

T E X A S



CHAPTER NEWS

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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



Warm enough? Dry enough? The month of August gives most of us a break from our environmental education and outreach programs. Summer nature camps are over, kids are still out of school, and the library programs have concluded. It really is OK to take a break.

I'd like to talk with you about our chapter's conversion to the online Volunteer Management System for time entry. Those of us responsible for the implementation and long term management for our chapter have now been trained by our state organization. We are in what they are calling the third tier, meaning we must complete our movement to VMS by October.

First, let me tell you it's going well. We will all be defined in the system in early August with an initial User Profile, User ID and Password. Our implementation team (me, Jerry Eppner, Ed Barrios, Pete Romfh, Peggy Romfh, Connie Stolte) will begin testing the time entry user interface during August to ensure we understand it, and can train and help you with its use.

We plan to train all members at our September general meeting. This will not be a long process. Those of us who volunteer at Sea Center and choose to enter volunteer time from home have been using this TPWD VMS system for some time. It's a very straightforward web browser interface that on the user side works from every browser I have tried. I actually do this from the browser on my cell phone.

Please understand that when we cut over to VMS it will be the only way to enter time and you must do this yourself: from home, a library, the volunteer room at AgriLife, or anywhere you can access a computer connected to the internet. We will no longer be able to do this for anyone on their secure system.

Another big part of this transition is getting all of our member historical time submissions into the VMS system to ensure you have gotten credit for all of the hours previously submitted. The information that will be uploaded to VMS is now over 5,000 lines. We will still need your help if you want to ensure all of your time is counted. Jerry will soon be telling us when he needs ALL of your final timesheets submitted. This will be sometime in the next couple of months. At that time we will finish our hours' upload spreadsheet and submit it to VMS.

For any time not in this upload (i.e. any time you have not turned into Jerry before the hours' upload takes place) you must enter the time entries manually via the online VMS user interface. As I said before, this will not be difficult, but remember the caveat Jerry mentioned at our July meeting. You will not be able to enter any time you volunteered that is more than 45 days old. This isn't just for the transition. You will never be able to enter time more than 45 days old. I suggest you either enter it promptly after each event or put it on your calendar to do every month.

We will keep you up to date on our VMS conversion, but we'll let the above soak in for now.

I hope to see all of you at our August meeting. We'll likely have more VMS news by then and can answer or get an answer to any questions

—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

As of July 30, sixty-six COT members have turned in timesheets totaling 6,818 hours of VT. This brings the COT cumulative total VT since inception to 161,605.

At the August general meeting, members to be recognized include **Georgia Monnerat** for recertifying for 2015 plus reaching the 1000 hour VT milestone. Also, **Sheila Williams** has reached the 250 hour VT milestone. Way to go!

Of some concern to me is the low number of timesheets turned in during the last month. As you have heard/read, TMN is migrating to a new online timekeeping system. In the near future we will cut off the acceptance of our current electronic timesheet submissions and all time will need to be entered online after that date. You will be hearing much more on this in the future, including some in this newsletter. So keep those timesheets up to date. You will like yourself more when that cutoff deadline arrives.



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

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, August 12, 2015
Texas AgriLIFE Extension Building
21017 County Road 171
Angleton, TX 77515-8903**



8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Morning refreshment Team Ed Barrios, Barbara Burkhardt, Ellis Burkhardt, Mary Helen Israel, Mike Mullins
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	General Meeting and quiz <i>This meeting is approved for volunteer 1.00 hour Volunteer time. Advanced training credit will be announced at the meeting</i>
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Program: The Sargassum Early Advisory System (SEAS) Speaker: Robert K. Webster, Ph.D. Candidate and Research Assistant Texas A&M University

Abstract.

For the last 150 years Sargassum landings along the Texas coast have seen cycles of heavy and light years of beach landings. The last heavy landing cycle occurred between 2000 and 2006 with previous heavy landings occurring in the 1860's, 1890's, 1930's, 1960's.

There is usually a gap of 30 years between the heavy occurrences where Sargassum landings are limited. In the summer and fall of 2011 there was a massive inundation of Sargassum on the Leeward and Windward islands of the Caribbean.

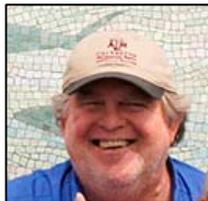


The Orinoco River of South America had severe flooding causing a large amount of nutrient rich water to drift north and make contact with Sargassum along the Islands. Once thought to be an outlier occurrence, this event has continued to increase the volume of Sargassum throughout its loop system.

Learn how Texas A&M's SEAS study, led by doctoral student Robert Webster, helps professionals around the world better understand this change.

Our research efforts are funded through National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA), Texas General Land Office (TGLO) and the Galveston Park Board.

ROBERT K. WEBSTER

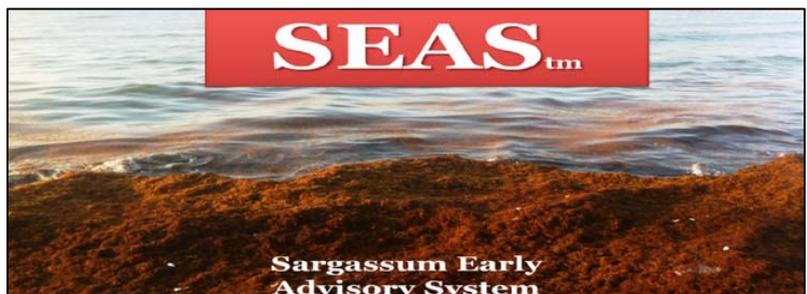


Education:

- Texas A&M University, Ph.D. candidate, Wildlife and Fisheries
- Texas A&M University Galveston, MS, 2004, Marine Resources Management
- Texas A&M University Galveston, BS, 2003, Marine Science Ocean and Coastal Resources

Professional Experience:

- 2011-2015 Developed and implemented Sargassum Early Advisory System (SEAS)
- 2005-present Research Assistant
Texas A&M University Galveston Coastal Geology Leads and assists with multiple research projects
- 2003-2005 Graduate assistantships
Texas A&M University Galveston
Manage research vessel for Graduate Department
- 2001-2015 Licensed Captain
Texas A&M University Galveston
Piloted multiple research trips
- 1979-2000 District Manager City of Plano Texas
Parks and Recreation Department



SUPPORT BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK'S GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Budweiser is offering a **\$25,000 grant** to the "favorite" Texas State Park

According to the rules, a person can cast one vote each day, every day, until September 30th

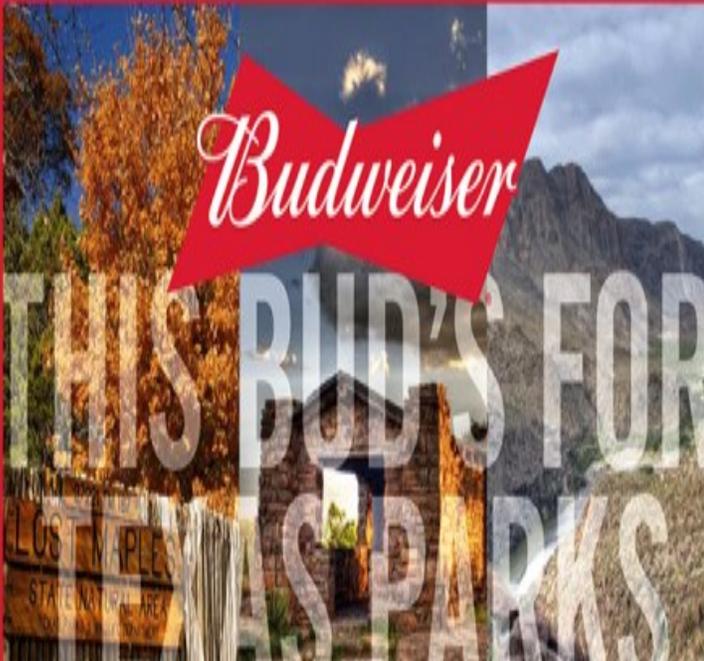
We can show our support for a TMN-COT Partner Organization—VOTE EARLY, VOTE OFTEN!

Click on the photo below to enter the website and cast your vote for Brazos Bend State Park

From [Brazos Bend State Park's Facebook page](#):

Please VOTE & SHARE.
The \$25,000 grant money is just what we need right now to help repair the park. VOTE & SHARE! VOTE & SHARE!

Visit tpwf.org



Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation

Give back and support the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

Your generosity is making a direct impact on Texas' lands, waters, fish and wildlife.

PWFT.CONVIO.NET

MEDIA LIBRARY by Neal McLain

If things go according to plan, our Media Library should be ready to use by the August 12th General Meeting.

It's located in the *Master Volunteer Room*, in the south corner of the AgriLife building. If you go out the back door of the auditorium and turn left, it's the last office before the stairway. The Master Gardeners use the same room for their gardening advice hotline service.

The Media Library was started in 2013 after the death of our former President Carl Dodson. Carl's family donated his books to the chapter for a permanent library. About the same time, following the death of chapter member Charles "Charlie" Clements, we received his books from his family.

Since the formation of the library several other chapter members have donated additional materials. The library now holds about thirty books plus additional items including CDs, DVD, pamphlets, and pocket guides.

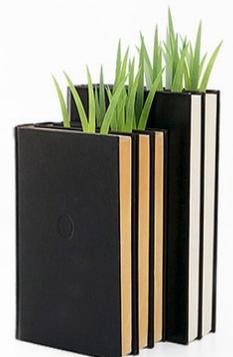
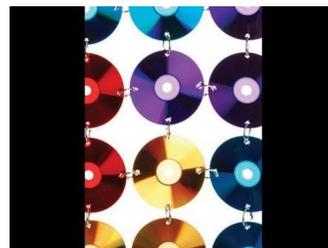
The library even has a section of "ephemera" for various non-book items housed in folders or ring binders. This category includes, among other things:

- Back issues of magazines published by the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service.
- Docent guides
- Copies of the TMN Statewide Curriculum
- Collections of printed or photocopied papers.

Many of the photocopied papers were collected by Charlie Clements. When I reviewed these items I was struck by Charlie's dedication and his desire to learn everything he could about the natural world.

For a complete list of the library's holdings see:

<http://tmn-cot.org/MediaLibrary/index.html>



LET'S CELEBRATE: "TIME WELL SPENT"

At an awards ceremony on July 8th at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, the TMN-COT recognized three members for their service:

- **Phil Huxford**, Class of 2001, 10,000 hours of service.
- **Sandy Henderson**, Class of 2007, 5,000 hours of service.
- **Neal McLain**, Class of 2004, 5,000 hours of service.

Chapter President Dave Brandes, Class of 2006, served as Master of Ceremonies with his special brand of enthusiasm and humor. Following the ceremony, members enjoyed a delicious barbecue lunch prepared by friend-of-the-chapter Ron Bisbee. Many chapter members provided a variety of side dishes, salads and desserts. A special cake was an added treat.

Cradle of Texas Chapter Host Pam West organized this event. We thank her for her tireless efforts.



Dave Brandes presents the 10,000-hour certificate to Phil Huxford



Honorees Phil Huxford, Sandy Henderson, and Neal McLain cut the cake

Photos: Richard Schaffhausen



The 5000-hour service pin is polished gold set with a diamond.

The 10,000-hour service pin is polished gold set with an emerald. The 10,000-hour pin is highest Master Naturalist honor.

The Saga of Beach Bones by Peggy Romfh

BEACHCOMBING

In June I found two vertebrae on Quintana Beach after Tropical Storm Bill rolled through Texas. They were unusual in shape, with long dorsal and transverse processes (6 inches high in one bone and 4.5 inches in the other).

After some on-line research and help from the staff at Sea Center Texas, I discovered that they were bones from bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*).

COWBOY CLEANING

The bones were darkened, likely from a long time in the Gulf, and a bit smelly, so the first problem came with deciding on how to clean them. Again, after research on the Internet, I found out that you should NEVER PUT BONES IN BLEACH as it dissolves the bone!

I found an old cowboy method for bleaching cattle skulls that worked like a charm: soak the bones for a few days in water with Dawn liquid or other detergent. Rinse and wrap the bones in an old cloth soaked with over-the counter hydrogen peroxide. Place in a zip lock bag and then into a black plastic garbage bag and leave out in the hot sun for a day. Unwrap and presto! The bones are white with no deterioration of the bone material.



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Photos by P. Romfh, June 19, Quintana Beach

THE LAW

The second problem came about when Connie Stolte from Sea Center Texas suggested that it may not be legal to possess marine mammal bones!

It was back to the Internet to research the law. In 1972, Congress passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). "In general, it is prohibited under the MMPA to (1) take, (2) import, and (3) possess, transport, sell, export, or offer to purchase, sell, or export marine mammals or their products." (Source: USFWS Marine Mammal Policy) **Luckily, there are some exceptions for 'beach found parts.'**

Jurisdiction for marine mammals under the MMPA and the Endangered Species Act is shared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The laws are complicated but basically state that for **some** marine mammals, 'beach found parts' may be collected and kept **IF AND ONLY IF** the parts are registered with the NMFS and the registration number is permanently attached to the part, e.g. the bone.

NO PART of an endangered species may be kept. NO SKELETON of any marine mammal may be kept.

Brenda Bowling, TPWD, who manages the Texas Marine Species web site, provided the latest update to the law.

(See <http://federal.elaws.us/cfr/title50.part216.section216.26/>).

Erin Fourgeres, Marine Mammal Stranding Program Administrator for the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office in St. Petersburg, provided the final piece of the puzzle. After confirming that the bones were indeed dolphin bones, she sent a registration form and number for each bone. The numbers had to be permanently written on the bones and the registration form kept in my records.

Interestingly, the bones may be transferred to a museum or educational facility, again with a set of rules from the NMFS and completion of transfer forms, but they may not be sold!

It's been an fascinating experience, and I am glad that I found the bones. They are beautiful and are a reminder of the importance of marine mammal species!

Can you believe it?



Photo Gallery Update: Kemp's Ridley Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

Photos by Patty Brinkmeyer, July 2015

Quintana Beach County Park



....**One turtle, 92 eggs, and a lonely trek back to the sea!**

The eggs were collected by USFWS personnel and transported to the Padre Island National Seashore incubation facility, where they will be kept until the baby turtles hatch.



FISHIN' FIESTA 2015

Members of Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges and TMN-COT joined forces on July 4th to promote their organizations at Freeport's Fishin' Fiesta 2015. They demonstrated snakes, turtles, and baby alligators to visitors at their exhibit space in RiverPlace, located in Freeport Municipal Park.



The Team

Clockwise from left: Ann Lange, David Plunkett, Robert Salzer, Kim Richardson, Ruby Lewis, Leyna Lewis, Justina Dent, Carole Wenny, Ed Johnson, Phil Huxford

Not shown: Mike Mullins, Kirby Rapstein, Candace Novak, Georgia Monnerat.

Photo: Ed Johnson



Mike Mullins with a visitor

Photo: Ed Johnson



Georgia Monnerat with young visitors at the turtle tank.
Photo: Neal McLain

MAY THEILGAARD WATTS by Neal McLain

August 20, 2015 marks the 40th anniversary of the death of May Theilgaard Watts. I write this in tribute to Mrs. Watts.

During my years in high school in Downers Grove, Illinois, Watts was the staff naturalist at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois. The Morton Arboretum had been established in 1922 by Joy Morton, founder of the Morton Salt Company on the grounds of his estate. The arboretum staff offers an extensive education program open free to the public. As Wikipedia notes, the program is "dedicated to a broader understanding of plants and nature, and ways to improve our world." [1] Classes serve children, families, school groups, and adults.

My family and I took many of these classes together, including several taught by May Watts. She taught a popular evening class that drew large audiences to the Thornhill Building, an elegant limestone structure that combined a large lecture hall with offices and research facilities.

Watts also taught a smaller weekly class devoted to closer study of specific topics. Each meeting consisted of field trip followed by bring-your-own dinner in a small rustic classroom building known as "The Shelter." Dinner was followed by a program presented by class members.

I remember two of these classes in particular. In one class the members were divided into teams, each of which studied a specific plant family and presented an oral report. By tradition, the evening's team also served some small food item -- perhaps a dessert -- prepared from some species of the family-of-the-week.

In another class, meeting in the spring of the year, each team was provided with a one-meter-square marker assembled from plastic pipe. The assignment was to find a spot of interest somewhere on the arboretum grounds, and to monitor everything that happened inside that square over the course of several weeks as early spring passed to summer. We were all amazed at the changes that occurred in those little square meters of land.

During those years my parents were close friends with many people associated with the arboretum. When my family moved away in 1952, one of my mother's friends gave her a copy of one of Watts' *Reading the Landscape* books. The card accompanying the book included a photograph of Watts. The photo of Watts accompanying this article is a scan of that photo. A copy of that same photo now appears on the *May Theilgaard Watts* Wikipedia page [2].



May Theilgaard Watts, ca. 1950. Photo by Isabel Wasson via Wikipedia. Public domain.



Thornhill Building Morton Arboretum, 2007. Photo: Jim Frazier via Flickr. Used by permission.

May Watts retired from the Morton Arboretum in 1961 and died in 1975.

After I graduated from High School my professional interest turned to the radio and television broadcasting. I entered the University of Michigan and graduated in 1967 with a Master of Arts in radio, television, and film. After several years in broadcast engineering I wound up in the cable television industry serving in various engineering management capacities until 2000 when I retired. But throughout my career I always maintained an interest in the natural world. Indeed, one of the reasons I moved to the cable television industry was the chance to work outdoors.

My wife and I moved to Texas in 2004 to be closer to our daughter and her family. We joined the Cradle of Texas Chapter's Class of 2004 and graduated in December 2004. The class rekindled my interest in the natural world.

But I will never forget May Theilgaard Watts. Although her knowledge and enthusiasm for the natural world far exceeded my own, I will always remember her as the teacher that first kindled the spark of interest in the natural world that I carry with me to this day.



The entrance to the Morton Arboretum, 2010. Photo: Benjamin Hoover via *The Benjamin's Weblog*. Used by permission.

May Watts wrote numerous books including the popular *Tree Finder* and *Flower Finder* guides and her *Reading the Landscape* series. She illustrated many her books with her own ink drawings. A partial bibliography:

- *Tree Finder: A Pocket Manual for Identification of Trees by Their Leaves* (Naperville, Ill.: Nature Study Guild, 1939).
- *Flower Finder: A Guide to Identification of Spring Wild Flowers and Flower Families* (Naperville, Ill.: Nature Study Guild, 1955).
- *Winter Tree Finder: A Manual for Identifying Deciduous Trees in Winter*. (Nature Study Guide Publishers, 1970)
- *Reading the Landscape* (New York: New York 1966).
- *Reading the Landscape: An Adventure in Ecology* (New York: Macmillan, 1957).
- *Reading the landscape of Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
- *Reading the Landscape of America* (New York: Macmillan, 1975).

[1] Wikipedia contributors. *May Theilgaard Watts*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 30 April 2015. Accessed 20 June 2015. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Theilgaard_Watts

[2] Isabel Wasson. *Photograph of May Theilgaard Watts*. Wikipedia Commons, Uploaded 16 March 2009. Accessed 20 June 2015. <http://tinyurl.com/MayTWatts>

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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

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