



Chapter News

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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.

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE



I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. I certainly did as I entertained family at my home in Lake Jackson. Our family has so many things to be thankful for, and I hope yours does as well.

It surely appears we will be welcoming perhaps the strongest El Niño winter in 50 years with below normal temperatures, especially in our area, and above normal precipitation. But, who knows for sure. There are other players affecting our winter weather such as the Arctic Oscillation, which influences the number of arctic air masses that penetrate into the South. Maybe we'll get lucky with just the right temperatures, the perfect amount of rain and the abundant sunshine we all enjoy. Well, we can dream can't we?

December is a month of change and a month of celebration for our chapter. We will elect new board of director officers at our upcoming general meeting. Remember that we will start our meeting this month with a social time at 9:30am followed by a business meeting at 10:00am. Please consider bringing some holiday snacks to share

"Yule is when the dark half of the year relinquishes to the light half. Starting the next morning at sunrise, the sun climbs just a little longer in the sky each day. Known as Solstice Night, or the longest night of the year, much

celebration was to be had as the ancestors awaited the rebirth of the Oak King, the Sun King, the Giver of Life that warmed the frozen Earth and made her to bear forth from seeds protected through the fall and winter in her womb. Bonfires were lit in the fields, and crops and trees were "wassailed" with toasts of spiced cider." – Yule Lore

Our version of this celebration is our opportunity to gather for comradery and reminiscing at a gathering hosted by some of our members known worldwide as "Hog Wild." Here we toast with the grape, not so much the apple, and we are all invited. Though not sponsored by our chapter, most of our members join the festivities as do our USFWS, TPWD, BCPD and other similar minded friends. See you there.

Just a reminder that the local Audubon Bird Counts begin this month and continue into the first week of January. Team up with one of our expert birders and learn more about birds and their behaviors. One of the things you will discover is birders love to share information about the birds they seek.

Finally, if I don't have the opportunity to say so to each of you this month, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

—Dave

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



The 116th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for December 14, 2015 to January 5, 2016. See Page 4 for the schedule of local counts.

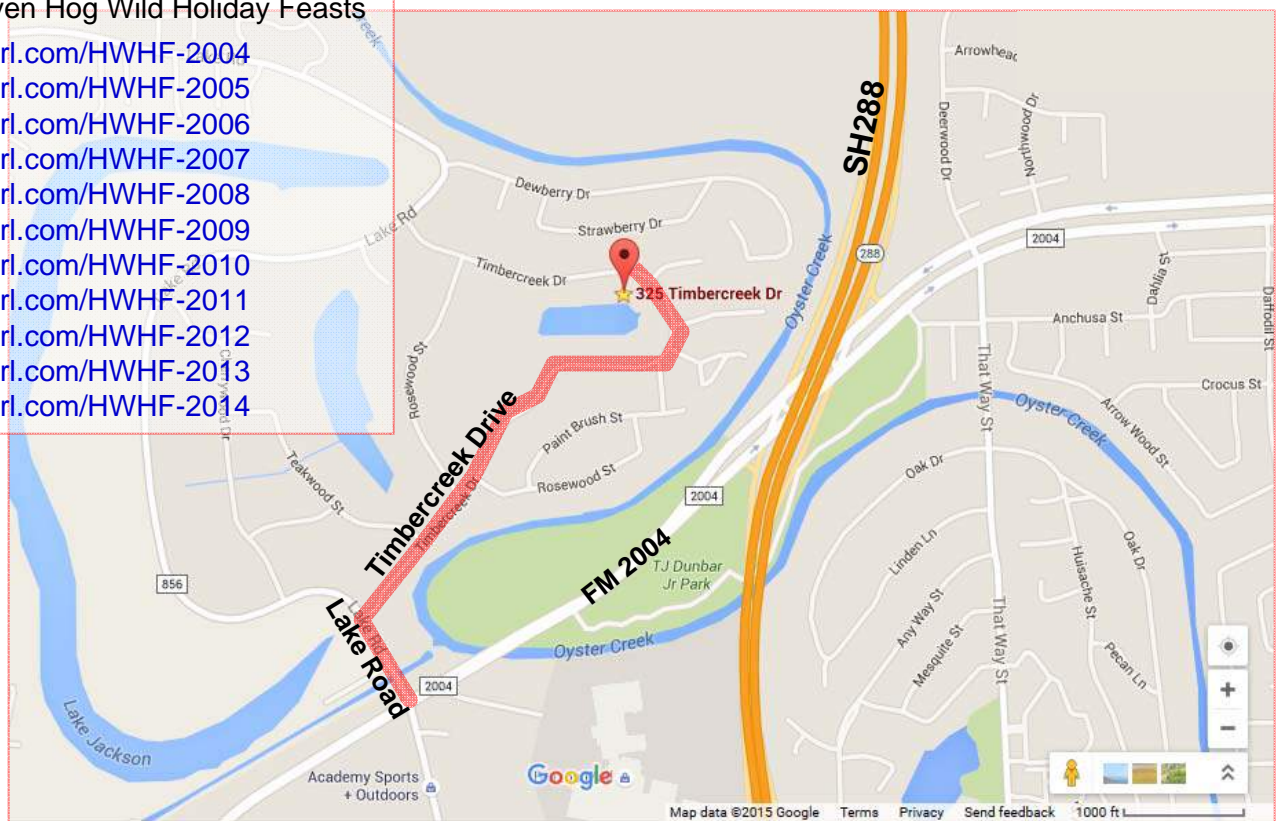
**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting
Wednesday, December 9, 2015
AgriLife Building, Angleton**



<p>9:30 AM - 9:50 AM NOTE LATE STARTING TIME</p>	<p>Fun and Fellowship Refreshment Team: Joycelynn Grigson, Mary Holler, Rainbo Johnson, Neal McLain, Sherry Summers Plus bonus goodies other members would like to bring</p>
<p>10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (tentative)</p>	<p>General Meeting Agenda: Election of Officers for 2016 Holiday Party (bring some goodies to share, if you wish). <i>This business part of this meeting is approved for Volunteer Time.</i> <i>There will be no Advanced Training at this meeting</i></p>
<p>12:00 PM - ???</p>	<p>Twelfth Annual Hog Wild Holliday Feast Hosted by Ed Barrios and crew. Location: 325 Timber Creek Drive Lake Jackson, TX 77566 979-287-1815</p>

New to the Chapter? Here are photos of the first eleven Hog Wild Holiday Feasts

- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2004>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2005>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2006>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2007>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2008>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2009>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2010>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2011>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2012>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2013>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2014>



NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

By Dave Brandes, President

At the upcoming December General Meeting we will be voting for our Board of Directors officers. The following individuals have been nominated and have accepted their nominations. Additional nominations for these elected positions are welcome and will be accepted until nominations are closed by motion from the membership.

- President - **Dave Brandes**
- Vice President - **Jill Carroll**
- Secretary - **Jean Britt**
- Treasurer - **Donald Sabathier**

These officers will serve beginning January 1st during the calendar year 2016

We greatly appreciate the members who have stepped up and agreed to stand for election and for board appointments.

Appointed Board Members are nominated by the President and ratified by the Board at the January Board meeting. Members that have agreed to accept appointment to the board for 2016 are:

- **Mike Mullins**, Past President
- **Jerry Eppner**, Membership Coordinator
- **Carolyn May-Monie**, Training Coordinator
- **Ed Barrios**, State Representative
- **Pete Romfh**, Volunteer Service Coordinator
- **Peggy Romfh**, Advanced Training Coordinator
- **Ruby Lewis**, Outreach Coordinator
- **Pam West**, Chapter Host
- **Richard (Dick) Schaffhausen**, Publicity Coordinator
- **Neal McLain**, Publications Coordinator
- **Patty Brinkmeyer**, Class of 2015 Representative

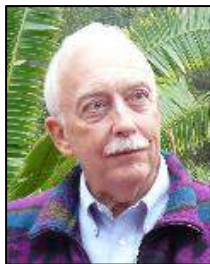
Continuing on the board will be:

- **John O'Connell**, Sponsor representing Texas AgriLife Extension Service
- **Connie Stolte**, Sponsor representing Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

I would like to thank the nominating committee Mike Mullins (chair), Pete Romfh, Jerry Eppner, Roy Morgan, and Ed Barrios on behalf of the Chapter and myself for their time and efforts to put this slate of candidates together

—Dave Brandes

ELECTED MEMBERS of the BOARD



Dave Brandes
President



Jill Carroll
Vice President



Jean Britt
Secretary



Don Sabathier
Treasurer

APPOINTED MEMBERS of the BOARD



Mike Mullins
Past President



Jerry Eppner
Membership



C, May-Monie
Training



Ed Barrios
State Rep



Pete Romfh
VT Coordinator



Peggy Romfh
AT Coordinator



Ruby Lewis
Outreach



Pam West
Chapter Host



R. Schaffhausen
Publicity



Neal McLain
Publications



Patty Brinkmeyer
Class of 2015

SPONSORS



John O'Connell
AgriLife sponsor



Connie Stolte
TPWD sponsor

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE 2015-16

Following is the schedule of local Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in 2015-16. For further information contact the following TMN-COT members:

David Plunkett 979-297-3322 (h) 979-418-1411 (c) doplunkett@sbcglobal.net	Tom Morris 979-297-4678 tmorris44@comcast.net
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Participation in any Audubon-accredited bird count is approved for volunteer service hours provided that you sign in and participate in the counting activity. "Counting activity" includes all time spent in the field plus training meetings, travel among count sites (if any), the countdown, and your travel time to and from the meeting points.

VMS Code: FR: Citizen Science/Field Surveys

December 14, 2015

Matagorda Co. - Mad Island Marsh CBC

Most of the count is on private land and participation in the CBC is the only way to gain access to some very productive wildlife lands. The diversity of the CBC is great and most sections have multiple exclusives. The CBC features extensive native grasslands, brushlands, floodplain forests, beaches and coastal marshes.

Brent Ortego - 361-576-0022
brent.ortego@tpwd.state.gov

December 16, 2015

Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR

This is a wonderful opportunity to bird the Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR. This CBC is open to all birders and is one of the highest inland CBCs for diversity in the country.

Sumita Prasad - 832-453-4374 - sumita@utexas.edu

December 17, 2015

Guadalupe River Delta—McFaddin Family Ranches -

This is a unique fun count surveying riparian forests near the Coast. The count is usually sponsored and the CBC will likely provide you access to property not available otherwise. This count was designed by Mark Elwonger and Brent Ortego to maximize the number of lingering neotrops. It contains 15 miles of the lower end of Guadalupe and San Antonio Rivers.

Brent Ortego - 361-648-9773
brent.ortego@tpwd.state.gov

December 18, 2015

San Bernard National Wildlife Refuges

This unique count provides opportunities to bird areas of the refuge not normally open to the public, including a newly-acquired tract along the west end of County Road 306, the Bludworth tract along Cocklebur Slough (2003 acquisition), and the nearby McNeill tract which now boasts the San Bernard Oak, the official state champion Live Oak.

Ron Weeks - 979-299-0066 - ronweeks@sbcglobal.net -

Saturday, December 19, 2015

Brazos Bend State Park

Now in our 30th year, we encourage participants young and old, and all levels of experience to join the fun. Strong leadership will be assigned for all groups and the park entry fee is waived for participants. See Brazos Bend CBC website for further information.

Justin Bower - 832-746-2140 - jbower47@hotmail.com

December 20, 2015

Freeport

The count is consistently one of the top ten in the country and finds the largest number of species of any on the Upper Texas Coast. Habitat includes seashore, barrier islands, prairie and woodland. The circle is divided into ten areas, each with its own leader and unique habitats.

Mike Austin - mj_eh@comcast.net

January 2, 2016

Brazoria—Columbia Bottomlands

This CBC includes Bar-X Ranch, Columbia Lakes, Hudson Woods unit of SBNWR, Brazoria Reservoir, Harris Reservoir, and southern Nash Ranch. This count was done from 1984-1994 by the Brazosport Birders. In 2009, the count was successfully revived with 45 participants and 145 species recorded.

Tom Taroni - 979-297-5563 - taronitom@gmail.com

December 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

www.free-printable-calendar.net

For further information —

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

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator

As of November 29, according to VMS, COT chapter members have submitted 14,602 hours of VT and 1605 hours AT in 2015. This brings the chapter to 144,982 hours of cumulative VT since inception.

Your friendly, but persistent timekeeper is still learning to navigate the VMS database to determine certification, recertification and milestones. That said, my current skills suggest the list of members to receive recognition at our December general meeting include:

- For 2015 recertification: Donna Graham, Phil Huxford, Rainbo Johnson, Jerry Krampota, Anna King (2015 intern!), Dawn Logan, Pam Peltier, and Robert Salzer (2015 intern!!).
- Reaching VT milestones are Joycelynn Grigson, Kim Richardson, Patsy Lepper and Sheila Williams for 250 hours.
- Pam Peltier has reached the 500-hour mark. Susan Conaty and Becky McClendon have each contributed 1000 hours of VT.
- And a very significant milestone has been reached: Tom Morris has volunteered over 4000 hours of VT. Congratulations to all for your achievements.

As always, as we transition into the VMS age, if you feel you have recertified or reached a milestone and have not been recognized, please let me know so I can check our records to determine where the error is. Speaking of VMS, miscoding opportunities on your hours submissions is still a bit of an issue, so please print yourself out one of the opportunity references on the website (see VMS Info on the left margin of the home page) to consult as needed. Also, we need to make sure we are picking the right "type" of hours for the entry.

HOUSTON URBAN INITIATIVE DEDICATION

By U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

HOUSTON, TEXAS — November 19, 2015. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and several partners celebrated the dedication of the **Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership** today at Clinton Park in Houston. With more than twenty partners on board, including the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, the Wildlife Service is helping Houstonians learn about, find, and care for nature right in their own communities.

Today's dedication ceremony included a short presentation by federal officials and elected leaders followed by activities and programs highlighting the partnership's successes.

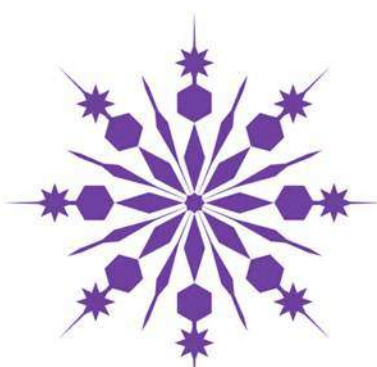
"This broad partnership is key to connecting urban youth in the Houston area with nature," stated Jim Kurth, Deputy Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "With 80 percent of Americans living in cities, working with urban communities is our greatest opportunity to inspire a new generation to love and appreciate our treasured wild places."

Further information about this event—
<http://tinyurl.com/UrbanWildlifeRefugePartnership>

TMN-COT members David Plunkett and Phil Huxford attended the dedication, accompanied by Jennifer Sanchez and Tom Schneider of Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The photo below includes many of the participants.



Participants at the dedication of the Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, Houston, Texas, November 19, 2015. Center: Jim Kurth (blue shirt), Deputy Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with Jennifer Sanchez (tan shirt), Project Leader, Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Photo: USFWS/Facebook. Public Domain.



A Photo Gallery White Christmas...by Peggy Romfh

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Unlike the ones I used to know
Where the prairie glistens,
and naturalists listen
To hear birds calling to and fro.

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every species that I sight
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white.

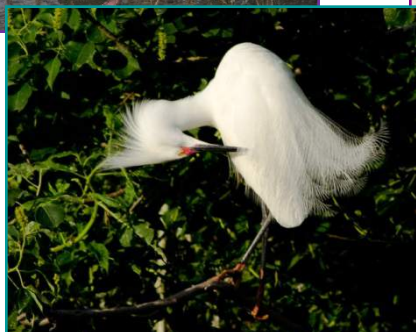


Photo Credits: Flowering Dogwood (Chris Kneupper); Wood Stork (James Wesselman); White Shrimp, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, White Pelican, Warty Anemone, Snow Geese, Least Tern, Rosemallow, Swamp Lily (P&P Romfh)

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 Editor	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Newsletter Writers	Peggy Romfh, Dave Brandes, Mike Mullins, Jerry Eppner, Neal McLain. USFWS.

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 and spacing.