



Chapter News

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A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KRISTINE



Happy New Year everyone! I hope you all enjoyed the holidays and are ready to greet the new year with renewed vigor. I want to thank Dave Brandes and last year's Board for their service to our chapter, and for doing such

amazing work in making it one of the best in the state! Dave has left me with some pretty big shoes to fill, and I am glad that he will still be on the Board for the next two years to share his experience and wisdom with me.

I also want to be sure to thank Jerry Eppner, who has served on the Board in various roles for the last twelve years; Mike Mullins, who has served as President and Past President for the last four years; and Jean Britt, who served as Secretary in 2016. We greatly appreciate all of their hard work. Jerry assures us that he will manage to find something to do with all of the extra time that he will now have on his hands.

Speaking of Jerry, he tells me that our members have logged almost 15,100 hours of volunteer time for 2016. That equals more than \$353,000 of economic impact for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department! If you still have hours to log, please be sure to do so soon, as TPWD will be performing their year-end review well before the 45-day deadline for entering hours.

Many of us finished up our volunteer efforts for 2016 by participating in the 117th Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the nation's longest running citizen science bird project. There are several CBCs in our area from which to choose, and many of our members such as Tom Morris participate and/or act as leaders in more than one count each year. Our very own Brazoria-Columbia Bottomlands CBC is near and dear to my heart, as I have been a participant every year since its inception in 1984. I was pleased to have four members of our 2016 class join us this year, and by all accounts they had a great time and learned a lot. If you've considered participating but were worried that you're not knowledgeable enough, worry no more! Newcomers are always welcome, and will be teamed up with more experienced birders. Although overall numbers of birds were down this year, we put forth a strong effort, and once the official species tally comes in, we have a chance of being the number one inland count in the nation.

The 2017 intern class begins soon, and Carolyn May-Monie and Laurel Owen have been working hard getting everything ready. If you would like to attend one of the sessions, please check with Carolyn or Laurel in advance to make sure there is room.

I am looking forward to working with all of you in 2017. Let's go out and make it a great year!

Kristine Rivers is the President of Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. She can be reached at rivers@tmn-cot.org



<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.

Mark your calendar! <http://tmn-cot.org/Newsletters/DunesDay-2017.pdf>
Dunes Day January 21, 2017
See Attachment for information



**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, January 11, 2017
Texas AgriLife Extension Building
21017 County Road 171
Angleton, Texas 77515-8903**



| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 8:30 AM – 9:00 AM | Fun and Fellowship Snack Team: Chris Kneupper, Becky McClendon, Ed Barrios, Mary Helen Israel, Pam West |
| 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM | General Meeting <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i> |
| 10:15 AM – 12:00 PM | Program: <i>“Artificial Reef Program”.</i> Speaker: Dr. Brooke Shipley, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department <i>This program is approved for Advanced Training. Approved AT hours will be announced at the meeting.</i> |



Dr. Brooke Shipley is the Artificial Reef Chief Scientist and GIS (geographic information system) Analyst for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Shipley graduated from Baylor University in 1997 and completed her master’s degree through the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences at Texas A&M University in 2000. In 2008, she received her Ph.D. through the Department of Marine Sciences from the University of South Alabama. She has been with the Artificial Reef Program since 2009.

She notes that “I wear two hats within the program. I tend to switch between biological monitoring and assessment and GIS analysis several times a day. Currently, I am working on a TPWD Management Data Series publication, which requires an extensive amount of work in the biological monitoring database and within the GIS maps. I also create all of the GIS maps we use to help us pinpoint and monitor our reef sites. I am also responsible for maintaining the community map that our program uses on a daily basis. Nearly all of the GIS maps that our program uses for operations come from my desk.

“Additionally, I’m often in the field with the Artificial Reef team. We are responsible for the actual monitoring of the reef sites, and some of our structures are in waters that are quite deep. Recently, I completed helicopter flight training, and I am now certified for decompression dives down to 160 feet.

“I come from a family of mathematicians and engineers and I’m the only scientist in three

generations but I still love math and order.

“I find it fascinating to make comparisons and analyses between differing reef structures and regions within our vast Texas waters. I enjoy combining my love of math and science through the use of models. We rely on these models to describe the ecosystem being studied and even make predictions.



“Our program is truly one of the most unique programs I have ever been involved with. We have the ability to follow a single structure from the day it becomes a reef. This means that over the years we can follow the community and colonization of the reef site and determine the health of an ecosystem over time. It is truly amazing!

“I am fortunate to go diving with the program on nearly every trip we take. We take biological monitoring trips four days per month from March through October. We dive multiple times each day and come back to shore exhausted. In our off-season, we continue to train and dive in local lakes and occasionally in pools. On one of my dives with the program, I was lucky enough to see a whole school of hammerhead sharks swim past me early one spring. Hammerheads migrate through the area in the winter, and it was highly unusual to see them at the time.”

Text source: *Artificial reefs make it all real.* © TPWD, 2016
<http://tinyurl.com/TPWD-REEF>

Photo source: TPWD via Gulfbase.org © TPWD, 2016
<http://tinyurl.com/Gulfbase-Shipley>

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS ELECTION REPORT

ANGLETON, TEXAS — December 14, 2016 The Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter has announced its Officers and Directors for 2017. Elected officers were elected by acclamation by the chapter members present at the organization's general meeting. The incoming President, Kristine Rivers, then announced the appointments of the remaining members of the board. Sponsor John O'Connell, representing Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, remains on the board.

Elected officers:

President — **Kristine Rivers**, Pearland
 Vice President -- **Jill Carroll**, Pearland
 Secretary — **Lisa Myers**, Lake Jackson
 Treasurer -- **Donald Sabathier**, Pearland

Appointed Members of the Board

Past President — **Dave Brandes**, Lake Jackson
 Advanced Training Director — **Larry Ruhr**, Lake Jackson
 Volunteer Services Director — **Oron Atkins**, Lake Jackson
 State Representatives — **Ed Barrios**, Lake Jackson
 Membership Directors — **Pete Romfh**, Houston
Peggy Romfh, Houston
 Outreach Director — **Ruby Lewis**, Angleton
 Training Director — **Carolyn May-Monie**, West Columbia
 Chapter Host — **Pam West**, Freeport
 Publicity Director — **Richard Schaffhausen**, Alvin
 Publications Director — **Neal McLain**, Brazoria
 Class of 2016 Representative — **Judy Green**, Angleton

ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE BOARD



Kristine Rivers
President



Jill Carroll
Vice President



Lisa Myers
Secretary



Donald Sabathier
Treasurer



John O'Connell
AgriLife Sponsor

SPONSOR

APPOINTED MEMBERS OF THE BOARD



Dave Brandes
Past President



Ed Barrios
State Representative



Carolyn May-Monie
Training Director



Ruby Lewis
Outreach Director



Oron Atkins
VT Director



Larry Ruhr
AT Director



Pam West
Chapter Host



Peggy Romfh
Membership Director



Pete Romfh
Membership Director



Richard Schaffhausen
Publicity Director



Neal McLain
Publications



Judy Green
Class of 2016 Representative

MEMEBERSHIP REPORT

By Peggy and Pete Romfh, 2017 Membership Co-Directors

A huge thank you goes to Jerry Eppner, who has successfully navigated TMN-COT member time tracking for the last 8+ years (with over 11 years of Board experience). As we have discovered in our first few days of trying to approve, compile and manage the VMS records for COT, there are intricacies and "Gotchas!" at every turn. Jerry's commitment and dedication to accurate record keeping has been awesome, and you will see it is taking two of us to do what he used to do by himself. We hope you will be patient with us as we learn this new role – and always, always, let us know of any errors or omissions.

Although there may be a few of you that are still turning in volunteer and AT opportunities for 2016, the records accumulated through Jan. 5th show that TMN-COT members reported 15,371 service hours and 1585 advanced training hours for 2016 and 171,682 service hours and 16,180 advanced training hours since the chapter began. That is an incredible testimony to all of you that volunteer as master naturalists. Thank you very much.

Here is a summary of the most recent awards and milestone activity:

NEW CERTIFICATIONS



Caylie Harris



Susan Safley



Melba Beken

HOOR MILESTONE



Oron Atkins
500 Hours

2016 RECERTIFICATION: Caylie Harris, Sheila Williams, Sherry Summers, Mary Holler.

In addition to the pins and certificates corresponding to the above rewards, we will also be bringing pins that were not handed out at previous meetings due to member absence. If you earned but have not yet picked up recertification or milestone pins earned earlier in 2016, we hope you will attend the January meeting so that we can give you the pins you have earned.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Photos by Richard Schaffhausen



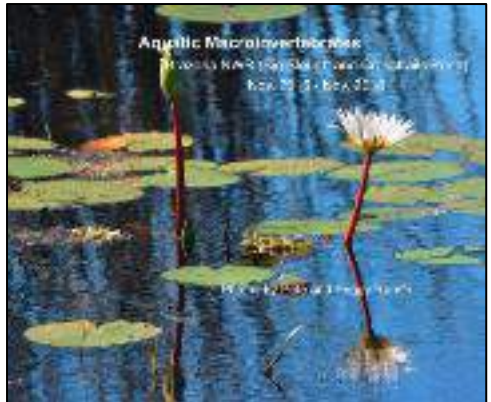
Retiring from the board...
Jean Britt (Secretary), Mike Mullins (Past President), Jerry Eppner (Membership)



Elected Officers for 2017...
Donald Sabathier (Treasurer), Kristine Rivers (President), Lisa Myers (Secretary), Jill Carroll (Vice President)

NEW BOOKS for DISCOVERY CENTER and MID-COAST REFUGES

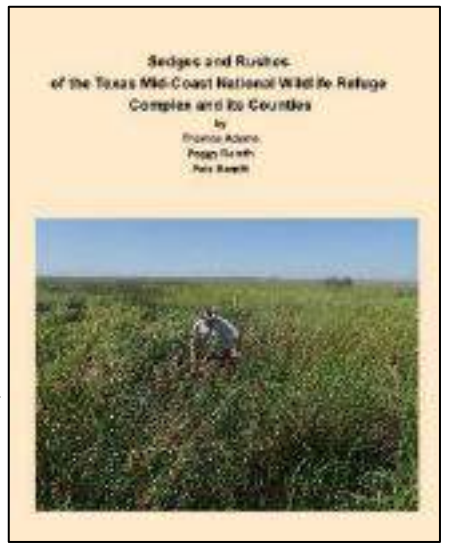
By Neal McLain



Aquatic Macroinvertebrates
By Peggy and Pete Romfh, 2016

ANGLETON — TMN-COT members Peggy and Pete Romfh have announced the publication of a book on Aquatic Macroinvertebrates at Brazoria NWR that is being used as a reference guide in the Microscopy lab at the Discovery Center. A second book on Sedges and Rushes of the Texas Mid-Coast will be available to biologists at the Refuge. We plan to publish both books on the Chapter website soon as reference guides for members. . .

Sedges and Rushes of the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex and its Counties
By Thomas Adams, Peggy Romfh, Pete Romfh, 2016



STAY HEALTHY! EAT FISH

by Peggy Romfh, Photo Gallery Editor

The sight of a boat-tailed grackle dipping down among the reeds at San Bernard Wildlife Refuge and coming up with a fish brought both a chuckle and a reminder as to how important fish are in the diet of many Gulf Coast birds. Herons, egrets, pelicans, terns and other birds are expert at fishing – by stabbing, scooping, dive bombing or grabbing with bill or claws. Here are a few of our local species enjoying a tasty meal of fish.



Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), Texas City Dike, 05-20-2016



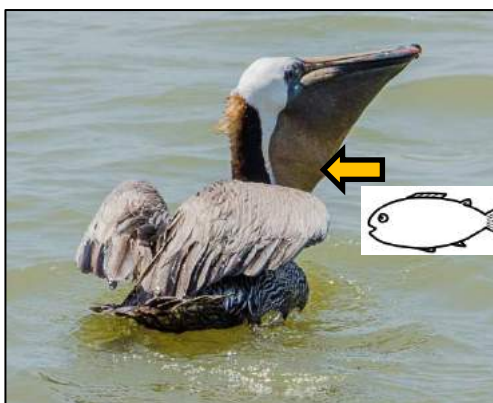
Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*), San Bernard NWR, 01-06-2017



Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Aransas NWR, 11-25-2010



Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*), San Bernard NWR, 08-22-2015



Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), Texas City Dike, 05-20-2016

The sight of brown pelicans diving into the Gulf from great heights, then surfacing with a bill full of fish and water is a common sight to see. Equally entrancing is the sight of a group of American White Pelicans coordinating their swimming to drive schooling fish toward the shallows. The pelicans then scoop up the corralled fish from the water, almost in unison.



Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), Brazoria NWR, 09-29-2016

The sight of this great blue heron with a very large fish was a sight to see as it swallowed the fish whole. According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology, "Great blue herons use their dagger-like bills to impale larger fish, often shaking them to break or relax the sharp spines before gulping them down."

Photos by P&P Romfh



Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*), Texas City Dike, 05-20-2016



Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) with Spotty Eel (*Bascanichthys bascanium*), Bryan Beach 10-01-12



I'd rather eat crawfish!

BIRDS of PREY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

By Phil Huxford and Neal McLain

Every year during March and April, EarthQuest brings the *Birds of Prey* program to Brazoria County for Migration Celebration. EarthQuest is a non-profit environmental education organization based in Georgia. According to its website, It "is dedicated to the education of the public as to their impact on the natural world".

The *Birds of Prey* programs are hosted locally by TMN-COT chapter member Phil Huxford. He manages the program on behalf of Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges.

During the weeks preceding Migration Celebration, EarthQuest's wildlife handlers present *Birds of Prey* programs in a variety of venues including schools, churches, service clubs, and shopping malls. In past years EarthQuest has presented programs in more than 30 schools in the Alvin, Angleton, Bay City, Brazosport, Columbia-Brazoria, Damon, Danbury, Sweeny, and Van Vleck School Districts, reaching a total audience of over 15,000 students and teachers.

The *Birds of Prey* programs culminate at Migration Celebration with four programs during the two-day festival at San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. These programs are funded by donors. They are open to the public without charge.

According to Huxford, planning for the 2017 season is already under way. As of the first week in January, he had already scheduled programs at 20 schools and ten other venues. He expects that by the end of the current season he will have scheduled over 60 *Birds of Prey* programs.



Steve Hoddy
EarthQuest Steve is the founder and president of EarthQuest, a non-profit corporation based in Georgia. He spends several weeks each year here in Brazoria County presenting numerous *Birds of Prey* Programs.



Phil Huxford, Birds of Prey Program Manager. Phil has been the driving force behind *Birds of Prey* school programs, and often serves as Master of Ceremonies. Phil is a member of the Cradle of Texas Chapter, Class of 2001.



Photo: Denis Mudderman
EarthQuest Handler Steve Hoddy



Photo: Denis Mudderman
Birds of Prey Program Manager Phil Huxford

Photographs of past *Birds of Prey* programs are available on the Chapter website

- *St. John Missionary Baptist Church, Van Vleck, 2011*
<http://tinyurl.com/BOP-Program-2011>
- *Migration Celebration, San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, 2011*
<http://tinyurl.com/BOP-Program-2011-MC>
- *Southside Elementary School, Angleton, 2012*
<http://tinyurl.com/BOP-Program-2012>
- *O.W. Roberts Elementary School, Lake Jackson, 2014*
<http://tinyurl.com/BOP-Program-2014>

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AT BRAZORIA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Photos by Richard Schaffhausen

FREPORT, TEXAS — December, 2016. The Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex sponsored a Holiday Open House at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge during the recent holiday season. The Discovery Center was open for visitors from December 26, 2016 to January 1, 2017. Several TMN-COT chapter members participated in the event as docents or instructors. Our intrepid photographer, Richard Schaffhausen, was on hand, camera in hand, to document the event. Here are some of his photos along with some stock photos of the Discovery Center.



This issue of Chapter News includes one attachment
Dunes Day 2013
<http://tmn-cot.org/Newsletters/DunesDay-2017.pdf>

CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| President | Kristine Rivers, Pearland |
| Vice President/Program | Jill Carroll, Pearland |
| Secretary | Lisa Myers, Lake Jackson |
| Treasurer | Donald Sabathier, Pearland |
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| Class of 2016 Representative | Judy Green, Angleton |
| Chapter Adviser | John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service) |
| Newsletter Editor | Neal McLain, Brazoria |
| Newsletter Writers | Phil Huxford, Neal McLain, Kristine Rivers, Peggy Romfh |
| Website | http://tmn-cot.org |
| Facebook | http://facebook.com/TMN.COT |
| E-mail Listserv | http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail |

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



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 Monday before the General Meeting by the Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Submissions are welcome. Submission deadline is 5:00 PM on Saturday before the General Meeting. Submissions should be sent by email to *Chapter News* Editor at tmn.cot@gmail.com. Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.