



Chapter News

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A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KRISTINE



The new year brought with it new opportunities, and our members greeted them with renewed energy and enthusiasm. January provided chances to assist with Field Research/ Citizen Science, Public Outreach, Resource Management, and Training, so no matter what type of activities you enjoy, there was something available for you. I encouraged our new interns to "test drive" different types of opportunities, and I hope that all of you will do the same from time to time. You never know when something new will spark an interest and speak to your heart!

Our interns have been divided into their project teams and will soon be visiting their assigned locations and deciding upon the focus of their projects. It's exciting to see the process begin anew and think about everything they will learn in their areas and share with the membership in May at their graduation. Our Camp Mohawk team from last year was inspired to request approval from the Board to begin volunteer projects at the park and has been hard at work since that time. With the help of an expanded group of volunteers, we have put in a pollinator garden and have just begun working to improve the trail system, including the interpretive guide and signage. Other Resource Management activities that began in January include the Invasive

Species Removal Project at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO) and the Bobcat Woods Trail Extension at San Bernard NWR.

Our Volunteer Service Director, Oron Atkins, received a last-minute request from Jennifer Wilson, the Wildlife Biologist at the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, for assistance with sparrow banding out at the Eagle Nest Lake unit of San Bernard NWR, and I'm happy to report that chapter members turned out in great numbers, including two of our new interns. Jennifer said that it was the most people she had ever had participate! Thirteen birds were netted, including a Yellow Rail, several LeConte's Sparrows, a few Lincoln's Sparrows, and a Swamp Sparrow. Six of the birds were recaptured birds that had been banded previously, thereby providing important scientific data for research purposes. Jennifer promised to follow up with participants to let them know when and where the "recaps" had originally been banded. There are many other ongoing Field Research/Citizen Science opportunities such as this one, including the upcoming Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) on February 17-20. You can learn more at

<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

If Training opportunities are more to your interest, Johnny Dwyer can always use more help with DEEP out at Brazoria NWR. Field trips have already begun, and he's had to shift some activities around due to the construction on the boardwalk, so it helps to have people with different areas of expertise. In addition, the push for Every Kid in the Park

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

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.



Once again this year our Birds of Prey team is presenting programs at local schools. They've also scheduled several "bonus" programs open to the public. Check out the BOP website for

<http://birdsofpreytxas.org/>

**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, February 8, 2017
Texas AgriLife Extension Building
21017 County Road 171
Angleton, Texas 77515-8903**



8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Snack Team: Oron Atkins, Christina Hartman, Jo Myers, Melba Beken, Suzie Safley, Joycelynn Grigson
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	General Meeting <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.</i>
10:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker: Amanda Anderson, Shorebird Technician, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory • Topic: <i>Winter Shorebirds</i>

Amanda Anderson is the shorebird technician at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. In this capacity she monitors Wilson's Plovers and other beach-nesting birds for the Beach Nesting Birds project, a joint effort by GCBO, Houston Audubon and the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program. The primary sites are Bryan Beach and the mouth of the Colorado River by the Matagorda Bay Nature Park. Anderson holds a Masters of Science degree from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Source: Susan Heath: *Beach Nesting Birds Project 2016: Update 1*. April 2016. <http://tinyurl.com/GCBO-ANA-1>



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued

has brought new school districts into the mix, so this year will be even busier than previous years.

Ruby Lewis and Phil Huxford are hard at work scheduling Public Outreach activities and are in need of volunteers to assist them to make sure everything goes smoothly. If you enjoy working with the public and seeing their faces light up as they learn about nature and see wildlife up close, then sign up for some of these opportunities. Dana Simon at Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue (GCWR) is also always in need of people to help answer the phone, transport animals, and clean cages.

I've only touched on a few of the different types of activities that you can do as a chapter member, but hopefully you'll come to meetings and learn about more as they become available, and most importantly, get out there and try something new this year. I'll see you in the field!

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

JOHNNY IS BACK!



Our old friend Johnny Dwyer has returned to Texas and he's now a full-time employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. His new title is USFWS Park Ranger & Environmental Education Coordinator.

In his new position he'll be running the DEEP and HWEEP environmental

education programs as well as taking on other duties within the Service.

Johnny hails from Cincinnati and first came to Texas as an intern with the Student Conservation Association. Contact Johnny at:

dwyer5jm@gmail.com

979-799-5063

Welcome back Johnny!

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Pete and Peggy Romfh, Membership Directors

Thanks to all of you for volunteering so many hours in 2016. We've just compiled the data for 2016. It shows the volunteer contributions for each partner and/or major project.. The Texas Mid-Coast Refuge (USFWS and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges activities and events) accounted for 35% of the total volunteer hours reported.

Migration Celebration had 1809 reported hours, the highest of any single event, followed by DEEP with 1338 hours.

It is great to see how training, public outreach, resource management and field research permeate projects and activities for each partner. Whether you are searching the beaches as part of the Turtle Patrol team, helping with seining or microscope work at DEEP, or reaching out to the public during community events, your hours matter! Thank you all very much.

The year 2017 is off to a great start, Seventy-two members have already reported over 1200 volunteer service hours in January.

The recertification pin for 2017 is a Kemp's ridley sea turtle. We look forward to handing them out to all of you in the



Our Texas A&M AgriLife adviser, John O'Connell, has provided us some background information on the use of volunteer service hours and public impact data at the county and state level. Both resources and funding for AgriLife and the Texas Master Naturalist Program are impacted by the volunteer hours reported.

Summary of Volunteer Service Hours Reported for Partners and Projects for 2016

COT Partner or Project	Hours 2016
USFWS (MC, DEEP, 50th, KBR, BOP, etc.)	5420
COT (Chapter Meet/Admin)	2494
GCBO (incl. XHX, Bird Camp)	1038
GCWR	916
Citizen Science Misc/Bird Surveys	878
COT (Incl. Events, PO, TR)	712
TX Coastal Watershed Program	655
Library Program	555
Friends Board	532
Sea Center Texas	510
Brazos Bend State Park	445
TX Stream Team	355
Turtle Patrol	330
Brazoria Parks/Camp Mohawk	275
Misc. (including planetarium, Karankawa, Nash Prairie Preserve)	261
Schools non-DEEP	110
Total	15486

MIKE MULLENWEG JOINS TMN-COT CHAPTER



Mike Mullenweg

Mike Mullenweg, the Lead Interpreter/Events & Trails Coordinator for the Brazoria County Parks Department, has joined the Cradle of Texas Chapter. Mike is a certified Master Naturalist, having completed his training with the Texas Mid-Coast Chapter.

Mike has had an extensive career in natural resources management. He has previously worked with several Texas-based organizations including:

- **Program Coordinator** for the Lower Colorado River Authority
- **Manager of the Natural Science Center** at Matagorda Bay Nature Park
- **Naturalist** for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- **Park Interpreter and Natural Resource Specialist** for the TPWD Government Canyon State Natural Area in San Antonio.

The Texas Mid-Coast Chapter encompasses eight counties along the Gulf Coast southwest of Brazoria County: Aransas, Calhoun, Goliad, Jackson, Matagorda, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria.

<http://midcoast-tmn.org/>

Welcome to the Cradle of Texas Chapter, Mike!

MEET THE INTERN CLASS OF 2017

By Neal McLain Photos by Richard Schaffhausen

ANGLETON, TEXAS — January 18, 2017. Our chapter's 2017 Intern Training Class opened today at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service building in Angleton. Eleven interns have registered. Here are the class members:

William Ahlstrom, Angleton. Bill has been Principal Engineer with a firm that designs implantable medical devices. He states that "I am an avid birder, and I encounter many animals, insects, and plants that I would like to know more about." Bill is a member of the Audubon Society and Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, and supports the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Lois Kemp, Rosharon. Lois is a retired registered nurse. She notes that she "lives on a small farm in Rosharon" and "hopes to know more about Brazoria County". Lois is a member of the Brazoria County Bee Association and the Harris County Bee Association.

Ellen and Michael Lasseter, Manvel. Ellen is a retired software engineer and Michael is a retired Grounds Maintenance Supervisor. They report that they are "looking for ways to contribute to the community."

Linda Leinen, League City. Linda states that she wishes "to learn more about Texas flora and fauna." She is a member of Armand Bayou Nature Center, the Native Plant Society of Texas and the Native Prairie Association of Texas.

Megan Mainer, LaPorte. Megan is the Recreation Superintendent for the City of La Porte. She reports that she would like to expand her knowledge of nature and native plants and how to protect wildlife in our area

Teresa Montgomery, Angleton. Theresa reports that "I love nature! I care about protecting it and learning as much as possible," Teresa is a member of a hiking club.

Edward Peebles, Houston. Ed holds a degree in Wildlife Fisheries Sciences. He "hopes to strengthen his knowledge of Texas ecosystems and native wildlife." Ed is a member of the Wildlife Center of Texas, the Houston SPCA, and the Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center.

George Valadez, Lake Jackson. George is a retired engineer. He reports that he "loves outdoors" and "wants to learn and identify plants and insects,"

Victor Wade, Lake Jackson. Vic has been responsible for Environmental Health and Safety for the Dow Chemical Company. He wants to be a Master Naturalist because "It's what I am interested in and has been my main interest all my life."

Robert "Bob" Whitmarsh, Lake Jackson. Bob is a retired Chemist with the Dow Chemical Company, and a former chemist educator with San Jacinto College. He is a member of The Nature Conservancy.



Bill Ahlstrom



Lois Kemp



Ellen Lasseter



Michael Lasseter



Linda Leinen



Megan Mainer



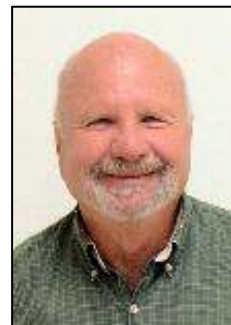
Teresa Montgomery



Edward Peebles



George Valadez



Victor Wade



Bob Whitmarsh

TMN-COT STARTS 2017 WITH AWARDS, DOVES, and FAREWELLS to RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

Photos by Dick Schaffhausen and Neal McLain



Past-president Dave Brandes accepts a gift from new President Kristine Rivers for his service as president in 2015-16.



Melba Beken, Ken Arnold, Caylie Harris, and Susan Safley receive 2016 certification certificates from President Kristine Rivers.



Jill Carroll starts off the 2017 Nature Notes series with a presentation on doves.



Membership Co-Director Peggy Romfh and President Kristine Rivers present Oron Atkins his 500-hour dragonfly service award pin.



Dr. Brooke Shipley, TPWD, speaks about the artificial reef program in the Gulf.



Pete Romfh (right) presents an award to Jerry Eppner recognizing Jerry's long years of service to the COT Chapter — a grabbag of accessories, including an LED-illuminated safety triangle, to accompany Jerry's shiny new car.

MIGRATION CELEBRATION PHOTO CONTEST 2017

By Peggy Romfh, 2016 Photo Contest Manager

The Migration Celebration event includes a photo contest that is open to people of all ages and nature photo interests. This year's contest promises to be the best ever with both new and consolidated categories of entries.

Categories for 2017 include:

- **Wildlife Vertebrates of Texas**
- **Wildlife Invertebrates of Texas**
- **Birds of Texas**
- **Plant Life and Fungi of Texas**
- **Landscape/Scenery of Texas**
- **Nature-themed Photo/Digital Art Texas**

New this year is the expansion of the landscape/scenery category to include skyscapes, sunsets, cloudscares, and scenery photos.

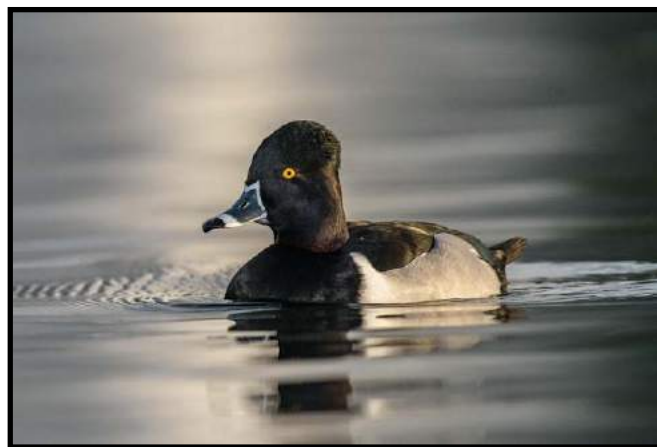
Because of the expanded use of photo editing and photo manipulation software, a new category has been added for nature-related photo art. Unlike other categories, significant digital manipulation may be done on photos entered in this category.

An additional category of judging will be done for Refuge photos. Refuge photos must be taken on the San Bernard NWR, Brazoria NWR, Big Boggy NWR or one of the units associated with them.

Winners will be announced at the annual kickoff dinner. All photos will be displayed at the Migration Celebration. Photos are judged by professional nature photographers.

The deadline to enter the 2017 contest is March 20th. For detailed contest rules and entry forms, see

<http://migrationcelebration.org>



'Ring-necked Duck on a Foggy Morning,' a photo by Stan Bravenec, was awarded Best of Show in the 2016 Migration Celebration Photo Contest.

PARTNER NEWS — GULF COAST BIRD OBSERVATORY

By GCBO staff and Neal McLain

NEW DIRECTOR

The Board of Directors of GCBO has named Martin Hagne as its Director. Hagne served as the Executive



**Martin Hagne,
GCBO Director**

Director of the Valley Nature Center in Weslaco, Texas, for 13 years. He then moved to Bandera, Texas, where he led the Flying L Resort.

Hagne was born in Sweden

and has lived in Texas for most of his life. He has worked on the side as a Field Biologist doing baseline studies for many years.

Chapter News welcomes Martin to Brazoria County.

Work has begun on the project to remove invasive plant species from our headquarters property. On January 19 & 20, hard working volunteers marked between 1,800 and 1,900 plants with flagging tape.

Warren Pruess is heading up this project and conducted training on plant identification both days prior to heading out into the woods. In addition hundreds of small saplings were pulled up since the ground was wet,

More work days will be scheduled to begin cutting and treatment. Native understory plants will be planted following the removal work. This is a long term project so watch for announcements of upcoming work days.

INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL PROJECT



Invasive species removal team: Warren Pruess, Oron Atkins (TMN-COT Class of 2016), Phil Huxford (TMN-COT Class of 2001).

Photo: Pete Romfh

THE SKY IS THE LIMIT FOR SPRING FLING AT QUINTANA NEOTROPICAL BIRD SANCTUARY (QNBS)!

By Peggy Romfh. Photos by Pete Romfh

170 DIFFERENT SPECIES WERE SEEN DURING SPRING FLING IN 2016!!

The month of April brings Spring Fling, an annual event at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary. The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO) sponsors a host station at this incredible bird migration stop-over point on the Gulf.

Spring Fling provides a great opportunity for master naturalists to volunteer mornings, afternoons, or all day. Volunteers post bird sightings daily, provide maps and directions to visitors, and overall welcome them to the joys of Gulf Coast birding. **We will ask for volunteers to sign up to staff the host station at the March meeting.**

Volunteers do not need to be expert birders. New volunteers can either partner with someone who is more experienced or ask visitors at the site to share what they are observing.

The Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary is located across from the Quintana City Hall on CR723, Quintana Road. It contains both wooded and xeriscape areas.



Photographers and birds alike enjoy 'camping out' at the water features at QNBS.

FALLOUT!



Bird enthusiasts live for a 'fallout' during spring migration. As birds migrate across the Gulf of Mexico, a strong north wind may cause them to tire and literally fall out of the sky along the coast.

QNBS Volunteer Facts 2016

- 29 Volunteers staffed host station
- Most volunteers were master naturalists
- 360 Volunteer hosting hours at QNBS station



Volunteers training to staff the host station in 2016

QNBS Visitor Facts 2016

An estimated 800 people visited QNBS in the month of April, 2016 to enjoy birding and photographic opportunities. People came from:

- 74 Texas locations
- 44 Non-Texas locations across the USA from 27 different states
- 5 Canada locations
- 7 Locations in other countries of the world, including Aruba, England, Scotland, Netherlands, Japan, Panama, and Trinidad

Visitors to QNBS represent birders with up to 30 years of experience and nature enthusiasts that are just starting to learn about birds. Some visitors are primarily interested in the warblers and other migrants, and some are interested in all of the coastal species.



COT Master Naturalists Dave Brandes and Tom Morris climbed to the top of the tower to search for birds on April 30, 2016, a day when 102 species were spotted.



CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Kristine Rivers, Pearland
Vice President/Program	Jill Carroll, Pearland
Secretary	Lisa Myers, Lake Jackson
Treasurer	Donald Sabathier, Pearland
State Representative	Ed Barrios, Lake Jackson
Past President	Dave Brandes, Lake Jackson
Training Director	Carolyn May-Monie, West Columbia
Membership Director	Peggy Romfh, Houston
Membership Director	Pete Romfh, Houston
Advanced Training Director	Larry Ruhr, Lake Jackson
Volunteer Service Director	Oron Atkins, Lake Jackson
Outreach Director	Ruby Lewis, Angleton
Chapter Host	Pam West, Freeport
Publicity Director	Richard Schaffhausen, Alvin
Publications Director	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Class of 2016 Representative	Judy Green, Angleton
Chapter Adviser	John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service)
Newsletter Editor	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Newsletter Writers	Kristine Rivers, Peggy Romfh, GCBO, 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 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.