



CHAPTER NEWS

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

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



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

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE



Welcome to spring. No one seems to really know how this month became to be known as April, but it is often associated with the Roman Goddess of flowering plants, Flora. Her function was to make the grain, vegetable and trees bloom. She was also called upon to prevent rust, a fungal disease that causes orange growths the color of iron rust and is a problem for many plants.

For us, April and May are crunch months. The schools are all trying to get there nature oriented field trips in before the end of school and Migration Celebration is fast approaching. If you have not experienced any of the USFWS educational programs, Sea Center Texas educational programs and tours or Migration Celebration, there is no better time than now when the wildflowers are blooming, the birds are migrating and nesting, and the weather is just right.

Do you remember the recent Saturday when we had over 3 inches of rain? I do too, but not because of the rain. Our fellow member Chris Kneupper invited me to participate in the 60th anniversary celebration of the Boy Scout's Camp Karankawa facility near Sweeny. We gathered up some reptiles, skins and skulls and presented education programs to the camping scouts. Chris and his troop had just completed about 18 months of renovation to the Nature Lodge and this is where we hunkered down. What a great venue it turned out to be. There we were warm and dry in the middle of the woods with trails they had developed surrounding us. The scouts and their families had as much or more fun than we did. Thanks for the opportunity, Chris.

Let me also remind you that our state organization provides a ListServ with periodic news of TMN activities and opportunities. Check out how to subscribe on our website.

— Dave

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

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator

As of March 27, twenty four COT members have turned in timesheets totaling 1,167 hours of VT. This brings the COT cumulative total VT since inception to 155,458.

At the April general meeting, members to be recognized include **Ed Johnson** and **Pete Romfh** for recertifying for 2015.

Also, we want to present **Neal McLain** with his diamond dragonfly pin for achieving the 5000 hour VT milestone. Congratulations, Neal!

NEW EDITOR

After years of diligently producing the TMN-COT Chapter News, **Neal McLain** decided to give someone else the opportunity to gain monthly VT hours.

Monica Krancevic (that would be me) is attempting to fill the editorship. Although I edited the Brazoria County Master Gardener 'What's Growin' On' newsletter for a year and a half, this will be a new challenge...so please bear with me as I get up to speed!

I hope members will contribute articles, news, events and volunteer opportunities.

Suggestions for changes in the format or content are also welcome.

Contact me at:

krancevic@tmn-cot.org or

news@tmn-cot.org

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, April 8, 2015
AgriLife Building, Angleton**

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Refreshment Team: John Boettiger, Gerald Forrest, Tom Morris, Kim Richardson
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	General Meeting and Quiz Quiz: TBA <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i>
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Program: <i>Prairie Ecosystems and Making Sense of Ecology</i> Speaker: Dr. Barron Rector, Associate Professor and Extension Range Specialist, Texas A&M University. <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. Barron Rector, Extension Range Specialist at Texas A&M University, is with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management. Rector received his B.S. (1972) and M.S. (1976) in Biology (with an emphasis in Plant Taxonomy) from Angelo State University. He received his Ph.D. (1983) from Texas A&M University

in Rangeland Ecology and Management. From 1973 to 1981, he served with Texas AgriLife Research in San Angelo, Texas. His professional experience is biology, chemistry, plant taxonomy, environmental ecology and range animal nutrition. Dr. Rector's current program responsibility include urban natural resource program development, rangeland seeding, grazing management, plant ID and youth programming.

Dr. Rector is currently associated with the Texas A&M University Department of Ecosystem Science & Management.

Source: TAMU

<http://essmextension.tamu.edu/people/rector-barron/>



Dr. Rector discusses range management. Photo: Jeff Goodwin

Rector's educational programming responsibilities focus on teaching rural and urban constituencies principals of ecology, range monitoring, how to evaluate biological interrelationships of ecosystems. These principals are taught by presentation, development of news articles, popular articles, videos, demonstration and on-site visits. Issues involving urban sprawl and the impact of man on the rangeland ecosystem is an important area of programming interest.

MIGRATION CELEBRATION NEEDS YOU



Slots are still available to help make the Migration Celebration a success!

For a complete list of volunteer positions available go to: <http://1drv.ms/1CzVrR6>

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

Home: 979-297-1815

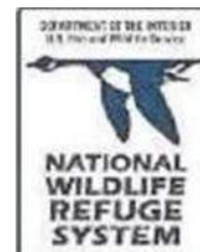
Cell: 979-415-4998

Email: barrios@refugefriends.org



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. http://tinyurl.com/pq8sq6v	Rules and Guidelines http://tinyurl.com/pq8sq6v/
April 1, 2015 4:00 PM	Photo feedback with the Judges	Texas AgriLife Extension Building http://tinyurl.com/Brazoria-Agrilife	Photographers meet the with the Judges and hear their comments
April 10, 2015 5:30 PM	Kickoff Dinner and photo exhibit	Freeport RiverPlace http://tinyurl.com/nabxv29	Tentative Schedule http://tinyurl.com/ptjvfo7
April 18, 2015 7:30 AM – 3:30 PM	Migration Celebration	San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge http://tinyurl.com/lud2vqr	Tentative Schedule http://tinyurl.com/os5yqw2
April 19, 2016 7:30 AM – 3:30 PM	Migration Celebration	San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge http://tinyurl.com/lud2vqr	Tentative Schedule http://tinyurl.com/o4qukom



Advanced Training Opportunity

Texas Master Volunteer Entomology Specialists

2015 Registration Information for MVES Training in Conroe, Texas

Registration is now open for the 2015 Master Volunteer Entomology Specialist (MVES) Training program to be held this year at the fantastic facilities at the Montgomery County AgriLife Extension Office (9020 Airport Road) in Conroe, TX between September 28 – October 2, 2015. The Montgomery County Master Gardener Association (MCMGA) is cooperating with this event.

Purpose of the Class. MVES training provides a unique opportunity for Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of arthropod life. The purpose of the program is to equip Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to support and expand insect-related county educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The goal of the Entomology Specialist program is not to produce entomology “experts”—rather it is to identify and recognize master volunteers who have received special training to support specific entomology-related programs or projects. In the past, projects have included educational projects for school children about bugs, building entomology collections for county programs, training other master volunteers, developing presentations, and/or applied research relating to insects.

What we'll do. We will explore insects and their relatives as an important part of both the human and the natural environment. Expert speakers will address topics covering insects in the environment, insect identification, integrated pest management, pesticide safety, bees, biting and stinging insects/arthropods, collecting methods and preservation techniques. You will have an opportunity to start an insect collection during the course. This year's course will include *night insect collecting* at the Texas A&M Forest Service location in Jones State Forest, 1328 FM 1488 Road, Conroe, 77384.

Expectations. Upon completing the course, you will be asked to begin entomology projects within your county to complete the training, and receive a special pin and official title of Master Volunteer – Entomology Specialist.

Registration. [Click here for Registration form and information about accommodations](#) around the Conroe area. Registration is on a first come/first serve basis. Only 30 participant spots are guaranteed for this training, along with 5 auditing slots (see below). **Submit your registration forms as soon as possible.** Payment and forms must be in the Montgomery County office by July 18, 2015 and no refunds will be given for any reason after this date. A detailed agenda is being prepared and once all speakers are confirmed it will be advertised.

Cost. Registration fee of **\$325 per person** that includes:

- Three lunches (T,W,Th), one dinner, snacks and drinks during the week
- Insect collecting kit including collapsible insect net, collecting jars, vials, glassine envelopes, spreading board, pinning strips, insect pins, pinning block, pin holder, insect repair adhesive, micron pen, labels, soft forceps, straight forceps, butterfly forceps, aspirator, hand lens and insect storage box
- Extension entomology bulletin set and other misc. publications.

Transportation. We rely on participants to provide their own transportation for travel to local insect collecting and possible field trip sites. Participant should be prepared for outdoor activity and dressed appropriately. We recommend long pants and shoes with socks, long sleeved shirt, sunscreen, insect repellent, flashlights or headlamp, and any other personal items you require.

Auditing the Class. Any volunteer who has previously completed the MVES training and would like to audit an individual class day this year, will be charged a \$25 fee per day which only applies to T, W and Th classes (\$70 for all three days) to cover costs of meals, snacks and drinks (no collecting supplies). Please **pre-register** for the number of days that you plan to attend. Only 5 auditing slots each day are available.***

Still Have Questions? For more information, contact Dr. Paul Nester, PNester@ag.tamu.edu or call 832-265-5639.

Citizen Science On-Going Volunteer Opportunities

At the last board meeting, the board approved two new volunteer activities. In addition, it's time to begin monitoring Monarch caterpillars.

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (<http://www.mlmp.org/Monitoring/Directions.aspx>)

Volunteers stake out and measure density of natural stands of milkweed species, and monitor the number of caterpillars found on a random number of plants.

A special project: If you can find a naturally occurring population of *Asclepias syriaca* (Common Milkweed) only, biologists from the College of William and Mary are collecting samples of those milkweed plants and the Milkweed Bug (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*). More information and the required protocol is available [here](#).

OdonataCentral (<http://www.odonatacentral.org/index.php/PageAction.get/name/HomePage>), the official repository for dragonfly and damselfly sightings in the Western Hemisphere.

Locate, photograph, identify and document damselflies and dragonflies in native/natural habitats in the Texas mid-Gulf region. Up to 3 photos of less than <1 MB each must be submitted on OdonataCentral's required on-line forms. All records are vetted by experts.

Some knowledge of Odonata identification is necessary as differences among species may be slight and often immature odes look very different than the adults.

As with other on-going activities, up to 2 hours a week may be charged to VT if not included in other accepted volunteer activities, with an additional 1/4 hour VT allowed for each record submitted and accepted.

Butterflies and Moths of North America (BAMONA) (<http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/>)

Volunteers locate, photograph, identify and document butterflies and moths in native/natural habitats in the Texas mid-Gulf region. Up to 2 photos of less than <15 MB each must be submitted on BAMONA's required on-line forms. All records are vetted by experts.

Although BAMONA encourages submitters to identify the subject, experts will identify those butterflies or moths that are unknown to the submitter.

As with other on-going activities, up to 2 hours a week may be charged to VT if not included in other accepted volunteer activities, with an additional 1/4 hour VT allowed for each record submitted and accepted.



Photos: M Krancevic

Photo Gallery Update by Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

Spring flowers are in bloom – it's time to visit Nash Prairie, Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary (QNBS), the refuges, and even roadside ditches to see some of the diverse flowers that grow in Brazoria County. All of the spring flowers below have TEXAS in their names!!!



Texas Dandelion
(*Pyrrhopappus pauciflorus*)
Brazos Bend State Park, March 2013



Texas Thistle
(*Cirsium texanum*)
Freeport, February 2013



Texas Toadflax
(*Nuttallanthus texanus*)
Quintana roadside, March 2014



Texas Bluebonnet
(*Lupinus texensis*)
Quintana NBS, April 2013



Texas Umbrellawort
(*Tauschia texana*)
Brazos Bend State Park, March 2014



Texas Star (Meadow Pink)
(*Sabatia campestris*)
Nash Prairie, April 2014



Texas Mountain Laurel
(*Sophora secundiflora*)
Brazoria NWR, April 2014

Photos by
P. Romfh

Texas Rat Snake
(*Elaphe obsoleta lindheimeri*), April 2011



YOU FORGOT ME!
TEXAS IS IN MY
NAME TOO!

You're
not a
flower,
Rat Face!



Ghost Crab
(*Ocypode quadrata*),
Quintana Beach,
Oct. 2012

THANKS
FOR YOUR
CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE PHOTO
GALLERY – WE
JUST HIT THE
50,000 VISIT
MARK ON THE
SITE!



Great Horned Owls
Great horned owls (*Bubo virginianus*) have been seen both at Brazoria NWR and at Brazos Bend State Park this spring. Jerry Eppner captured a photo of this owl sitting on a nest with the baby owl sitting protectively in front at Brazoria NWR (Feb. 2015).

Henslow's Sparrow
The Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*) is listed as endangered in 7 states to due habitat loss. Tom Taroni captured a photo of this sparrow at Eagle Nest Lake in Brazoria County (Feb. 2015)

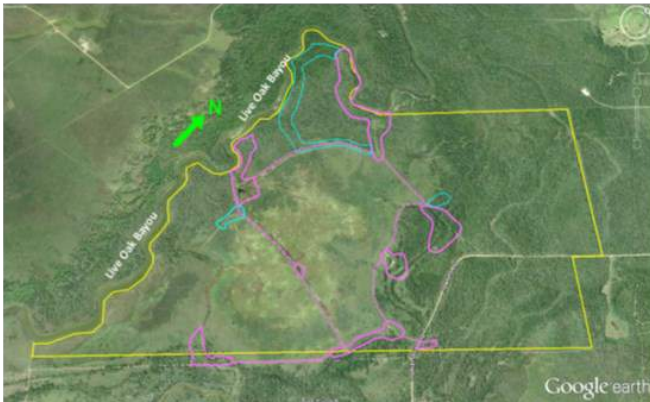


Tockonhono Naturalist

Unusual “Texas” Finds at the USFWS Live Oak Bayou Unit

By Chris Kneupper

The Master Naturalist intern class of 2014 accomplished a project at a piece of property in Matagorda county that the U. S. Fish & Wildlife (USFWS) had recently acquired, now called the Live Oak Bayou unit. The unit is located about a mile or more to the southwest of Sargent, on the east bank of Live Oak Bayou. A drawing was made by Denis Mudderman (shown below) indicating the boundaries of the unit (yellow), and paths that he and the intern team followed on the property (blue & pink lines).



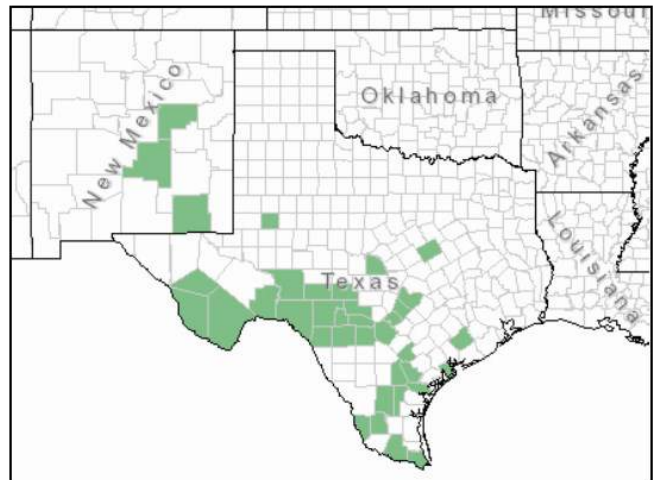
Although a full report was made by the intern team in May 2014, they did discover three unusual plant species which are not typically found in our area, all of which have “Texas” in their name - **Texas Mountain Laurel**, **Texas Persimmon** and **Texas Torchwood** - and I’d like to highlight them for you here. These species do occur in south Texas and the middle coast, but we were more than a little surprised to find them in Matagorda Co. Thus, the unit does offer an unusual picture of how plant species might form a gradient from our county to the west and south.



Photo: Peggy Romfh

Texas Mountain Laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*)

Texas Mountain Laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*) is typically a woody evergreen bush or shrub, but can grow into a small tree. In spring, it has clusters of lavender flowers resembling wisteria, and which smell like grape Kool-Aid. The seeds occur in clusters of large pods, which are tough and only slowly dry out and rot. The seeds themselves are large shiny orange-red beans, the meat of which is toxic. In smaller doses, the meat is hallucinogenic, which gives the species another name - Mescal Bean. However, the thick shiny seed coat allows the seed to be ingested without problems. The thick seed coat also requires scarification of the seed for propagation, usually with a small file or sandpaper. The species is popularly used as a landscape plant, but does require good drainage, so is usually used in raised beds in our area. It is usually found in the river and creek bottoms of central and west Texas but also occurs in the south Texas brush country, thriving in limestone soils. Some years ago, I heard a story that Texas Mountain Laurel did occur higher up along Live Oak Bayou near the FM-521 crossing, but I have never observed them myself. The USDA PLANTS database indicates that its range extends into New Mexico, but it has not been previously reported in Matagorda Co.



Range Map for Texas Mountain Laurel

Texas Persimmon (*Diospyros texana*) is also a woody bush or small tree. It is known for its beautiful curving trunks and limbs which have a smooth light-gray color. Older limbs tend to also have a thin outer bark layer which dries and peels up. In spring, the flowers are small and pale yellow or green - not very noticeable. Like hollies, persimmons have separate male and female individuals, so only the females bear fruit. The fruit is a small dark-brown or black orb, about the size of nickel to a quarter, and is crowded with seeds but is edible. The fruit is eaten by native mammals and deer, and is occasionally used by humans. The taste resembles a prune.

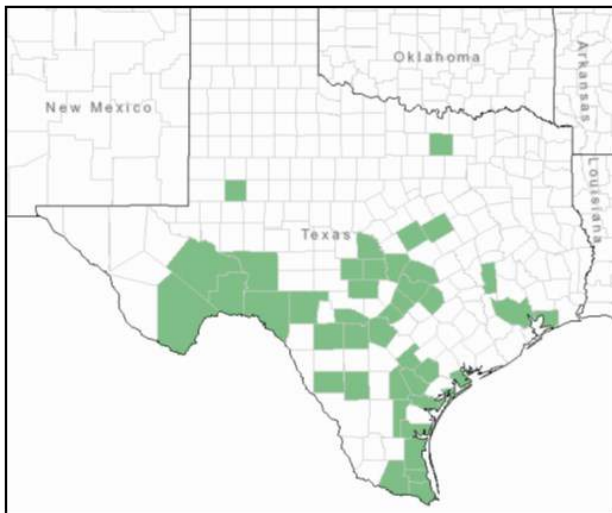
Tockonhono Naturalist, continued



Photo: Sherri Wilson

Texas Persimmon (*Diospyros texana*) at Live Oak Bayou

This species is very common in the Hill Country of central Texas, although it occurs throughout the brush country in south Texas, and also into west Texas. Some specimens have been reported to occur along the intercoastal canal on shell banks. The USDA PLANTS database shows that its range extends to Harris and Chambers counties, but is not yet reported in Matagorda or Brazoria Co.



Range Map for Texas Persimmon

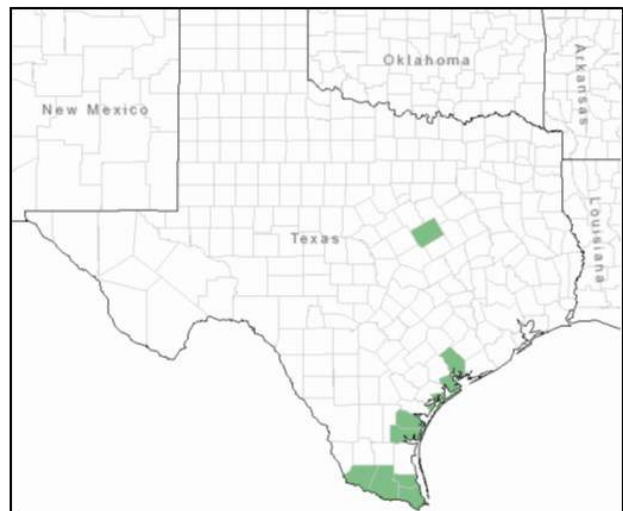
Texas Torchwood (*Amyris texana*) is a small bushy shrub growing no more than 5 to 6 feet high. It gets its name from the fact that the small thin branches have a high content of resinous sap that is flammable so the sticks ignite readily. It tends to grow in thickets, underneath taller brush such as mesquite, or among other brush so that it is hard to notice.



Photo: NPIN Database

Texas Torchwood (*Amyris texana*)

Texas Torchwood is reported to grow along the Texas coast north to the town of Matagorda, usually on shell banks a short distance from tide water, so any at Live Oak Bayou would represent the extreme northern end of its range. The USDA PLANTS Database indicated a more-limited range as shown below, indicating its presence only in the mid-coast area and extreme south Texas.



Range Map for Texas Torchwood

All three of these species were found only on the natural levy along the east bank of Live Oak Bayou. Their tendency to grow on limey soils suggests that shell deposits in this levy may have created a favorable situation for them. Many thanks to the intern team of Sheree Muzny, Sherri Wilson, Mel McKey, Dave Plunkett, Lou Golish and John Minkert, ably sponsored by Denis Mudderman, who did the exploring of the unit. As the range maps indicate, these species are very unusual to be found at this location, and may offer a unique reason to visit this unit.

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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.

Please reply only to the sender of group emails.

State Master Naturalist Listserv

- 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

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. Submissions may be edited for clarity, syntax, grammar, or spelling.