

MAY 2017

# Chapter News

## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KRISTINE RIVERS

Spring is a busy volunteering season for us Texas Master Naturalists, not only in our own chapter but also for everyone across the state. In recognition of National Volunteering Week in April, our TMN State Program Coordinators, Michelle Haggerty and Mary Pearl Meuth, sent a big thank you to all of us and provided the following statistics through the latest reporting year of 2016 and to date:

- More than 10,800 volunteers have been trained through TMN training classes
- There are 46 TMN chapters statewide with two in development
- 428,168 service hours were reported by TMN volunteers throughout the 2016 calendar year; this service is valued at more than \$9.48 million; to date, over 3.69 million hours (valued at \$84.88 million) have been reported to the TMN program
- Last year, TMN volunteers reached over 426,000 youth, adults and private landowners through their outreach, educational and technical guidance events; through 2016, TMN volunteers have reached more than 5.6 million people to date
- 4,887 new acres were impacted in 2016 through TMN volunteer stewardship projects and management plans, and over 226,200 acres have been impacted to date
- 105 new trail miles were developed and/or maintained through new TMN service projects in 2016; to date, over 2,120.68 trail miles have been impacted
- Over 400 partnerships at the local chapter level have been established statewide to date.



In 2017 to date, the Cradle of Texas Chapter has impacted approximately 30,000 youth and adults and reported approximately 7,200 hours of VT and over 760 hours of AT. We accomplished our biggest volunteer event of the year, Migration Celebration, and managed to represent our chapter at Pearland's Earth Day Celebration that same weekend. We helped our partner, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO), with one of its most important outreach events—

Spring Fling, which occurred daily throughout the entire month of April. The Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary had an estimated 1,000 visitors from 27 states and 10 countries this year. We continue to help with an amazing season for the Sea Turtle Patrol, which has located 123 nests on the Texas Gulf Coast to date. If you've been out to Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, you've seen the wonderful new boardwalk built by refuge staff and other hardworking members of our chapter (see photos, left, I took while visiting on May 5).

Our Board members have also been hard at work, and I am pleased to report that our chapter is now recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; consequently, we are able to accept tax-free donations, company match donations, and members will be able to deduct volunteer miles on their income taxes.

I am so very proud of all of you and your efforts. Keep up the great work!

*Kristine Rivers is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. She can be reached at [rivers@tmn-cot.org](mailto:rivers@tmn-cot.org).*



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<https://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 socio-economic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

**Did you know... Members are *always* welcome at monthly COT Board Meetings held the first Wednesday of each month at the Angleton AgriLife Extension Building from 10 a.m. to approximately 12 p.m.**

**Texas Master Naturalist Program  
Cradle of Texas Chapter  
General Meeting and Advanced Training  
Wednesday, May 10, 2017  
Texas AgriLife Extension Building  
21017 County Road 171  
Angleton, Texas 77515-8903**



<b>8:30 AM – 9:00 AM</b>	<b>Fun and Fellowship</b> Snack Team: Sheree Muzny, Lisa Myers, David Plunkett, Kristine Rivers
<b>9:00 AM – 10:00 AM</b>	<b>Program:</b> Intern Class of 2017 Research Reports and Graduation
<b>10:15 AM – 11:15 AM</b>	<b>General Meeting</b> <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour volunteer time</i>



**“Shadow Creek Ranch Nature Trail: A Man-Made Wildlife Oasis”**

Location: Pearland, Texas

Owner: City of Pearland

**Team members:**

Ed Peebles, Houston

Mike and Ellen Lasseter, Manvel

Megan Mainer, LaPorte

**Mentor:**

Kristine Rivers, Pearland

◀ *Ed Peebles, Mike Lasseter,  
Ellen Lasseter, Megan Mainer*



**“An Ecosystem Survey of a Section of the Gulf Coast Beach in the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge”**

Location: Brazoria, Texas

Owner: United States Fish and Wildlife Service

**Team members:**

Bill Ahlstrom, Angleton

George Valadez, Lake Jackson

Vic Wade, Lake Jackson

Bob Whitmarsh, Lake Jackson

**Mentors:**

Mike Mullins, Sweeny

Larry Ruhr, Lake Jackson

◀ *George Valadez, Vic Wade,  
Bill Ahlstrom, Bob Whitmarsh*





## Membership Report by Pete and Peggy Romfh, Membership Directors

Congratulations to those who recently recertified or reached new hours milestones in 2017. Those receiving awards in May include:

### Initial Certification

Jackie Hicks Bill Ahlstrom George Valadez

### Recertification (Sea Turtle Pin)

Howard Allen	Mel McKey
Jackie Hicks	Neal McLain
Anna King	Tom Morris
Larry Kirby	Mike Mullins
Vicki Kirby	Richard Schaffhausen
	Lorna Witt

### 250 Hours (Bronze Dragonfly Pin)

Julia Geissler	Jo Myers
Larry Kirby	Ken Sluis

### 1000 Hours Milestone (Gold Dragonfly Pin)

Oron Atkins

### Impact Data—January-April

7,268 Adults	22,301 Youth	29,569 Total
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### Hours Totals—January-April

7,180 hours VT	763.3 hours AT
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The following awards were presented at the April TMN-COT general meeting. Denise Kaplan received her initial certification awarded last month. Sixteen members recertified for the calendar year 2017, including: Oron Atkins, Jean Britt, Susan Conaty, Garry Ellis, Judy Green, Janet Jackson-Ellis, Ed Johnson, Ann Lange, Becky McClendon, Sheree Muzny, Herb Myers, Lisa Myers, Peggy Romfh, Pete Romfh, Larry Ruhr, Chip Sweet. Four members, Jean Britt, Judy Green, Lisa Myers, and Kristine Rivers, reached 250 hours of Volunteer Service (VT). Congratulations.



(Above) Judy Green, Pete Romfh, Jean Britt, Lisa Myers, Kristine Rivers, Peggy Romfh.  
(Left) Kristine Rivers, Denise Kaplan, Peggy Romfh.  
Photos by Richard Schaffhausen



## Two Nature Camps in June: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

### Nature Camp at Camp Mohawk County Park

(June 12-15)

### Nature Camp at Quintana Beach County Park

(June 19-22)

Nature Camps are fun and educational day camps for children ages 7-12 and hosted by the Brazoria County Parks Department with lots of help from COT Master Naturalists. The camps are led by TMN-COT member and Parks Department's Lead Interpretive Ranger and Programs Coordinator, Mike Mullenweg.

**Nature Camp at Camp Mohawk County Park** includes the study of birds, habitat, and flyways. Children will experience the diversity of insect life and the wonder of aquatic habitats by capturing and examining the tiny creatures sharing their world.

Monday through Thursday, June 12-15, 2017, from 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Map: <http://tinyurl.com/MAP-NC-CMCP>

### Nature Camp at Quintana Beach County Park

includes the study of the aquatic environment. Children will learn about fish, turtles and marine mammals while having fun and exploring the animals' habitat.

Monday through Thursday, June 19-22, 2017, from 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Map: <http://tinyurl.com/MAP-NC-QBCP>

### TO VOLUNTEER...

Contact Mike Mullenweg, Brazoria County Parks Department or see sign-up sheets at the May 10 General Meeting

[mikem@brazoria-county.com](mailto:mikem@brazoria-county.com)

281-756-1541 ext. 7 (Alvin and north)

979-864-1541 ext. 7 (Angleton and west)

979-388-1541 ext. 7 (Brazosport and south)

### TO REGISTER A CHILD

Contact Mike Mullenweg at Parks Department (see above). Registration fee is \$30 for each Nature Camp. Registration closes on June 1.

## COT Members Score Multiple Prizes in 2017 Migration Celebration Photo Contest

Three COT chapter members garnered multiple awards and merits in last month's Migration Celebration Photo Contest, including two first place ribbons, and the best of show award for Pete Romfh. All of their awarded/merited photos appear below. First, second, third place and honorable mention were judged by a professional photographer, and "Refuge Photos of Merit" were judged by Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Mid-Coast staff member Jennifer Sanchez. Merit photos will hang on the walls of the Texas Mid-Coast Complex Headquarters on Highway 2611 and the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters on Highway 2004 until next year.

Roger Allen took first place in the Plant Life or Fungi category, both second and third place in the Landscape/Scenery category, and a merit in Plant Life or Fungi. Peggy Romfh received both second (and a merit) and third place in the Nature-themed Photo/Digital Art category and an honorable mention and a merit for two of her photos in the Plant Life or Fungi category. In addition to Pete Romfh's first place and best of show ribbons in Wildlife Invertebrates, he also took first (and a merit) in Nature-themed Photo/Digital Art, honorable mention in Wildlife Invertebrates, and merits in Birds, Plant Life or Fungi, and Nature-themed Photo/Digital Art. All but three of these winning photos were taken in Brazoria County.

### Photos by Roger Allen



"Workin' It" (1<sup>st</sup> place Plant Life or Fungi).



"Morning Moon Rays Over the Brazos"  
(2<sup>nd</sup> place Landscape/Scenery).



"Looking to the Stars" (3<sup>rd</sup> place Landscape/Scenery).



"Dixie Iris" (merit).



## Migration Celebration Photo Contest—continued

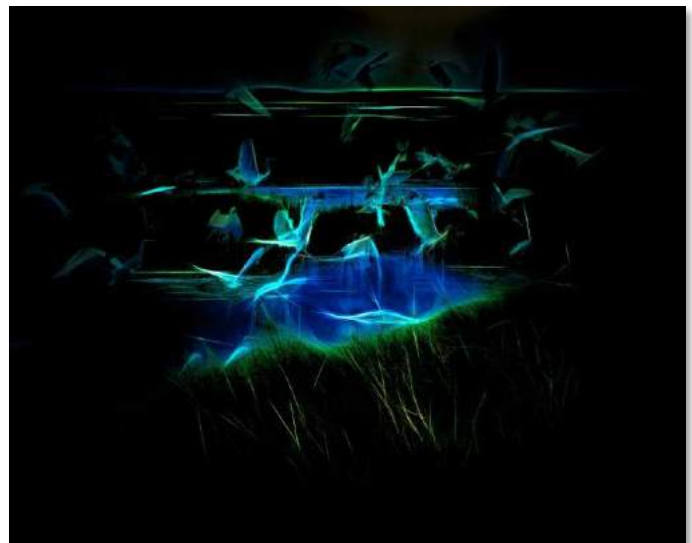
Photos by Peggy Romfh



Clockwise from top left: “King of the Marsh” (3<sup>rd</sup> place Nature-themed Photo/Digital Art); “Sunshine on My Shoulders Makes Me Happy” (2<sup>nd</sup> place Nature-themed Photo/Digital Art and merit; “*Carex Lupuliformis* Sedge” (merit); “False Garlic” (honorable mention Plant Life or Fungi).

## Migration Celebration Photo Contest—continued

Photos by Pete Romfh



Clockwise from top left: "Bug on Black" (1<sup>st</sup> place Wildlife Invertebrates and Best of Show); "Flight of the Dowitchers" (1<sup>st</sup> place Nature-themed Photo/Digital Art and merit); "Fancy Dancer" (merit); "Flight of the Egrets" (merit); "Sundew" (merit); "I'm Going to Get You" (Honorable Mention Wildlife Invertebrates).



## BIRDS OF PREY PROGRAMS: A SUCCESSFUL SEASON by Neal McLain

Birds of Prey programs (BOP) are a regular feature of Migration Celebration. In addition to BOP programs presented during the event, volunteers from TMN-COT and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (FOBWR) present Birds of Prey programs at local K-12 schools and other local venues.

The BOP programs are produced by EarthQuest, a non-profit corporation based in Georgia, and presented by Steve Hoddy, founder and president of EarthQuest. Phil Huxford, FOBWR and TMN-COT member, administers the program on behalf of FOBWR. Working with school officials, Phil schedules shows during the two months preceding Migration Celebration, raises funds to pay for the programs, and serves as a sort of Master of Ceremonies during BOP presentations. Phil obtains funding from a variety of sources: Corporations, service clubs, and individual donors, several of whom are TMN-COT members. During the 2017 season, Phil and Steve presented 55 *Birds of Prey* programs, reaching more than 19,600 people. A successful season, indeed.



Steve Hoddy,  
Earthquest  
Steve is the founder



Phil Huxford, Birds  
of Prey Program  
Manager

VENUE	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS	AUDIENCE REACHED
<b>Schools</b> Alvin ISD (2 programs) Savannah Elementary Angleton ISD (4) Frontier, Rancho, East, West Bay City ISD (3) Roberts, Cheery, Holmes Boling ISD (1) Newgulf Elementary Brazosport ISD (15) 12 schools Columbia Brazoria ISD (4) Barrow, Wild Peach, West Columbia Damon ISD (1) Damon Elementary Danbury ISD (1) Danbury Elementary Matagorda ISD (1) Matagorda Elementary Palacios ISD (2) Central and Eastside Sweeny ISD (3) Sweeny Elementary Tidehaven ISD (1) Markham Elementary Van Vleck ISD (2) Elementary and Middle Parochial (2) Epiphany, Holy Cross	<b>42</b>	<b>16,500</b>
<b>Special Events</b> Matagorda Bay <i>Birdfest</i> (1) <i>Nurture Nature Festival</i> at Brazos Bend State Park (1) Baytown Nature Center (1) Lake Livingston State Park (1) Quintana Beach County Park (1)	<b>5</b>	<b>2,060</b>
<b>Private Events</b> Brazoria Library (1) Danbury Rotary Club (1) Brazoria Lions Club (1) Brazosport Rotary Club (1)	<b>4</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Migration Celebration</b> Saturday (2) Sunday (2)	<b>4</b>	<b>945</b>

## Texas Waters Specialist Certification by Larry Ruhr

A new Specialist Certification opportunity for is available to Texas Master Naturalists, the purpose of which is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteer specialists who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of aquatic resources and aquatic habitats within their Texas communities. Texas Waters Specialists will be fundamental in informing the public of conservation issues specifically related to the need for fishable, swimmable and drinkable waterways. For additional information, check out the program website at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/water-education/texaswatersprogram/texaswatersspecialist>.

Certification requirements are: Reading the required curriculum contained in the book, *Texas Waters – Exploring Water and Watersheds*, available in hard copy or a free PDF download; 8 hours of approved AT training relative to water and watersheds; and 10 initial hours of VT service relative to Texas Waters and 10 hours of appropriate VT each year plus participation in an approved community service project for recertification. These hours count towards TMN recertification.

Your point of contact for questions or to begin working on this certification is Larry Ruhr, AT Director, at [larryruhr@tmn-cot.org](mailto:larryruhr@tmn-cot.org), who will put you on the email list for future communications and have the “AT: Waters Specialist” option put into VMS for you to use.

We will be organizing a small group discussion / study group to review the challenge questions at the end of each chapter in the curriculum book—likely one or two chapters per session. Currently, the study groups are planned for up to an hour after the monthly chapter meetings. These are not required, but are an opportunity to discuss the topics with other interested members; discussions are acceptable for Waters Specialist AT credit. Reading the book is required but does not carry any credit.

## Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Patrol Update

by Vicky and Bryan Adams, SBNWR Sea Turtle Patrol

The 2017 Kemp's ridley sea turtle nesting season has begun, with nests already found on Boca Chica Beach, North and South Padre Island, Mustang Island, and recently, on Matagorda Peninsula. With many folks, especially Master Naturalists, having participated in this year's training sessions, we have high hopes that our nearby beaches will soon join that list.

The Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) is the smallest of sea turtles—adults weigh 80 to 100 pounds—is the only sea turtle that nests primarily during the day and is also the most critically endangered of all sea turtles. They nest mostly on the Gulf Coast of central and northern Mexico with a smaller number nesting on the Texas coast.

Due to a dramatic plunge in the population of Kemp's ridleys from the 1940's to the 1980's, an extensive effort has been undertaken jointly by Mexico and the United States to try to bring this species back from the edge of extinction. The San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge has been assigned responsibility for patrolling the Gulf Coast from Quintana through the Matagorda Peninsula, with the goal of locating nests, carefully extracting the eggs, and transporting them to Padre Island National Seashore, where the eggs are incubated and the hatchlings released.

Wouldn't it be better to simply leave eggs in the original nest and let nature take its course? Certainly, there is debate on this issue, but scientists involved with the extraction/incubation/release project make a couple of points: (1) The historical nesting range lies primarily from the south Texas coast through the central Gulf Coast of Mexico, and (2) most of our region of the coast has undergone a great deal of development, and nests left in situ are subject to a high



Photo by B. Adams



Photo by B. Adams



Clockwise from above: Kemp's ridley eggs extracted from the 2016 Quintana Beach nest. Tracks found at Quintana in 2016 by Vicky Adams; debris placed beside tracks to make them more visible. In 2016, Mike Mullins discovered and photographed these loggerhead sea turtle tracks on Matagorda Peninsula. Loggerheads are much larger than the Kemp's ridley and make much more prominent tracks.

degree of destruction by natural predators and human activities. If this species were more abundant, these problems would be less critical, but at this stage every nest, every hatchling, is vital. After entering the ocean as juveniles, only nesting females will ever return to land, and even they remain on the beach for only 45 minutes to an hour. This makes it unlikely that you will ever see a nesting turtle or turtle tracks, but if you do, please immediately call 1-866-TURTLE 5. Don't approach a nesting turtle, and try to avoid stepping on or otherwise disturbing the tracks, which are likely the only clue to the location of the nest! To see more images of tracks, Google "Kemp's ridley tracks."

## Who am I?



**Each month or so, a less-familiar animal or plant is featured along with a photo provided (usually) by a COT member. Guess what this animal is—then read on.**

The Portuguese man o' war, (*Physalia physalis*) is often called a jellyfish but is a species of siphonophore, a group of animals closely related to jellyfish. A siphonophore is unusual in that it is comprised of a colony of specialized, genetically identical individuals called zooids—clones—with various forms and functions, all working together as one. Each of the four specialized parts of a man o' war is responsible for a specific task, such as floating, capturing prey, feeding, and reproduction. Found mostly in tropical and subtropical seas, men o' war are propelled by winds and ocean currents alone and sometimes float in legions of 1,000 or more.

Resembling an 18th-century Portuguese warship under full sail, the man o' war is recognized by its balloon-like float, which may be blue, violet, or pink and rises up to six inches above the waterline. Lurking below the float are long strands of tentacles and polyps that grow to an average of 30 feet and may extend by as much as 100 feet. Tentacles contain stinging nematocysts, microscopic capsules loaded with coiled, barbed tubes that deliver venom capable of paralyzing and killing small fish and crustaceans. While a man o' war's sting is rarely deadly to people, it packs a painful punch and causes welts on exposed skin. Beachcombers be warned: The stalwart man o' war may still sting even weeks after having washed ashore. According to USA Today Network, thousands of the creatures washed up along Brevard County's 72-mile shoreline in January of this year.

Photo by Kristine Rivers; Text by National Ocean Service <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/portuguese-man-o-war.html>  
Kristine Rivers discovered this specimen at Bryan Beach in March, 2017.



## 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
Speakers Bureau Coordinator	Jimmy Salinas, Freeport
Chapter Host	Pam West, Freeport
Publicity Director	Richard Schaffhausen, Alvin
Publications Director	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Class of 2016 Representative	Judy Green, Angleton

Chapter Advisor	John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service)
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Newsletter Editor	Lisa Myers, Lake Jackson
Newsletter Writers	Neal McLain (Chief Reporter & Editorial Advisor), Kristine Rivers, Peggy Romfh, Bryan Adams

Website	<a href="http://tmn-cot.org">http://tmn-cot.org</a>
Facebook	<a href="http://facebook.com/TMN-COT">http://facebook.com/TMN-COT</a>



## Master Naturalist Email Lists

### **TMN-COT Chapter list**

- Instructions [http://tmn-cot.org/Email\\_Lists/index.html](http://tmn-cot.org/Email_Lists/index.html)
- Send messages to [TMN-COT@googlegroups.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Submissions are welcome; submission deadline is 5:00 PM on Friday before the General Meeting. Send submissions by email to *Chapter News* Editor at [news@tmn-cot.org](mailto:news@tmn-cot.org). Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.