We'll be holding our March monthly meeting at the Center for the Arts and Sciences planetarium located in Clute in front of the college. This should be a fun and interesting meeting for us. I promise to hold the business meeting to the bare minimum. See you there.

—Dave

*Dave Brandes is the President of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at [brandes@tmn-cot.org](mailto:brandes@tmn-cot.org)*

## MEMERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator

As of February 27, twelve COT members have turned in timesheets totaling 319 hours of volunteer time. Not great considering all the VT that has actually been done, but not untypical for this stage of the game. Many of our members are just a little slow off the block every year, but I am confident they will rise to the occasion soon.

A special congratulations to two of our 2015 interns, Jean Britt and Jill Carrol, for *successfully* turning in their volunteer time for the first time. Well done, ladies. Now I use the word *successfully* because two other 2015 interns also braved the "timesheet elements" and have received some constructive critique. But that is OK, they gave it a shot, and I like that. They (and you) will find that I am a pretty patient timekeeper, at least until crunch time around the end of the year.

If you did not attend the January general meeting (which would be hard to believe considering it was almost standing room only), you missed one our members, Sandy Henderson, receive her diamond dragonfly pin for accruing 5000 hours of volunteer service during her TMN adventure (see story, Page 4). Sandy was a member of the 2007 class of interns. Her passion for volunteering centers on the efforts of the Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue organization. Congratulations, Sandy!



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

**Texas Master Naturalist Program  
Cradle of Texas Chapter  
General Meeting and Advanced Training  
Wednesday, March 11, 2015  
Brazosport Planetarium  
Center for the Arts and Sciences  
400 College Blvd, Clute, TX 77531**



<b>8:30 AM - 9:00 AM</b>	<b>Fun and Fellowship</b> Refreshment Team: Julia Geisler, Johanna Harlan, Peggy and Pete Romfh, Joan Simonsen
<b>9:00 AM - 9:50 AM</b>	<b>General Meeting and Quiz</b> <b>Quiz:</b> <i>Same or Different</i> by Leo Novak <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i>
<b>10:00 AM – 12:00 PM</b>	<b>Program:</b> <i>Underpinning nature, our place in the galaxy – with lots of easy models to share</i> <b>Speaker:</b> Judi James, Director, Brazos Planetarium and Nature Center <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>

### THE BRAZOSPORT PLANETARIUM

By Tom Morris, October 2011

The Brazosport Planetarium is one of the gems of the Brazosport area. The planetarium includes a 30-foot diameter dome and a dual projector system along with displays, interactive, educational terminals, and a live feed from NASA. Audience seating under the dome accommodates 72 visitors. Incorporated as the Nature Center and Planetarium of Brazosport in 1976, the facility also includes wildlife Displays and a nature trail along Oyster Creek.

At the center of the dome stands the Spitz Model 4A planetarium projector capable of projecting images of approximately 2000 stars and five naked-eye planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn). The projector is of excellent optical quality and shows the sky so well that NASA astronauts learn the night sky here as part of their training program. A full dome video projector shows high resolution digital video across the full diameter of the dome. NASA's model of the shuttle (used in wind tunnel tests) is on permanent display at the planetarium.

Weekly programs are presented on Tuesday nights at 7 pm with the program changing monthly. Judi James, planetarium director, also teaches astronomy classes for BISD.

There is an active astronomy club that presents periodic "star gaze" programs to the public at the planetarium and school events onsite for students and parents.

Judi James is the Director of the Brazosport Planetarium and Nature Center, a Member Group of the Center for the Arts and Sciences. She graduated from the University of Houston in science education with a minor in geology. She holds Texas certification to teach secondary astronomy, geology, meteorology and oceanography.



Judi hosts a variety of audiences at the Planetarium. Her audiences include grade school students and the general public. She also teaches star identification classes for each class of incoming NASA astronauts.

Judi taught school for 29 years at Brazoswood and Brazosport high schools, including teaching astronomy for 14 of those years. She has served as Director of the Brazosport Planetarium for almost 15 years.

In addition to her duties as Director of the Planetarium, she serves the Center as show director for Brazosport Center Stages and as writer and director of the Elizabethan Madrigal Feast.

Judi's husband Denis is a founding member of the Cradle of Texas Chapter.

*Editors note: For a description of the Spitz Model 4A planetarium projector, see: <http://tmn-cot.org/Newsletters/SpitzProjector.pdf>*

## MEET THE INTERN CLASS OF 2015

By Roy Morgan, Training Director

. We now have 21 individuals wanting to join the ranks of Master Naturalists. This is going to be another awesome group. The class projects have been identified and the groups are already at work on their respective projects.

Be sure to meet and greet our new interns at the March meeting.

The project teams are already at work!

- **The Pearland Team:** *The Future Pearland Nature Center: Identifying & Nurturing a Healthy Habitat*
- **The GCBO team:** *To Be Announced*
- **The Quintana Team:** *The impact of Sargassum on Quintana Beach*



Ken Arnold



Fritz Bates



Mike Bettorf



Greg Bloomhuff



Patty Brinkmeyer



Jean Britt



Colene Cabezas



Jill Carroll



Bryan Frazier



Kendrick Gray



Anna King



Vicki Kirby



Ann Lange



Laurel Owen



Donald Sabathier



Robert Salzer



Maggie Schakel



Robert Simmons



Jesse Villasana



Mary Kate Ward

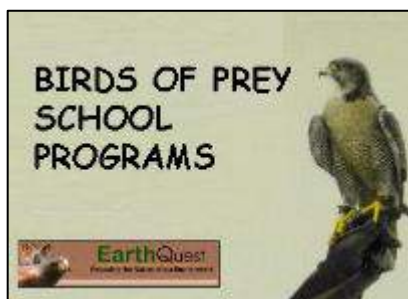


Patricia Weeks

Descriptions of the team projects and a bio of each intern can be found here:

[http://tmn-cot.org/Newsletters/2015-03\\_Attach.pdf](http://tmn-cot.org/Newsletters/2015-03_Attach.pdf)

## BIRDS OF PREY SCHOOL PROGRAMS



Every year during March and April, *Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges* brings *Birds of Prey* programs to Brazoria County for a few weeks before Migration Celebration. During these weeks, wildlife handlers from EarthQuest, present Birds of Prey programs at local elementary and middle schools.

EarthQuest, a non-profit environmental education organization based in Georgia, is dedicated to the education of the public as to their impact on the natural world. In previous years EarthQuest has presented programs in more than 30 schools in the Alvin, Angleton, Bay City, Brazosport, Columbia-Brazoria, Damon, Danbury, Sweeny, and Van Vleck School Districts, reaching a total audience of over 15,000 students and teachers.

For further information about the Birds of Prey school program see:

<http://refugefriends.org/BOP/index.html>

## NEW SITE MANAGER AT LEVI JORDAN SHS

Texas Historical Commission, February 2015

**BRAZORIA** — The Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Historic Sites Division recently announced the hiring of Ashley Carter as site manager for Levi Jordan Plantation State Historic Site, located in Brazoria. Carter most recently worked at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in North Canton, Ohio where he was a Collections Specialist. He has also worked for the National Park Service Museum Resource Center and the George Washington Memorial Park.



Photo: THC

"I'm excited to bring my experience to this position and look forward to working with the dedicated staff at the THC," Carter said. "This property is currently under development but it has a remarkable story to tell. I plan on working hand-in-hand with the community on enhancing the site and bringing its history to life for the enrichment of our visitors."

Levi Jordan Plantation is one of 20 historic sites operated by the THC. The site tells the story of Levi Jordan, who moved his family and twelve enslaved workers to Texas to establish a sugar and cotton plantation on the San Bernard River in the 1840s. The site highlights the multiple perspectives and evolving relationships of those who lived and worked on the land during the 19th century.

## SANDY HENDERSON REACHES 5000-HOUR MILESTONE

**ANGLETON** — February 11, 2015. The Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter has announced the Sandy Henderson, a member of the Chapter's Class of 2007, has reached the 5000-hour Volunteer milestone. Sandy volunteers at Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue and serves as its Treasurer and as member of its Board of Directors.

In recognition of her volunteer service Sandy was awarded the Texas Master Naturalist 5000-hour service pin. The pin is solid gold inset with a diamond.



Dave Brandes (Chapter President), Henderson, Jerry Eppner, (Chapter Membership Coordinator). Photo: Richard Schaffhausen

## HIGHEST EVER REFUGE SYSTEM BUDGET PROPOSED BY PRESIDENT

*Friends Forward* February 2015

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Obama administration has proposed \$1.6 billion for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in his Fiscal Year 2016 budget, an increase of \$135.7 million over the enacted FY2015 budget. The budget request includes \$508.1 million for Refuge System operations and maintenance, \$33.9 million more than the enacted FY 15 budget. If enacted, the FY16 budget would be the Refuge System's highest operations and maintenance budget ever.

Among other items in the budget includes:

- **\$10 million** increase to reestablish the Challenge Cost Share program to foster collaborative approaches to adapting to climate change.
- **\$5 million** increase for the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program to support the Interior Secretary's *Engaging the Next Generation* initiative.
- **\$3.7 million** increase for wildlife and habitat Inventory and Monitoring.
- **\$2 million** increase — to nearly \$11 million — for the Cooperative Recovery Initiative, which focuses on recovery actions urgently needed for critically endangered or near-endangered species.
- **\$4 million** increase to help address the Refuge System's deferred maintenance backlog.
- **\$2.7 million** increase for Refuge System equipment and vehicle management.

Further information: <http://tinyurl.com/fy2016usfws>

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR QUINTANA SPRING FLING

By Cecilia Riley and Carol Jones, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

Every April, thousands of migratory songbirds arrive along the Texas coast. And every year, hordes of local and out-of-town birders descend up the bird sanctuaries at Quintana to witness the migration. There are few services for visitors in the vicinity, so GCBO has established the "Quintana Spring Fling." During the month of April, GCBO staff and volunteers are stationed at the Host Station next to Quintana City Hall.

We need volunteers to assist with Spring Fling! Volunteers perform several important duties:

- Serve as hosts for visitors, provide information about the sanctuary, and help novice birders identify birds.
- Periodically walk through sanctuary, listing birds seen, and maintain a daily log of birds.
- Update the "birds seen" board near the sanctuary entrance.
- Assist with the operation of a small gift shop located at our Spring Fling Station, selling snacks, water, soft drinks, and some nature store items.

The Spring Fling Station is located just across the street from the Neotropical Bird Sanctuary (see map). It is operated seven days a week, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, throughout the month of April. Volunteers are assigned in four-hour shifts (9:00 - 1:00 and 1:00 - 4:00). Volunteers may choose to work a full day, or work single shifts on multiple dates throughout the month.

Volunteers are urged to attend a training session at the Spring Fling Station on Friday March 20 at 3:00 PM at Quintana Host Station. The training session will include an explanation of the duties, and the location of location of keys and supplies.

GCBO is a partner of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. Volunteer hours count toward certification or recertification. If you are interested volunteering, please contact GCBO Mary Gibson, [mgibson@gcbo.org](mailto:mgibson@gcbo.org) or 979-480-0999

GCBO is an independent non-profit organization. It is recognized as an innovative organization, which has designed and conducted a significant number of large conservation projects, including migration studies, habitat enhancement, land acquisition, and regional habitat mapping. For further information, see the GCBO website at <http://gcbo.org/>

### TMN-COT MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

Quintana Spring Fling is approved for Volunteer time. You may claim:

- All hours spent at the Spring Fling Station.
- Travel time for each round trip to the station. Travel time is limited to your actual daily travel time or the amount of time that you spend at the station *on that same day*.

Please code your timesheet "GCBO."



### Spring Fling Host Station

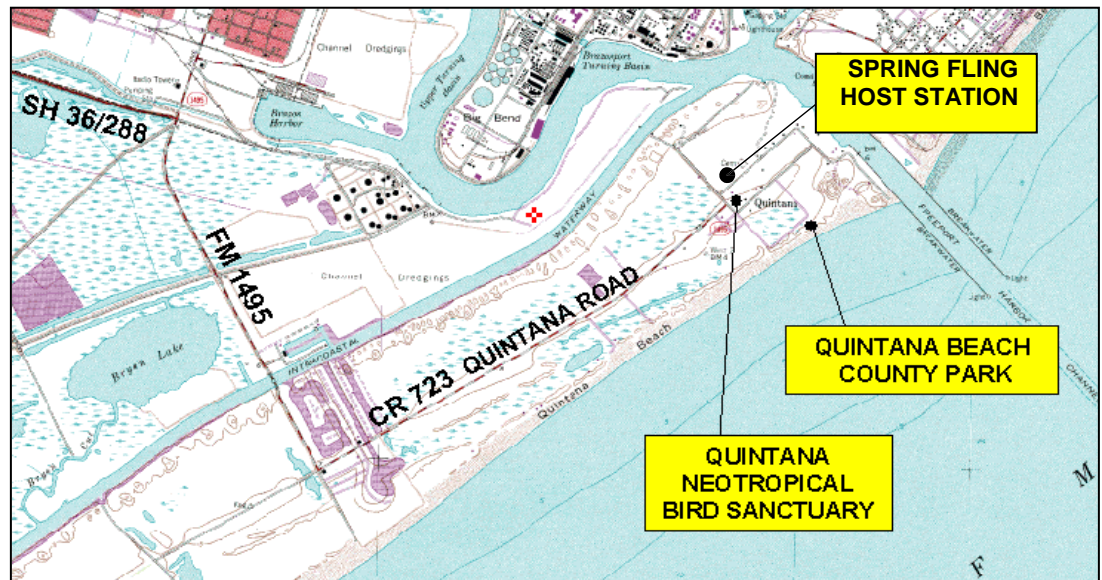
#### Location:

Quintana City Hall  
814 Lamar St.  
Freeport TX 77541  
979-233-0848

Directly across the street from  
Quintana Neotropical Bird  
Sanctuary.

Google map:

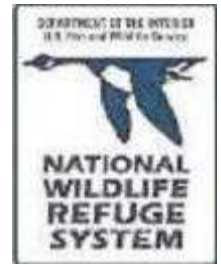
<http://tinyurl.com/mbg3ma2>





## GET READY FOR MIGRATION CELEBRATION!

Migration Celebration is an annual spring nature festival presented each spring by the **US. Fish & Wildlife Service** and **Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges**. Many Cradle of Texas Chapter members participate in the planning and execution of the celebration. Migration Celebration kicks off with a fundraising dinner at Freeport RiverPlace followed by a two days of events at San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge.



DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	DETAILS
March 20, 2015 5:00 PM	Photo Contest entry deadline	See Rules and Guidelines for locations. <a href="http://tinyurl.com/pq8sq6v">http://tinyurl.com/pq8sq6v</a>	Rules and Guidelines <a href="http://tinyurl.com/pq8sq6v">http://tinyurl.com/pq8sq6v</a>
April 1, 2015 Time TBA	Photo feedback with the Judges	Texas AgriLife Extension Building <a href="http://tinyurl.com/Brazoria-Agrilife">http://tinyurl.com/Brazoria-Agrilife</a>	Photographers meet the with the Judges and hear their comments
April 10, 2015 5:30 PM	Kickoff Dinner and photo exhibit	Freeport RiverPlace <a href="http://tinyurl.com/nabxv29">http://tinyurl.com/nabxv29</a>	Tentative Schedule <a href="http://tinyurl.com/ptjvfo7">http://tinyurl.com/ptjvfo7</a>
April 18, 2015 7:30 AM – 3:30 PM	Migration Celebration	San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge <a href="http://tinyurl.com/lud2vqr">http://tinyurl.com/lud2vqr</a>	Tentative Schedule <a href="http://tinyurl.com/os5yqw2">http://tinyurl.com/os5yqw2</a>
April 19, 2016 7:30 AM – 3:30 PM	Migration Celebration	San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge <a href="http://tinyurl.com/lud2vqr">http://tinyurl.com/lud2vqr</a>	Tentative Schedule <a href="http://tinyurl.com/o4qukom">http://tinyurl.com/o4qukom</a>

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed, and participation is approved for Volunteer Hours. This is a good opportunity to rack up some volunteer hours toward certification or recertification!

Volunteer positions are available for a wide variety of interests — everything from assistant cook to parking attendant and tour guide to information booth host. If you've never participated in Migration Celebration before, check out photos from 2014:

<http://tinyurl.com/Migration-2014>

If you'd like to volunteer, contact Ed Barrios, Migration Celebration Volunteer Coordinator:

Home: 979-297-1815

Cell: 979-415-4998

Email: [barrios@refugefriends.org](mailto:barrios@refugefriends.org)

## ADSPOTS

Adspots are small (about 2" x 2") advertisements used to promote upcoming nature festivals such as Migration Celebration. Adspots can be used in print publications and on websites

This year's Migration Celebration adspot was designed by Chris Kneupper and his daughter Christy.

Migration Celebration has reciprocal adspot agreements with **Friends of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge** and **Friends of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge**. These organizations place our the Migration Celebration adspot on their websites and we place there adspots on our websites.

Following are the three 2015 adspots.



**Migration Celebration**  
Friends of Brazoria National Wildlife Refuges



**Balcones Songbird Festival**  
Friends of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge



**Family Fishing Day**  
Friends of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge

## PHOTO GALLERY UPDATES

by Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

### January Visitors in Texas



*Redhead (Aythya americana)*

Photo by Jerry Eppner,  
Brazoria NWR, 01/18/2015

The Redhead is a DIVING DUCK. It may lay eggs in nests of other redheads, other duck species, or even in nests of American Bittern or Northern Harriers.



*Black-vented Oriole (Icterus wagleri)*

Photo by Tom Taroni,  
Brazoria County, 01/07/2015

The Black-vented Oriole is an accidental visitor to Texas and southern Arizona. It is normally found in north and central Mexico and south to central Nicaragua.



*Grasshopper Sparrow (Ammodramus savannarum)*

Photo by Tom Taroni,  
Eagle Nest Lake, 01/29/2015

Grasshopper sparrow parents prepare grasshoppers to feed to the nestlings by shaking off each pair of legs in turn.

### Winter Beach Finds

Winter is a great time to search for mollusks and other invertebrates that wash up on the beach, particularly with winter storms. Seashells of every sort are found along the shore, along with crabs, anemones, and Portuguese Man o' War.



*Atlantic Moon Snail (Polinices duplicatus)*

Photo by P. Romfh, Quintana Beach  
County Park, 02/01/2013

The moon snail is a carnivore that captures clams with its large foot, drills a hole with its radula, and sucks out the clam meat.



*Angelwing (Cyrtopleura costata)*

Photo by P. Romfh,  
Bryan Beach, 01/10/2013

Angelwings burrow into the sand or mud. Their long siphons are always protruded and circulate water as the source for its food supply.



*Blue Crab (Callinectes sapidus)*

Photo by P. Romfh,  
Bryan Beach, 02/20/2012

The blue crab's carapace (or shell) is about 7 inches wide and 4 inches long. Females mate only once, then lay up to two million eggs.

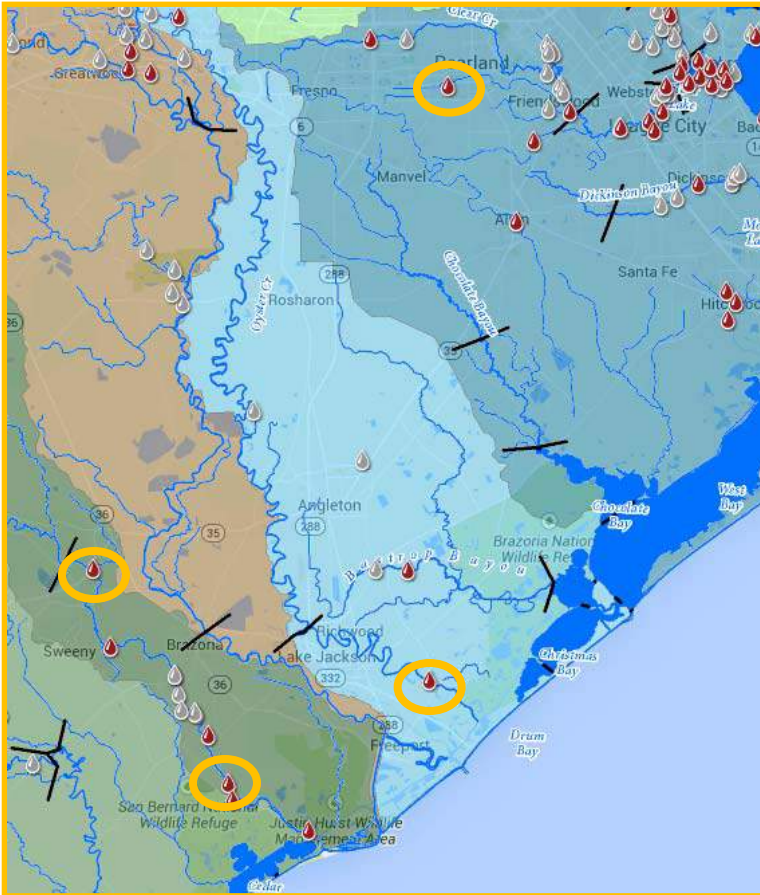


*Tricolor Anemone (Calliactis tricolor)*  
Quintana Beach County Park.

L - Photo by Dave Brandes, 02/19/2013  
R - Photo by P. Romfh, 04/11/2013

That warty-looking bump on a sea shell was actually an anemone 'hunkered down' after it washed up on the beach. The photo at right shows another tricolor anemone found on the same beach after it was placed back in a tank of sea water.





Texas Stream Team Water Quality Monitoring Sites in Brazoria County watersheds and streams. (Red drops are sites currently monitored. Gray drops are sites not currently monitored. Orange circles represent sites monitored by TMN-COT members.

Source: <https://aqua.meadowscenter.txstate.edu/>

## Upcoming Training in Water Quality Monitoring

March 14, Missouri City Parks and Recreation, 2701 Cypress Point Drive, Missouri City. Time: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. To register, contact Will Merrell, Stream Team Volunteer Coordinator, at 713-993-4594 or [Will.Merrell@h-gac.com](mailto:Will.Merrell@h-gac.com)

or

April 18, Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center, 20634 Kenswick Drive, Humble. Time: 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. To register, contact Teri MacArthur, Jesse H. Jones Park, at 281-446-8588 or [tmacarthur@hcp4.net](mailto:tmacarthur@hcp4.net)

## Oystercatcher Research Funding Lost

Susan Heath, Avian Conservation Biologist at GCBO, who recently spoke to the TMN-COT membership about the oystercatcher research that she has been doing with the help of graduate students, reported that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has chosen not to fund a proposal for follow-up oystercatcher research in 2015. She has worked out some logistics with Audubon Texas and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that will allow her to monitor the nesting pairs on a much reduced basis this year.

Susan has come up with a novel approach to obtain funding to continue oystercatcher monitoring along the coast with an “Adopt an Oystercatcher Stewardship Program.” Contributors may adopt an oystercatcher (or a pair of oystercatchers) banded in Texas. Even if you are not able to contribute, it is worth going to this site to see the photos and banding codes for many of the oystercatcher pairs that she has banded to date. Then, on future outings, you can see if you can find any of the banded birds!

<http://gcbo.org/showhtml.aspx?html=AdoptAnAMOY.html>



## TEXAS STREAM TEAM MONITORS QUALITY OF TEXAS WATER

By Peggy and Pete Romfh

Established in 1991, Texas Stream Team is administered through a cooperative partnership between Texas State University, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Currently, over 1,400 Texas Stream Team volunteers collect water quality data on lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, bays, bayous, and estuaries in Texas.

The Texas Stream Team program promotes the use of volunteer data at the local level, by partners, volunteers, schools, government agencies, business and industry and others, for education and for use in natural resource management decisions.

The water quality parameters that volunteers collect data include Water Temperature; pH; Dissolved Oxygen; Total Dissolved Solids and Conductivity (or Salinity in coastal counties); Water Clarity; Field Observations; and *E. coli* bacteria, Phosphorus, and Nitrogen.

Texas Stream Team volunteer data is available to the public through the Texas Stream Team Data Viewer.

<https://aqua.meadowscenter.txstate.edu/Default.aspx>  
Texas Stream Team Citizen Water Quality Volunteers are certified by completing training courses using test kits that measures physical and chemical parameters of water.

Participation in the program includes the following commitments:

- One-year commitment to monitor at least one location.
- Monitor their site(s) monthly at approximately the same time of day each month (the physical and chemical parameters fluctuate over a 24-hour period). Monitoring takes approximately one to two hours.





Photo by Mike Mullins, Sweeny, 01/21/2015



Eclosed [Emerging] Monarch.  
Photo by Anne Bettinger, Lake Jackson, 01/17/2013

## IS TROPICAL MILKWEED HARMFUL TO MONARCH BUTTERFLIES?

By Peggy and Pete Romfh

Tropical Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) is a non-native milkweed that is a popular host plant for monarchs. However, as Mike Mullins discovered, monarchs will stay in Texas instead of migrating south to Mexico if the tropical milkweed continues to flower and produce new leaves all winter. Mike observed this monarch caterpillar (*Danaus plexippus*) on January 21 on a patch of tropical milkweed that he had not cut back in late fall.

According to Cathy Downs, Conservation Specialist with *Monarch Watch* (<http://monarchwatch.org>), "The late colony of available milkweeds induced the migrating Monarchs to break diapause and become sexually mature. With temperate climates they may have found plenty of available nectar and host plants to take up residence. (The path of least resistance if you will.)"

She added, "It's also possible some home reared Monarchs were released late in the season and found available milkweeds for egg laying. If the caterpillars survived and actually pupated nearby they would probably be restricted in their development by the cold temperatures. You may just see newly **eclosed** [emerged] Monarchs on the first sustained warm weather. Peak migration in your area would have been October 15 to around the 25th."

Monarch expert Karen Oberhauser from the University of Minnesota (*Journey North, Spring 2014*), says the potential negative effects on monarchs from tropical milkweed include "1) continuous breeding on the same plants, which can lead to a build-up of *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE) infection, and 2) availability of milkweed during a time that it is not naturally available, and so potential consequent impacts on monarch breeding during the fall migration."

**One solution that has been proposed is to cut the tropical milkweed plants back to the ground (or bring the plants indoors) to encourage the monarch majority to finish their Mexican migration. Cutting back the plants will also allow fresh, healthy foliage to emerge for new generations of monarchs.**

### Monarch Population Status Winter 2015

According to a late January report by Chip Taylor in *Monarch Watch.org*, World Wildlife Mexico announced that nine colonies of Monarchs were located this winter season with a **total area of 1.13 hectares, up from the 0.67 hectares recorded last year**. It's the second lowest population on record!

Winter storms or poor conditions for breeding in the spring and summer could have a severe impact on a population of this size. If there are no winter storms in February and conditions are favorable as the monarchs move northward in March to Texas, the long range forecasts suggest that the population has a good chance of increasing again next year.

### OE

*OE is a protozoan parasite that infects monarch and queen butterflies. Most damage to the butterfly happens during the pupal stage. Adults that are heavily infected may die before emerging.*

*With a mild infection, the infected adults are often smaller, cannot fly as far, and may have difficulty reproducing.*

*OE levels on monarchs are assessed for parasitic loads by pressing a piece of ultraclear Scotch™ tape on their abdomens and counting the number of spores seen under a light microscope.*

<http://tinyurl.com/p8mumqh>

### Fostering a New Generation of Outdoor Enthusiasts

Source: *Friends Newswire Feb., 2015*

The newest *Conserving the Future* implementation team – the Outdoor Recreation Team – is developing a strategy to expand outdoor recreation on national wildlife refuges to fulfill Recommendation 18 (<http://1.usa.gov/1yftGMA>). The goal is to create a Refuge System recreation program that is relevant and accessible to all Americans.

The Outdoor Recreation Team has four sub-teams:

- **Recreation Access:** The team will look at improving signs along highways and calculate what it will cost in infrastructure investments to provide better access.
- **Appropriate Refuge Uses:** The team will focus on activities that attract new and diverse audiences and encourage partnerships with communities.
- **Wildlife Observation/Photography:** The team is seeking to establish a photography initiative. The team will expand online resources – and develop training and mentoring opportunities for refuge staff and volunteers – in an effort to provide the Refuge System's photography offerings to a broader cross-section of the public.
- **Other Recreation:** The team will assemble examples of the kind of expansive recreation offered on some wildlife refuges, including developing at least one outdoor skills center.

## TMN-COT MEMBERS RECOGNISED AT USFWS VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

By Tom Schneider, USFWS. Photos by Richard Schaffhausen, FOBWR



Jennifer Sanchez, Chris Kneupper

Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex volunteer appreciation dinner was held at the Freeport Community House February 19, 2015. During the event, ninety-one volunteers and refuge staff were treated to a scrumptious meal of Moroccan-Style Brazened Chicken Thighs, salad, and Couscous with shrimp planned out to the last detail by head chef Marty Cornell and assisted by sous chefs Ron Bisbee, Ed Barrios, Barbara Burkhardt, Ellis Burkhardt, and Dick Schaffhausen.

Highlights of the evening included:

- Volunteer of the Year Award presented by Jennifer Sanchez to **Chris Kneupper** for his help with Houston urban gardens.
- Recognition of **Phil Huxford** for 12,000 volunteer hours for the Refuge Complex.
- Recognition of Tom Taroni, Warren Pruess, **Jim Renfro**, **Tom Morris** and James Heller for their 25 years of service to the refuges.

Perhaps the most amazing occurrence of the evening was a "short" talk by Bryan Adams.



Phil Huxford, Jennifer Sanchez



Tom Taroni, Warren Pruess, Ron Bisbee, Jennifer Sanchez, Jim Renfro.

More photos:

<http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-VAD-2015>

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

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*Chapter News* is published monthly on the first day of the month by the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Submissions are welcome. Submission deadline is 5:00 PM the next-to-last day of the month. Submissions should be sent by email to *Chapter News* Editor at [tmn.cot@gmail.com](mailto:tmn.cot@gmail.com). Submissions may be edited for clarity, syntax, grammar, or spelling,