



Chapter News

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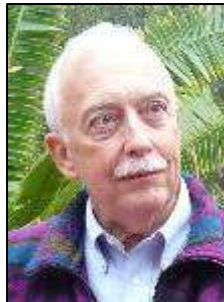
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Chapter News is published by Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Contact us at Texas A&M Agrilife Brazoria County Office 21017 County Road 171 Angleton, TX 77515-8903 979-864-1558 (Angleton) 979-388-1558 (Brazosport) 281-756-1558 (Alvin) 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



Happy New Year everyone, and I hope all had a very merry Christmas holiday. It seems we can say goodbye to 80+ degree temperatures for a few months. They tell us it will be a cold and wet winter. Since

Christmas, seven states including Texas have had greater than ten inches of rain. Speaking of the weather, I've recorded over 80 inches of rain this year. Normal rainfall for this area is 50 inches.

I had an opportunity to talk with our commissioner's court in early December about our Cradle of Texas Chapter and our activities in Brazoria County. One of the things I did was take them through the day of a 4th-grader on a DEEP field trip. They really enjoyed that. I also talked about the value of our service to the county.

One way to look at this is to calculate the in-kind value of our service since we were established. It turns out to be just about one million dollars. If you fell out of your chair, go ahead and have a seat again.

January also brings the generation of our annual report of activities for our state organization. While a bit of a hassle, it's always good to see a summary of our service for the year. I'll try to get some of it into next month's newsletter for you.

I also want to say a special thanks to our Membership Coordinator Jerry Eppner, who carries most of the burden of these reporting activities. It will be especially challenging this year since we tracked our service in both our old and the new VMS systems. Please be sure to get all of your time into VMS NOW.

Activities will be ramping up again this month, with DEEP sessions beginning again on the 12th. As always, I encourage everyone to come play. And, if you like playing in the sand at the beach, Dunes Day is the 23rd. In addition, our Angleton Library will be hosting a special evening session on the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. This will count as AT.

Hope to see everyone at the meeting. Some of our board members are supplying the snacks this month.

—Dave

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

INTERN CLASS OF 2016 BEGINS JANUARY 27

Our Chapter's next Intern Training Class begins on Wednesday, January 27. The class meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 8:30 am at the Texas AgriLife Extension building in Angleton. New members welcome! For further information contact:

Carolyn May-Monie
Training Coordinator
979-345-2150
maymonie@tmn-cot.org



Class of 2015 Graduation Ceremony. Texas AgriLife extension building, Angleton, Texas, May 13, 2015

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, January 13, 2016
Texas AgriLife Extension Building
21017 County Road 171
Angleton, Texas 77515-8903**



8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Refreshment Team: Neal McLain, Leo Novak, Peggy Romfh, Pete Romfh, Pam West
9:00 AM – 9:50 AM	General Meeting <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i>
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Program: <i>Opening the Mouth of the San Bernard River</i> Speaker: Colonel (Retired) Christopher Sallese, Coastal Programs Manager, Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation, Houston. <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>

ABSTRACT

The Mouth of the San Bernard River has been shoaled shut (blocked by silt) since 2012. In May of 2014, the Brazoria County Commissioners' Court hired Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation of Houston to develop a grant application for RESTORE^[1] Act funding to reopen the river and explore the options of developing a structural solution to the shoaling problem. The presentation will review the modeling efforts executed by team presented to the County for their consideration.

Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation is an engineering consulting and design firm based in Houston. It offers civil, structural, environmental, and transportation engineering consultation for industry, government, and private development. According to its website, Dannenbaum is "widely regarded among the state's premier firms for the planning and design of all types of infrastructure."
<http://www.dannenbaum.com/>



Our guest speaker, Colonel (Retired) Christopher Sallese, is the Coastal Programs Manager for Dannenbaum. Colonel Sallese spent more than 27 years in the U.S. Army before entering the private sector, including more than three years as Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Galveston District.

Colonel Sallese's qualifications include leadership and management experience in engineering; emergency management; coastal operations and management; ecosystem restoration and resource sustainability; risk mitigation; strategic planning; interagency operations

and disaster response and recovery. During his military career, he was extensively involved in the planning, programming and execution of federal civil works programs along the Texas Gulf Coast encompassing flood damage reduction, navigation, regulatory activities, water quality, environmental conservation, recreation, emergency response services, and economic vitality.

Colonel Sallese joined Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation in 2013 and serves as the firm's Coastal Programs Manager. He is currently working with numerous clients both public and private on terminal develop and rehabilitation projects and serves as the Project Manager for the Gulf Coast Community Protection and Recovery District's storm surge protection study which encompasses the Texas Coast from Orange to Brazoria County.

[1] The RESTORE Act (the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act) is a United States federal statute that was signed into law by President Barack Obama on July 6, 2012. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RESTORE_Act

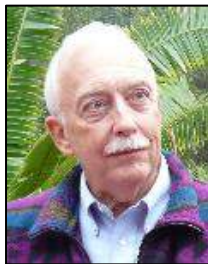
ELECTIONS REPORT

By Dave Brandes and Neal McLain

ANGLETON, TEXAS — December 8, 2015 — At its regular monthly meeting held here today, members of the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter elected officers and directors to serve during the calendar year 2016. There were no nominations from the floor so the slate of officers presented the nominating committee was elected by acclamation:

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

ELECTED MEMBERS of the BOARD`



Dave Brandes
President



Jill Carroll
Vice President



Jean Britt
Secretary



Don Sabathier
Treasurer

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 our two sponsors:

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

We appreciate these members who have stepped up and agreed to stand for election and for board appointments

And we appreciate the efforts of Nominating Committee members consist of TMN-COT members Mike Mullins (chair), Pete Romfh, Jerry Eppner, Roy Morgan, and Ed Barrios.

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

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Jerry Eppner, Membership Coordinator

As we approach the end of 2015, we can look back and see a year of change and challenge as we transitioned from our old timekeeping system to the new online Volunteer Management System. While not without its startup issues, we can predict the new system will help us keep up with our volunteer service more easily and accurately as we move forward.

As of December 28, COT has logged 15,600 hours of volunteer time and 1641 hours of advanced training. I will not run the final numbers for milestones and recertifications until I get them in preparation for completing our annual report to state.

Which brings up two requests, both of which you have heard before. We need everyone to log into VMS and, if you have not done so already, update your profile. Your profiles contain information that we will need to complete our report. Also, we need everyone to enter their 2015 hours before January 10. There are very few volunteer opportunities left for 2015, so logging your final hours as soon as possible, but no later than January 10, should be easy and is requested.

TWPD SETS FIREARMS OPEN CARRY POLICY

AUSTIN, TEXAS – December 2015. The Texas Park & Wildlife Department has announced its policy with respect to open-carry firearms in TPWD facilities. This policy applies to all Texas Master Naturalist volunteers because TMN volunteers are officially part of the TPWD volunteer program. TMN volunteers are asked to abide by this policy while volunteering as Master Naturalist at any site or location.

For details see Attachment #1:

http://tmn-cot.org/Newsletters/Chapter_News_2016-01-A1.pdf

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND REAUTHORIZED USFWS FUNDING INCREASED

WASHINGTON, D.C. – December 16, 2015. The United States Congress today enacted a 1.1-trillion-dollar spending bill. Among other things this bill reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund for three years and provides additional funding for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The Refuge System's Operations and Maintenance budget was set at \$481 million, a \$7.2 million increase over last year's budget. Overall, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service budget was set at \$1.5 billion, an increase of \$68 million.

For details see Attachment #2:

http://tmn-cot.org/Newsletters/Chapter_News_2016-01-A2.pdf

TMN-COT VOLUNTEERS ASSIST AT HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AT DISCOVERY CENTER

ANGLTON TEXAS — December 29, 2015. Again this year volunteers from the Cradle of Texas Chapter assisted with the annual Holiday Open House at the Discovery Center at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge. The open house was open to the public from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM for six days between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Thanks to all volunteers for their assistance!



TMN-COT Volunteer Richard Shaffhausen holds a corn snake for two young visitors,



TMN-COT Volunteer Kim Richardson helps a visitor use a microscope.

Photos: Richard Schaffhausen/Facebook

NEW FACES AT THE DISCOVERY CENTER



Kelly Koch

Kelly Koch Education Coordinator



Kelly is the Education Coordinator for Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. In this position she schedules volunteer assignments for the DEEP (Discovery Environmental Education Program)

and HWEPP (Hudson Woods Environmental Education Program).

Kelly is a graduate of the University of Missouri Columbia, where she studied Natural Resource Management. She discovered her love for the natural world while fly-fishing on Ozark streams in her home state of Missouri. Kelly is a Certified Wildlife Interpretive guide and began her career with the Missouri State Parks.

Kelly is currently a Student Conservation Association intern. Her position at Brazoria NWR involves working with volunteers that make up the Environmental Education program. Visit the Discovery Center to hear her bird calls!.

Mary Hoffman RV Volunteer



Mary Hoffman is from Wisconsin; She worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 20 years. After she retired from USPS she returned to college and started her true

love — working in natural resources. She has volunteered for a state park in the redwoods in California, and for a National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina.

She reports that she loves the diversity of Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, where she volunteers with her husband Steve.

J.B. Doyle RV Volunteer



J. B. Doyle identifies himself as "Native Texan, raised in West Texas, Midland area." He served four years in the U.S. Air Force as a Jet Engine Mechanic. He retired from

Continental Airlines in 1984, and "completely retired" in 2004. He traveled in Europe, South Africa, Mexico, Central America or four years.

He started volunteering in 2012 with the U.S. Forest Service (2012-15). He notes that "this is my opportunity to volunteer with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. My first month here has been fantastic!

What's an RV Volunteer?

According to the USFWS website, RV Volunteers (properly called resident volunteer) work side-by-side with refuge staff and become part of the refuge family. They have a beautiful place to live for a period of time and are able to explore and experience the refuge as well as the local area. In return, the refuge gains valuable volunteer assistance.

Opportunities are available at many U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service national wildlife refuges and national fish hatcheries. Resident Volunteers may provide their own "homes" (some type of recreational vehicle), or they may stay in refuge housing if available. The field station typically provides such amenities as an RV pad with septic, water and electricity hook-ups. In some cases, there will be a "common area" provided with laundry facilities, Internet access, phones. Housing may consist of shared spaces such as houses, bunkhouses, cabins, mobile homes, trailers, and even field camps.

<http://www.fws.gov/volunteers/residentVolPrograms.html>

URBAN PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED IN HOUSTON

USFWS *Friends Forward*, December 2015 ^[1]

HOUSTON, TEXAS — November 28, 2015. Clinton City Park in Houston was bustling with activity today when 300 people gathered to celebrate the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, one of 17 partnerships around the country designed to connect city residents with conservation stewardship. The Houston partnership brings together more than 20 organizations to help Houston residents learn about, find and care for nature in their community.

The partnership, established in 2013, seeks to link each of four refuges and their Friends groups with four Houston parks and their support groups:

- **Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge** with Clinton City Park.
- **Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge** and Hermann Park
- **Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge** with Carverdale City Park
- **Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge** with Hobart Taylor City Park.

Nancy Brown, Southwest Region urban and Friends coordinator, expects Friends groups and sister parks to apply for grants together to implement projects.

Guests at the November 18 celebration included Houston representatives of Phi Beta Sigma Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, an African American fraternal organizations that has agreements with the Service to promote conservation among young people. The Friends of Anahuac Refuge began making connections with the Super Neighborhood Committee, a civic association and Clinton Park support group.

During the ceremony, the first seeds were planted for both a pollinator garden and a native seed bank. The 17-acre native seed bank on two city parks will provide seeds for habitat restoration, including seeding 38,000 acres of city parkland with native species. The gardens were funded with a \$1,500 grant from the National Conservation Training Center, which offered a course in Houston on planting habitat gardens with kids. NCTC offers "Building Urban Wildlife Habitats with Youth" in a different location each year. The next course, which is open to Friends, will be held at San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in May 2016.

Since its establishment, the Houston Partnership has supported 28 organizations with habitat restoration and/or environmental education programs. The partnership has reached more than 1,190 youth through both formal and informal environmental education programs.

Since its establishment, the Houston Partnership has supported 28 organizations with habitat restoration and/or environmental education programs. The partnership has reached more than 1,190 youth through both formal and informal environmental education programs.

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.

Photo at right: participants at the dedication of the Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, Houston, Texas, November 19, 2015. Pictured are 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..



The Furr High School Green Ambassadors are a model for "youth teaching youth" about conservation.
Photo: USFWS



Children helped plant a pollinator garden and a native seed bank in their neighborhood park.
Photo: USFWS

[1] "Urban Partnership Launched in Houston" *Friends Forward*, December 2015. <http://tinyurl.com/UrbanPartnerships>

PELICANS ALONG THE TEXAS GULF COAST

by Peggy Romfh

Who among us has not enjoyed the site of a formation of brown pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) gliding above the surf in an undulating pattern above the waves or the kamikaze style of diving they employ as they plunge into the water to stun and then scoop up fish? They tilt their heads skyward to drain the water out of their pouches and swallow fish, which may be seen outlined behind the expandable throat pouches. Sometimes a sea gull is seen perching on the back or head of a fishing pelican as it tries to steal the fish the pelican has caught.

Brown pelicans were at the brink of extinction in the 1970's due to the effect of pesticides such as DDT on the eggshells, but the population has rebounded. Brown pelicans are seen year round along the Texas Gulf Coast.

Live along southern and western coasts; rarely seen inland
Wingspan to 79 inches
Slightly smaller than American White pelicans
Fish by diving



Brown Pelicans, Left and center - Bastrop Bayou; photos by Pam West. Right – Quintana Jetty County Park; photo by P. Romfh



American White Pelicans. L – Bastrop Bay, photo by Pam West. R – Salt Lake, Brazoria NWR, photo by P. Romfh

American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) breed in the northern USA and Canada and migrate south to spend winter along the coast. White pelicans snowy white with black flight feathers are visible only when the wings are spread.

Unlike brown pelicans, white pelicans dip their heads below the surface of the water to feed. They often work cooperatively to fish. We've often seen a group of white pelicans gracefully encircle and herd a school of fish towards the shallows, and when the fish are corralled, they all dip their heads together to scoop up their catch.

Migrate through midlands of USA; winter along western and southern coasts
Wingspan to 114 inches (second largest average wingspan of any North American bird, after the California condor)
Fish by corraling fish, then dipping heads under water to scoop them up
Soar high in the air

SAN BERNARD RIVER: STILL BLOCKED

By Neal McLain

Author's note: this article is a revised version of an article I wrote for the February 2013 issue of Chapter News. We reprint it in this issue in connection with the upcoming general meeting where we'll hear about the latest plans to reopen the river.

The San Bernard River arises at a spring near New Ulm, Texas and flows to its mouth on the Gulf of Mexico, some 120 miles to the southeast of the source. Along its course, it passes through portions of Austin, Brazoria, Colorado, Fort Bend, Matagorda and Wharton counties. It passes alongside the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, flows across a salinity-barrier dam at ConocoPhillips' pumping station near Old Ocean, and continues on southeast to San Bernard NWR where it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. It drains approximately 1,850 square miles of land, and its basin area is home to approximately 87,000 people according to the 1990 census.



Fig. 1. Mouth of the San Bernard River, 2010.

Image © 2012 OpenStreetMap contributors under the Open Data Commons Open Database License (ODbL). Cartography licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license (CC-BY-SA). <http://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>



Fig. 2. Mouth of the San Bernard River, July 2010, looking southeast toward the Gulf of Mexico. Note the silt deposition on the northeast side of the river — a broad sandy beach, completely covering the channel dredged the previous year. Composite photo P1100648.JPG by Neal McLain. Public domain.

According to Wikipedia,^[2] the San Bernard is "one of a small number of rivers in Texas which empties directly into the Gulf."

Except it doesn't. When the Corps of Engineers diverted the nearby Brazos River in 1929, silt from its jetties progressively choked the mouth of the less powerful San Bernard, four miles southwest. Eventually the San Bernard no longer reached the Gulf, and the resulting blockage had diverted the water flow into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway eastward, exiting through the Brazos River Flood Gates. The increased current there has created problems for commercial navigation.

In January, 2009, the Galveston District of the Army Corps of Engineers awarded a \$2 million contract to dredge the mouth of the San Bernard River. The contract called for dredging almost 339,000 cubic yards of material using a shallow draft pipeline dredge (Fig 4.) The work was completed before the end of the year.

Almost immediately, the mouth began silting up again as silt continued to flow southwest from the Brazos River jetties toward the mouth of the San Bernard. Drought conditions during 2008 reduced the flow of the San Bernard, thus exacerbating the situation. By July 2010 the mouth had already shifted southwest, leaving a broad sandy beach where the dredged canal had been (Figs 1 and 2). By mid-2012 the mouth was completely blocked, and the entire discharge of the river again flowed northeast through the Intracoastal Waterway to the Brazos (Fig. 3.).



Fig. 3. Mouth of the San Bernard River, January 2013.

Photo courtesy of Albert Smith. Reprinted by permission.

[2] Wikipedia contributors. "San Bernard River." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 4 Nov. 2015.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Bernard_River

Continued

SAN BERNARD RIVER: STILL BLOCKED continued

By Neal McLain

The map below (Fig 4) shows the mouth of the river in 2008. The orange line indicates the dredging completed in 2009. Note that the mouth of the river is located several hundred feet southwest of the dredge line before it became completely blocked.

As noted in the meeting announcement on the Page 2, the Brazoria County Commissioners' Court has hired Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation of Houston to evaluate the situation and recommend a solution that would open the river once again, and keep in open in the future by preventing continued silt deposition.



Fig 4. Army Corps of Engineers map of the mouth of the San Bernard River showing the proposed alignment of the river after dredging (orange line). Image: Galveston District of the Army Corps of Engineers, 2008. Public Domain.

CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Dave Brandes, Lake Jackson
Vice President/Program	Jill Carroll, Pearland
Secretary	Jean Britt, Lake Jackson
Treasurer	Donald Sabathier, Pearland
State Representative	Ed Barrios, Lake Jackson
Past President	Mike Mullins, Sweeny
Training Coordinator	Carolyn May-Monie, West Columbia
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 Representative	Patty Brinkmeyer, Brazoria
Chapter Advisers	Connie Stolte (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department) John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service)
Newsletter Editor	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Newsletter Writers	Peggy Romfh, Dave Brandes, 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.