



DECEMBER 2017

Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KRISTINE RIVERS

I'm not sure how, but this year has really flown by somehow! I can't believe it is already December and the end of my first year as chapter President. It has been a wonderful year, and I am so proud of everything that we have accomplished.

One of the major milestones that we achieved this year was obtaining our non-profit status, and as we look forward to 2018, I would like to see us make better use of it with regard to fundraising. I believe that we could make a significant difference for students in Brazoria County by creating exciting, interesting programs that would supplement the curriculum provided in schools. Although I myself have no experience in fundraising, I hope that someone in our chapter does. If you have a background in fundraising and would be interested in spearheading this effort, please let me know.

Another area in which we made significant progress in 2017 was implementation of the Texas Water Specialist program. Several of our chapter members achieved certification and have worked hard to further their knowledge through Advanced Training and volunteering efforts. I look forward to seeing the program expand and flourish in 2018.

One of my projects this past year was creation of the Speakers Bureau,

and I was happy to see it begin to take shape as we accepted some requests from the community for speaking engagements. In 2018, it is my goal for us to be more proactive in seeking out opportunities and getting the word out that we have many subject matter experts within the chapter who are available for presentations. I would like for people to think of the Cradle of Texas Chapter whenever they have a need for knowledgeable speakers related to conservation, wildlife, and native plants.

We made significant progress in that area with our presentation series at the TMN State Meeting as we shared our love of coastal ecology with all those who attended our sessions. I can't wait for January 20th, when we will reprise most of the presentations to interested chapter members and other guests. We will be providing lunch to all attendees; I hope that you will join us.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you for your confidence in me this past year and for your support of my initiatives. It has been an honor for me to serve as your President, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to serve again in 2018.

Kristine Rivers is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. She can be reached at 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.

Masthead photo, Houston Audubon.

HOG WILD HOLIDAY FEAST following the December 13 General Meeting. As of 12/11/17, appetizers and sides are still needed; contact Ed Barrios, Ed77566@comcast.net. More info and directions on Page 2.

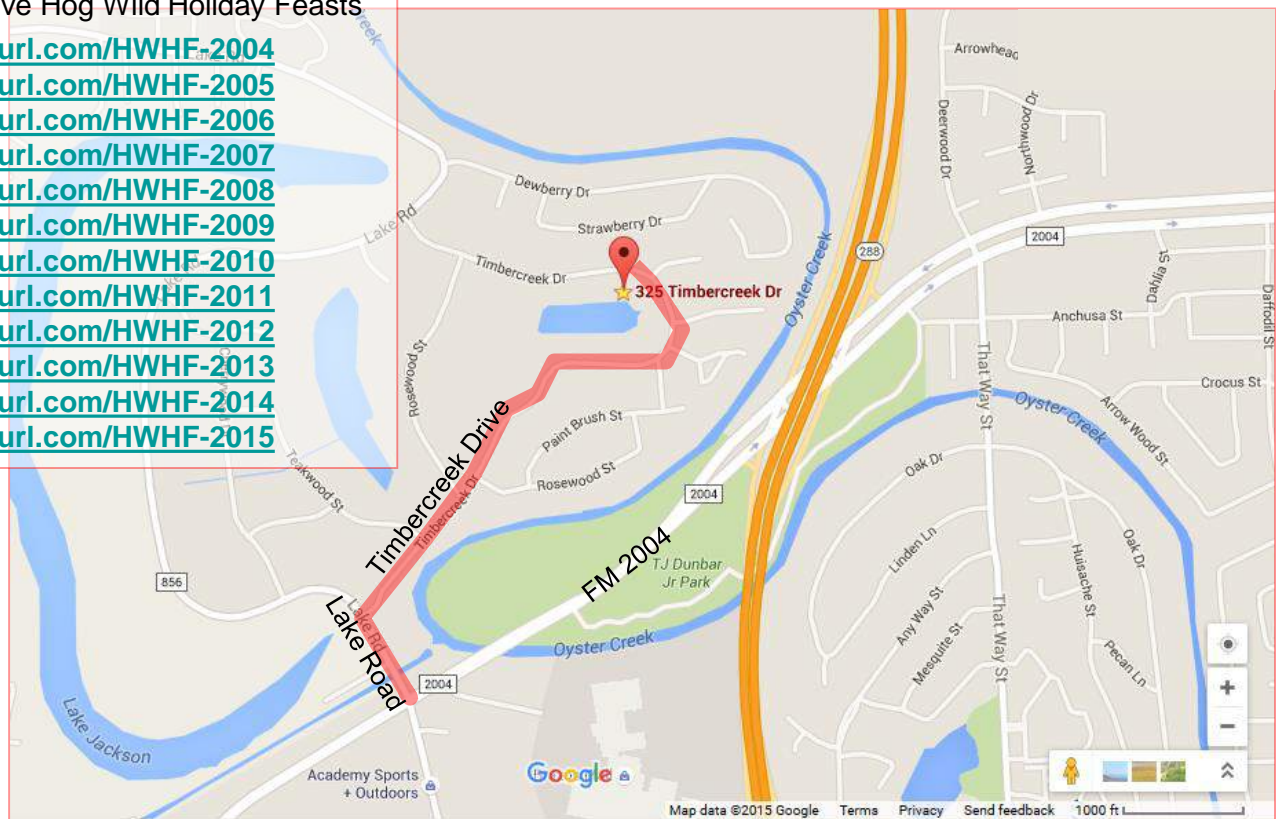
Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, December 13, 2017
Texas AgriLife Extension Building
21017 County Road 171
Angleton, Texas 77515-8903

10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Snack Team: Mike Bettorf, Ann Lange, Mel McKey, Neal McLain
11:00 AM – 12:00 AM	General Meeting Agenda Election of Officers for 2018 The business part of the meeting is approved for 1.0 hour of Volunteer Time <i>THERE WILL BE NO GUEST SPEAKER AND NO ADVANCED TRAINING</i>
12:00 PM – ???	14th Annual Hog Wild Holiday Feast (Sign up with Pam West to bring goodies) Hosted by Ed Barrios, Marty Cornelli, and Roy Morgan Location: 325 Timber Creek Drive, Lake Jackson, 979-287-1815 (Ed Barrios)

New to the Chapter? Here are photos of the first twelve 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>
- <http://tinyurl.com/HWHF-2015>

Directions to Hog Wild Holiday Feast



Membership Report by Pete and Peggy Romfh, Membership Directors

Congratulations to those receiving awards in December:

Recertification (Sea Turtle Pin)

Mike Bettorf	Mary Helen Israel
Barbara Burkhardt	Mike Mullenweg
Julia Geisler	Candace Novak
Christina Hartman	Ed Peebles
Mary Holler	David Plunkett

250 Hours Milestone (Bronze Dragonfly Pin)
Vicki Kirby

500 Hours Milestone (Silver Dragonfly Pin)
Neeta Allen Anna King

1000 Hours Milestone (Gold Dragonfly Pin)
Kim Richardson

Impact Data—January–November

14,603 Adults 33,776 Youth 48,379 Total

Hours Totals—January–November

15,339 hours VT 1,632 hours AT 115 Volunteers



Presented at the November General Meeting...



Peggy Romfh (center) presents Herb Myers and Kristine Rivers with 500-hour pins. Justina Dent received a 5,000-hour milestone pin and cuts her celebratory cake shared during the General Meeting break. Phyllis Gerdes assists Chapter Host Pam West in serving the cake. Photos by Dick Schaffhausen. Below: Presentation team for State Meeting being given pins (inset) by President Kristine Rivers to recognize participation. Pictured from left to right: Neal McLain, Pete Romfh, Lisa Myers, Peggy Romfh, Kristine Rivers, Mike Mullenweg, Jimmy Salinas, and Phil Huxford. Not pictured: Rich Tillman. Photo by Dave Brandes.



Nominating Committee Report by the Nominating Committee

At the upcoming December General Meeting, we will be voting for our Board of Directors officers for 2018. The following members have been nominated by the nominating committee. Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor and a ballot finalized before voting begins.

- President—Kristine Rivers
- Vice President—Bill Ahlstrom
- Secretary—Lisa Myers
- Treasurer—Donald Sabathier

The newly-elected officers will assume office at the conclusion of the December General-Membership Meeting.



Kristine Rivers
President



Bill Ahlstrom
Vice President



Lisa Myers
Secretary



Don Sabathier
Treasurer

COT Member Shine at 2017 Festival of Lights

Cradle of Texas members once again contributed to the festivities of Lake Jackson’s Festival of Lights on Saturday, November 18. Coordinated by Ruby Lewis, TMN and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges volunteers shared alligators, turtles and snakes with festival goers and spread the word about the upcoming Migration Celebration in April. Santa allegedly made an appearance as well.



Row 1: Roy Morgan (Santa Claus?) with corn snake welcomes visitors, Lisa Myers shows a hognose snake to young visitors; **Row 2:** Juvenile alligator resting peacefully on Ruby Lewis’ lap; Ruby Lewis with a large juvenile alligator, Juvenile alligator taking a break.

Row 3: Mike Lasseter with juvenile alligator; David Plunkett invites a visitor to April’s Migration Celebration; Ellen Lasseter with a bale of box turtles; Kim Richardson with a king snake; Layna Lewis takes a break from alligator wrangling; **Row 4:** Christina Hartman with juvenile alligator. Photos by Neal McLain.

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 2017-18



Editor's note: This article is a reprint of an article previously posted in Chapter News. We reprint it here in anticipation of the 2017-18 Christmas Bird Count.

The 118th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is scheduled for December 14, 2017 to January 5, 2018. Organized by the National Audubon Society, this all-volunteer effort takes a snapshot of bird populations to monitor their status and distribution across the Western Hemisphere. The results are compiled into a database that is shared with federal, state, and private authorities. Past data can be viewed on Audubon's website. Counts are open to birders of all skill levels. Novices are placed in groups with more experienced birders.

There is no fee to participate in Christmas Bird Counts. The annual CBC report will be an on-line publication and National Audubon will rely on donations for funding. Detailed information will be posted on the FOBWR/TMN-COT calendar when available:

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

Christmas Bird counts are supported by the Houston Audubon and are accredited by the National Audubon Society. For a complete list of all Texas Bird Counts, see the Houston Audubon website at:

<http://tinyurl.com/CBCs-2017-08>

TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS

PLEASE NOTE

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, lunch, travel among count sites (if any), the countdown (including dinner), and your travel time to and from the meeting points.

VMS Code: FR: Field Research/Citizen Science

Description: CBC + location of event

Some Introductory Words

by Tom Morris, David Plunkett, and Neal McLain

The Audubon Christmas Bird Counts is a North-, Central-, and South-American campaign to count as many birds and species within a fixed circle, 15 miles in diameter. The first Christmas Count was in the Northeast in 1900 on Christmas Day.

Data from the counts are compiled in a database, results are printed annually, and the raw data is available to researchers and amateurs. Population trends have been used to help protect species that show marked decreases.

A typical count day requires a lot of walking—two to three miles—and you are exposed to the elements a good part of the day. However, in case of bad weather such as rain, we resort to birding by car. In the evening we meet at a "countdown" for dinner and to tally results.

Good hiking shoes, a hat, rain gear, repellent, layers, water, light snacks, and binoculars are the basics.

Less experienced birders are welcome to participate. If you wish to participate, please contact the Count Coordinator as soon as possible. Names of coordinators are posted on the next page of this newsletter and on the TMN-COT/FOBWR calendar. The coordinator will assign you to a specific group and let you know where to meet your group on the morning of the count.

Every Bird Count is named for something—a city, a park, or some geographic feature—located inside the 15-mile-diameter circle. These names can sometimes be confusing. For example, the Brazoria Bird Count is named for the City of Brazoria, but it includes a much larger area. Similarly, the Freeport Bird Count is named for Freeport, but it also includes a larger area.

During these counts, participants typically meet early in the morning, around 6:30 a.m., and work in small groups with at least one knowledgeable birder per group. Each group covers a specified territory in the morning and usually covers another in the afternoon, with a break for lunch. Less-experienced birders thus have an opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues.

Continued on Page 5

LOCAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE 2017-18

The schedule of local Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in 2017-18 follows. For further information, contact:

David Plunkett
979-297-3322 (h)
979-418-1411 (c)
doplunkett@sbcglobal.net

Tom Morris
979-297-4678 (h)
tmorris44@comcast.net

December 18, 2017

Matagorda Co.—Mad Island Marsh CBC (TXMM)

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

Count circle: <http://tmn-cot.org/cbc/TXMM.kmz>
Brent Ortego, 361-576-0022 brentortego@hotmail.com

December 20, 2017

Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR (TXAP)

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.

Count circle: <http://tmn-cot.org/cbc/TXAP.kmz>
Sumita Prasad, 832-453-4374 sumita@utexas.edu

December 14, 2017

Guadalupe River Delta—McFaddin Ranches (TXGF)

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 neotrops.

Count circle: <http://tmn-cot.org/cbc/TXGF.kmz>
Brent Ortego, 361-648-9773 brentortego@hotmail.com

2017 DECEMBER						
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						

December 15, 2017

San Bernard National Wildlife Refuges (TXSB)

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 Blutworth tract, along Cocklebur Slough (2003 acquisition), and the nearby McNeill tract, which now boasts the San Bernard Oak, the official state champion Live Oak.

Count circle: <http://tmn-cot.org/cbc/TXSB.kmz>
Ron Weeks, 979-299-0066 ronweeks@sbcglobal.net

Saturday, December 16, 2017

Brazos Bend State Park (TXBZ)

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.

Count circle: <http://tmn-cot.org/cbc/BBSP.jpg>
Justin Bower, 832-746-2140 jbower47@hotmail.com

December 17, 2017

Freeport (TXFR)

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.

Count circle: <http://tmn-cot.org/cbc/TXFR.kmz>
Mike Austin, mj_eh@comcast.net

December 30, 2017

Brazoria—Columbia Bottomlands (TXBR)

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.

Count circle: <http://tmn-cot.org/cbc/TXBR.kmz>
Tom Taroni, 979-297-5563 taronitom@gmail.com

For further information: <http://tinyurl.com/cbcs-2017-08>

In Memoriam—Dianne Lee Richmond

Dianne Lee Richmond passed away in November at her home in Lake Jackson. A retired nurse, Dianne worked for 22 years at Brazosport Memorial Hospital and five years in Pediatric Home Health. Dianne was known for her love of family, animals, nature and traveling. She was a Texas Master Naturalist and volunteered at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Brazoria County Disaster Relief, and Safety Town. She was also a member of St. Michael's Catholic Church in Lake Jackson. *(Published on Dignity Restwood Funeral Home website, November 2017.)*

Dianne was an active member of the Cradle of Texas Chapter for several years. A member of the Class of 2005, Dianne volunteered for several environmental education programs including DEEP, the INEOS EE program, and the Phillips 66 EE program. We will miss your smile.



Dianne Lee Richmond



Jim Renfro and Dianne Richmond at "Ever Green: Protecting the Columbia Bottomlands," Hudson Woods Unit, March 2008; Barbara Burkhardt, John Thayer, and Dianne Richmond at TMN-COT General Meeting, AgriLife Building, December 2004. Information and photos compiled by Neal McLain.



Ode to Christmas

We're *dreaming of a white Christmas*, where
the only *snow* is found in snowy egrets,

And white pelicans *glisten* as they swim in
the bays,

And we listen to the sounds of wintering
gulls instead of *sleigh bells in the snow*.

And our *days are merry and bright*, if we can
enjoy the beauty of nature.

God Bless You All and to All, a Nature-
filled New Year!

Peggy and Pete
TMN-COT
Membership Directors



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, Demi-John
Publicity Director	Richard Schaffhausen, Alvin
Publications Director	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Class of 2017 Representative	Bill Ahlstrom, Angleton
Chapter Advisor	John O'Connell (AgriLife Extension Service)
Newsletter Editor	Lisa Myers, Lake Jackson
Newsletter Contributors	Neal McLain (Chief Reporter, Editorial Advisor), Kristine Rivers, Peggy Romfh, Pete Romfh
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 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. Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.