



Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE



Many things are happening this month. For one, kids are now back in school. This means our environmental education programs will be cranking up. These programs and our outreach events put us

in a unique position to influence generations of the public. For example, we are able to work directly with all BISD kids at least twice before they graduate for 4-5 hours each time at our wildlife refuges. Typically this is 4th and 7th grade. These fun experiences make them aware of and potentially cherish our natural resources at an age where they are exploring their world. Through them is how these resources will be protected for generations. We have just as much fun as the kids, so come help us with this mission when we begin again.

Some large outreach events are this month. Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in Lake Jackson is Saturday the 12th and 19th. Later this month is "Adopt-a-Beach" Beach Cleanup on Saturday the 26th sponsored by Brazoria County Parks Department. Very early next month is the Grand Opening Celebration of Buffalo Bayou Park on October the 3rd. Check our calendar for details.

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

Another activity ramping up for our board is the new state bylaws and operating guidelines for chapter management. Our state organization is trying to make these documents standard across all Texas Master Naturalist chapters. We are currently studying them to see if anything will affect us and will be presenting them to you for approval later this year. Before you ask, yes, it is mandatory that we approve them if we want to continue

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MEMERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator

As of August 30, eighty COT members have turned in timesheets totaling 9248 hours of VT. This brings the COT cumulative total VT since inception to 164029.

At the September general meeting, we will be pleased to recognize our newest certifying Master Naturalists, Mike Bettorf and Vicki Kirby. Also, members to be recognized for recertifying for 2015 include Ed Barrios, Elaine Crews, Phyllis Gerdes, Dawn Logan, Neal McLain, John Minkert, Georgia Monnerat, Mike Mullins, David Plunkett, Kim Richardson, Ken Sluis, Linda Sluis, Andy Smith and Lorna Witt. Kim Richardson has reached the 250 hr VT milestone. Pam Peltier has reached the 500 hr VT milestone. David Plunkett has reached the 1000 hr VT milestone. Congratulations to all.

Just a reminder. Our transition to the new online timekeeping system, Volunteer Management System or VMS, is progressing. It is very important for all members to be getting their current electronic timesheets up to date. Right now our schedule targets the end of September for final timesheet submission before we move full time to the new system. We will keep you posted on the progress toward that goal.



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

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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.

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, September 9, 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 Brazoria County Library System/Angleton Library
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	General Meeting and VMS Training. <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: Bees and beekeeping Speaker: Kenneth Nugent Brazoria County Beekeepers Association

Kenneth Nugent has been a beekeeper since 2011. He started out with a few hives in his backyard and now has beehives on four locations. What started out as a hobby turned to full time beekeeping when he retired from being an Industrial Fire Fighter and EMT in 2013.

Kenneth helped form the Brazoria County Beekeepers Association in March 2012 and has been the president of BCBA since it was established. The purpose of the club is to educate and promote the raising of bees.

He will be speaking to us about bee biology, safety around bees, and the importance of the honey bee on the American food supply.



TMN-COT PHOTO GALLERY HIGHLIGHTS

by Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

We recently played a 'natural selection' game with our grandchildren that involved repeatedly choosing favorite colors/flavors of jelly beans from a bowl of mixed color jelly beans, then watching the percentage of black jelly beans steadily increase as everyone avoided them due to their nasty taste (sorry licorice lovers!). We made the analogy to the monarch butterfly, whose foul flavor after a diet of milkweed provides both an undesirable taste and poison (cardiac glycosides) that keep the birds away, thus protecting them from predation.

It is interesting to observe strategies in the Animal Kingdom that keep species alive and safe from predation or more able to catch prey themselves. Some examples, highlighted with Photo Gallery photos, are shown below.

Ghost Crab

Ocypode quadrata

A wave of shimmering movement caught our eye on Quintana Beach this summer as hundreds of ½ inch, juvenile ghost crabs danced across the sand, their coloring exactly the same as the **tan and black specks of a Texas beach** and their speed up to 10 mph as they dove into carefully crafted holes/tunnels in the sand.



Photo by Pete Romfh, Quintana Beach

Gray Treefrog

Hyla versicolor/Hyla chrysocelis

Like the anole, the gray treefrog is variable in color. Frogs camouflage themselves from gray to green depending on the substrate on which they are sitting. This gray treefrog, was observed on a gray fence rail.



Photo by Cindy Goodrum, Backyard, Brazoria County.

Carolina Mantis

Stagmomantis carolina

With its long, leaf-like shape and fat abdomen, the mantis is often nearly invisible on vegetation. Males are usually brown and the larger females are green or brown.

The mantis' color varies because the nymphs are able to adjust their color to match the environment they are in at the time they molt.

Fact: Sexual cannibalism occurs in this species, and the female will often eat the male even while mating.



Photo by Denis Mudderman Brazoria NWR

Carolina Anole

Anolis carolinensis

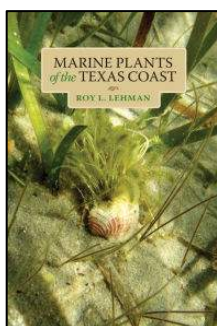
The **brown coloration** of the male anole (see red dewlap) reflects lower activity and cool, dark moist conditions, while the bright **green coloration** reflects higher activity and bright light.

We often see anoles on our patio – olive brown while perched quietly on the brick wall and bright green while actively seeking insects in green foliage of nearby bushes.

Fact: Even though it changes color, the anole IS NOT a chameleon!



Photos by Dave Brandes Brazoria County



Book: "Marine Plants of the Texas Coast" by Roy L. Lehman provides great photos, descriptions, and a plant key of plants found both in and out of the water along the coast, including shoreline plants, seagrasses, mangroves, and seaweeds. Trying to figure out what that seaweed is you saw by the beach? This book may be a reference you want to have.

PHOTO GALLERY HIGHLIGHTS, continued

: by Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

Resources and references are essential when it comes to plant and animal identification. Highlighted are a few unusual species and some common species that seem to have many similar relatives that are easily confused. Thomas Adams, USFWS, has been a great benefit in confirming or correcting plant identification on submitted photos. References, such as “Encyclopedia of Texas Seashells” by John W. Tunnell Jr., Jean Andrews, and Noe C. Barrera, provide exacting and precise measurements that greatly help in the identification of seashells. And most importantly, TMN-COT members with an expertise in different topics provide valuable input for the Photo Gallery.

Shark Eye and False Shark Eye Moonsnail Species are Close but Different

Two species of Shark Eyes inhabit the Gulf of Mexico, as do as several other moonshell species. Most of what we have found on the beach are Shark Eyes Moonsnails (*Neverita duplicata*). Recently, we found a False Shark Eye Moonsnail shell (*Neverita delessertiana*).

The False Shark Eye differs from the Shark Eye by having a ridge on the upper umbilical wall (it's missing in the Shark Eye) and an elevated spire (spire is flatter in the Shark Eye). See red arrows in photos below. In both photos, the Shark Eye is on the left and the False Shark Eye is on the right.



Photos by P. Romfh
Quintana Beach



Photo by P. Romfh

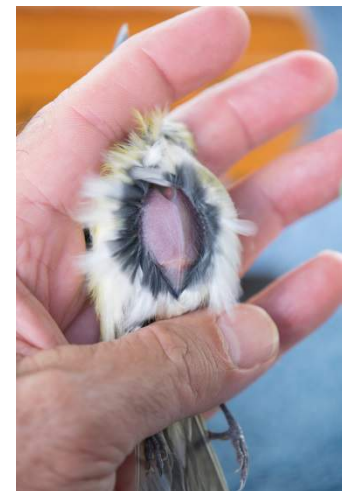
Longbarb Arrowhead *Sagittaria longiloba*

The ditches along the road into Brazoria NWR were filled this year with longbarb arrowhead with their distinctive pointed leaves.

Brood Patch on a White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*)

Recently, while observing bird banding at GCBO, we had the opportunity to see white-eyed vireos up close, as well as observe the pink-skinned brood patch on the vireo.

According to birding.about.com, a brood patch is an area of featherless skin on a nesting bird's breast, abdomen, or sides that functions to transfer body heat from the parent bird to the eggs that are being incubated. If incubation duties are shared, both parents may develop brood patches. Feathers fall out naturally for many species, but ducks will deliberately pluck out feathers and use them to line the nest for additional insulation and heat retention. Ouch!!



Photos by P. Romfh, GCBO

Small-mouthed Salamander *Ambystoma texanum*

The small-mouth salamander grows 4-7 inches and is typically black or dark brown with light gray or silver-colored flecks.



Photo by Cindy Goodrum,
Backyard, Brazoria County

Widgeongrass *Ruppia maritima*

The mats of widgeongrass that lie beneath the surface of shallow ponds belong to the family Ruppiales and are not true grasses!



Photo by P. Romfh,
Bryan Beach Ponds

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

The TMN-COT Board of Directors welcomes two new members effective with immediately.



Donald "Don" Sabathier has been appointed to the position of Treasurer to fill the unexpired term of our former Treasurer, Gerald Forrest.

Don is an active HR consultant and a member of the Brazoria County Master Gardeners Association. A former Eagle Scout, Don spent 30 years in the Army

Reserves. He notes that he "loves the great outdoors."

Don is a member of the Class of 2015. He was elected by the members of the class to serve as Intern Representative to the Board. He has left that position in order to assume the duties of Treasurer.



Jill Carroll has been appointed to the position of Intern Representative to the Board to fill the unexpired term of former representative Don Sabathier.

Jill is a former professor at Rice University and is currently a freelance writer for *The Houston Chronicle*. She is also a consultant and a facilitator where she facilitates a leadership program that has a wilderness component.

Jill has been educator for nearly 30 years and a highly skilled public speaker. She loves outside activities, building trails, banding birds, collecting samples and leading hikes.

Jill is a member of the Class of 2015.

CYNTHIA MARTINEZ NAMED CHIEF OF NWRS



Cynthia Martinez, a 21-year veteran of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has been promoted to Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System

Martinez started with the USFWS in the mid-1990s as a contaminants biologist in the Ecological Services office in

Phoenix. She then moved to the Southern Nevada Ecological Services Office in Las Vegas, where over 15 years she held various positions from fisheries biologist to field supervisor.

Martinez succeeds Jim Kurth, who was Refuge System chief from October 2011 until January 2015 before being promoted to Service deputy director for operations.

Source: USFWS

BRANDI BRADFORD APPOINTED HOUSTON URBAN INITIATIVE EDUCATION COORDINATOR



Brandi Bradford has been named Houston Urban Initiative Education Coordinator by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She describes her duties in this position as "to facilitate connecting urban audiences in Houston with the outdoors!" [1]

Houston Urban Initiative is a partnership among USFWS, the

Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, and Houston Wilderness. [2] Its stated purpose is "to coordinate amongst the six refuges and Ecological Services office in the Houston market, understand community values, and develop a marketing plan. The partners will create a coordinated presence within existing land designations in Greater Houston Area." [3]

Brandi holds a bachelor's degree in Recreation and Natural Resource Management from Texas A&M University, 1949.

Brandi has held positions with several state and federal government organizations:

- **Bureau of Land Management:**
National Landscape Conservation System Alaska Program Lead.
- **National Park Service:**
National Capital Parks East, Mammoth Cave NP, Great Smoky Mountains NP, Everglades NP.
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service**
Kauai National Wildlife Refuges
- **US Army Corps of Engineers:**
Lead Park Ranger, Red River.
- **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department:**
Program Manager.

Brandi can be reached at the office of Houston Urban Initiative:

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[1] LinkedIn: Brandi Bradford. March 2015.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/brandi-bradford/8/1b1/867>

[2] Houston Wilderness is "a broad-based alliance of business, environmental and government interests that acts in concert to protect, preserve and promote the unique biodiversity of the region's precious remaining ecological capital from bottomland hardwoods and prairie grasslands to pine forests and wetlands." <http://houstonwilderness.org>

[3] USFWS: Designated Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships. April 23, 2015.

<http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-Designated>

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE continued

operating. We will also be making our Policies and Procedures document consistent with these mandates. This basically means pulling everything out that is already in these new documents or conflicts with them. We expect only a very small impact on our operation. Our chapter had substantial input to the new bylaws.

Now, it's Volunteer Management System (VMS) update time. As we have said before, migration to this time reporting and recognition tracking system operated by Texas Parks and Wildlife is mandatory. There will come a time, shortly, when no time will be reported through Jerry, our Membership Coordinator.

In July we submitted a spreadsheet to state with all of our member information and their awards. This is referred to as the "People Upload." This upload was scheduled for early August but has been rescheduled by state for some time after August 31. I tell you this because it potentially impacts the training we plan for our next general meeting. This information, which creates accounts for all of you, needs to be done before we train. The half-life for training is about three days. This means if you don't use what you learned within three days, you will have forgotten half of it. So, if we don't have accounts in the system before our next

general meeting there is no sense in doing the training and we will need to postpone it until October. I hope this doesn't happen because we are otherwise ready to go. We are still planning for September training,

Our friends at the Brazoria County Library System will provide snacks for our September meeting. They are thanking us for all we do for the, especially the summer library programs. So, Ruby, Georgia, Candace, and David, thank you and you are all off the hook for this meeting.

All right, let's wrap this up for September. I hope to see all of you at our general meeting for Kenneth Nugent's "Bees and Beekeeping." And yes, I'm trying to shorten the business meetings. These seem to have grown substantially the last few years. Please come up to me before, during break, and after our meeting with your suggestions. It will work even better if you write them down and push them in my face.

See you soon,

—Dave

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

IN MEMORIAM

Chapter News regrettably reports the passing of two TMN-COT members during the month of August 2015.

DONALD VANDRAGT



Donald "Don" VanDragt, age 73, passed away in August in Arvada Colorado. Don attended Michigan State University, earning a Bachelor of Science in Packaging Engineering.

While at MSU, he met Patricia Martin and they were married in August 1966. In 1974, began his 23-year career with The Dow Chemical Company. The family moved to Lake Jackson, Texas, when

he transferred to Dow Texas Operations in 1979, advancing his career in operations and project management.

Don retired from Dow in 1997, but continued to work as a contract engineer and project manager for a few years. His wife died in 2005. In 2011, he moved to Golden, Colorado, to live near his youngest daughter and his beloved Colorado mountains.

Don was a member of the TMN-COT Class of 2010. He participated in trail construction at Dow Woods Unit and he attended the 2011 Matagorda Island trip.

Published by the Olinger Crown Hill Mortuary website on August 20, 2015.

GERALD FORREST



Gerald Forrest passed away in August 2015 at the age of 74 after a battle with esophageal cancer. Gerald had a difficult start in life when he lost his parents and sister to tragic circumstances at the age of two. His only remaining family member was his beloved brother Bill. After serving in the United States Navy, he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering from New Mexico State

University. After graduation, Gerald moved to Houston where he stayed for the remainder of his life. He worked at Automatic Switch CO (ASCO) as a Sales Engineer for the majority of his career. After his retirement, Gerald spent his time cultivating his large garden and sharing his love of nature as a volunteer with the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas chapter and the Master Gardeners Association.

Gerald was member of the TMN-COT Class of 2006. He participated in numerous Chapter activities including outreach and trail construction. He was elected as Chapter Treasurer in 2014 and served in that capacity until his death.

Published in the Houston Chronicle on August 7, 2015

CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Dave Brandes, Lake Jackson
Vice President/Program	Leo Novak, Lake Jackson
Secretary	Linda Sluis, Richwood
Treasurer	Donald Sabathier, Pearland
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	Pam West, Freeport
Publicity Coordinator	Richard Schaffhausen, Alvin
Publications Coordinator	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Class of 2015 representatives	Patty Brinkmeyer, Brazoria
	Jill Carroll, Pearland

Chapter Advisers	Connie Stolte (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department) John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service)
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Newsletter Writers	Peggy Romfh, Dave Brandes, Jerry Eppner, Neal McLain

Website	http://tmn-cot.org
Facebook	http://facebook.com/TMN.COT
E-mail Listserv	http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail



MASTER NATURALIST EMAIL LISTS

TMN-COT Chapter list

- Instructions http://tmn-cot.org/Email_Lists/index.html
- Send messages to TMN-COT@googlegroups.com
- Message Archive <http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail>
- All messages are sent immediately.

State Master Naturalist list

- Instructions <http://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmn-listserv/>
- Subscribe listserv@listserv.tamu.edu
- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator

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.