



MARCH 2018

Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KRISTINE RIVERS

It may not officially be Spring just yet, but the weather is already absolutely beautiful! I hope everyone has found some time to get out and enjoy it.

Pete and Peggy Romfh told us at our last chapter meeting that Advanced Training hours usually average about 10% of volunteer hours; however, due to our Bonus AT Day on January 20th, the Texas Estuarine Resource Network (TERN) Rookery Monitoring Training Day on February 26th, and a few other AT opportunities, we find ourselves in the unique position of having numerous chapter members who already have enough AT hours to recertify before meeting the VT-hour requirement. Not to worry, though—things are already getting really busy, and April is always our busiest volunteer month.

Oron Atkins and his team have been working hard to finish Bobcat Woods Trail restoration at San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in time for Migration Celebration; the Discovery Environmental Education Program (DEEP) and Birds of Prey program have already started; there's been a great deal of clean-up and restoration work at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO); and we've got a few new projects that have begun, including Project SOAR with GCBO, TERN colonial waterbird rookery and foraging habitat monitoring, and the American

Eel citizen science project. All of that and more, and it's only the first week of March!

April ushers in GCBO's Spring Fling at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary, as well as our biggest volunteer effort of the year—Migration Celebration at San Bernard NWR. With all these volunteer opportunities available, hopefully you will find something to participate in that you really enjoy. It will be interesting to see how many people recertify in the first half of 2018 compared to recertification levels in previous years.

Bill Ahlstrom has been quite busy lining up interesting speakers for upcoming chapter meetings, and we're focused on bringing a variety of great topics to you. At the March Board meeting, we brainstormed suggestions, and I'm excited to see what Bill brings to us. Bill notes that many members have volunteered to present Nature Notes at upcoming meetings. We have such a depth of knowledge in our own membership that this year's Nature Notes will no doubt be quite interesting.

This year is already shaping up to be a great one! I look forward to seeing all of you at meetings and out in the field.

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



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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 by P&P Romfh.

Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
Chapter News – March 2018

MIGRATION CELEBRATION is Next Month!
Volunteers needed!! See inside for more details,
and visit the NEW Migration Celebration website
at <http://migrationcelebration.org>. Logo by Kristine Rivers.



Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, March 14, 2018
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, Becky McClendon Huff, Jo Myers, George Valadez
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	General Meeting and Nature Notes <i>This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour volunteer time</i> Nature Notes: "Oxygen and Salinity in Tidal Rivers" by Pete Romfh
10:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Speaker: James Glover, Brazoria County Parks Department Topic: <i>The Intracoastal Waterway: Early Years of Today's ICWW and its Continuing Impact on the Economy and Environment</i>



James Glover is presently the Historical Site Manager and Supervisor of the Stephen F. Austin-Munson County Park near Angleton, Texas.

Born in New Velasco in 1961, James attended Sweeny ISD, graduating in 1980. He went on to attend Brazosport College and Southwest Texas State University. After working in construction, retail, and newspapers, he joined the Brazoria County Parks

Department (BCPD) as Ranger at Quintana Beach County Park and became Park Supervisor in 2004. From 2008 to 2016 he ran department-wide programs for BCPD until moving into his present position.

James is a noted and well-respected Texas Historian and speaker. Historical research and interpretation, canoeing, kayaking, woodworking, and literature are among his interests and hobbies. James is a member of numerous organizations including the Brazoria Historical Militia, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Sons of the Republic of Texas, and the Brazoria County Historical Commission. He is an Admiral of the Texas Navy, having received the award from Governor Rick Perry in 2012.

Brazoria County Parks Department (BCPD) is based in Angleton, Texas. The BCPD operates ten parks, 23 miles of sandy beaches, 21 boat ramps, two RV campgrounds, historical homes, interpretive centers, day-use facilities, playgrounds, a swimming pool, horseshoe and volleyball pits, and picnic areas. The Department also offers meeting room, cabin, dormitory, pavilion, and chapel rentals.



The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is a 3,000-mile (4,800 km) inland waterway along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts of the United States, running from Boston, Massachusetts, southward along the Atlantic Seaboard and around the southern tip of Florida, then following the Gulf Coast to Brownsville, Texas. Some sections of the waterway consist of natural inlets, saltwater rivers, bays, and sounds, while others are artificial canals.

Without many of the hazards of travel on the open sea, the ICW provides a navigable route along its length. The ICW is operated by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, a unit of the Department of Defense; it was founded by President George Washington in 1802.

Tug and barge passing through the Colorado River Locks on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway near Matagorda, Texas.
 Credit: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers / Wikipedia Commons.

Membership Report by Pete and Peggy Romfh, Membership Directors

Congratulations to those receiving awards at the COT March General Meeting:

Recertification 2018 (Ocelot Pin)

Marty Cornell	Kim Richardson
Phil Huxford	Kristine Rivers
Carolyn May-Monie	Peggy Romfh
Neal McLain	Pete Romfh
Roy Morgan	Larry Ruhr
Lisa Myers	Don Sabathier

250 Hours Milestone (Bronze Dragonfly Pin)

Mike Bettorf

Impact Data—February

703 Adults 1153 Youth 1856 Total

Hours Totals—February

1144 hours VT 217.5 hours AT 71 Volunteers

The individuals pictured below accepted awards or certifications at the February General Meeting held at the Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service.



Above: Texas Water Certification program participants receive certificates of completion and pins. From left: Larry Peterson, Ed Peebles, President Kristine Rivers, Larry Ruhr, Peggy Romfh, and Pete Romfh.



Clockwise from above: President Kristine Rivers and Membership Director Peggy Romfh present Don Sabathier with a 500-hour VT pin. Ruby Lewis with the cookie cake presented to her in honor of achieving the 4000-hour VT milestone. February COT General Meeting speaker Stephen Curtis chats with Chip Sweet and Kristine Rivers about the American Eel Survey project. Kristine Rivers and Peggy Romfh present Ruby Lewis, the first to recertify in 2018, with an ocelot pin. Photos by Pete Romfh.



2018 COT Intern Training Class Schedule Announced

Caroline May-Monie, Intern Training Director, and the training team recently solidified plans for the 2018 Training Class, which commences on September 5 and ends with intern-project reports and graduation at the COT Monthly Member Meeting on December 12.

The complete training schedule is posted at http://tmn-cot.org/Intern_Training/index.html and the webpage also includes information and a registration link for prospective interns. The 2018 class will be limited to 15 participants and offers some new modules and presenters, e.g., “Forests: Columbia Bottomlands,” led by Chris Kneupper, and “Aquatic Systems,” led by John O’Connell. Please help get the word out about the enriching education offered by COT’s program.



Saturday & Sunday
April 21 & 22, 2018

San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge
 6801 County Road 306, Brazoria, TX 77422

FREE FUN
 for the
ENTIRE FAMILY!

Photo Contest

The Nature Photography Contest is an annual Migration Celebration (MC) program that recognizes local nature photographers. Nature photography is one of six, legislated public uses of national wildlife refuges (NWRs) along with wildlife observation, interpretation, environmental education, hunting, and fishing.

The 2018 Photo Contest is sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Complex, is underwritten by Friends of the Brazoria Wildlife Refuges and is being coordinated Ed Barrios. The committee is honored to once again have noted nature photographer Kathy Clark as the judge.

Deadline for submissions is March 23; submissions can be dropped off at either the NWR Refuge Complex office in Brazoria or the Brazosport Area Chamber of Commerce in Lake Jackson. Judging takes place on April 14 at the AgriLIFE building in Angleton and includes the opportunity for photographers to receive a critique from judge Kathy Clark. All photos are exhibited at the Kickoff Dinner, at which winners will be announced, and also at the MC event. Full information on the contest can be found at:

<http://migrationcelebration.org/photocontest.html>.

Kickoff Dinner and Speaker

Migration Celebration (MC) 2018 will begin with kickoff activities at [Freeport RiverPlace](#) on Friday, April 13, at 5:30 p.m. and features an exhibit of the MC Photo Contest submissions. Marty Cornell's traditional sage-rubbed roasted pork dinner will be served at 6:15 p.m., along with yummy sides, a vegetarian lasagna option and cake. All food is prepared and served by MC volunteers. Dinner tickets are now available at \$30 per person (\$10 for children) from a MC committee member or via reservations for will-call tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/ticketsMC>. In addition, a limited number of dinner tickets will be available at the door.

This year's keynote speaker is Stuart Mackenzie, the Migration Program Manager at Bird Studies Canada (BSC) responsible for the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, Long Point Bird Observatory, and aspects of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network.

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus, Latin for movement) is a global, collaborative, research network that uses a combination of miniaturized radio transmitters and a coordinated, automated, telemetry-receiver network to track the movement and behavior of small organisms. Its purpose is to facilitate landscape-scale research and education on

the ecology and conservation of migratory animals. A Motus system will be displayed at the MC event on April 21 and 22.

Volunteering

Over 480 volunteer time slots must be filled by approximately 180 people in order to make Migration Celebration (MC) happen. Each year, volunteers representing Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges and COT, along with their friends and family members, fill many of those slots. The event also includes many displays and tours staffed by refuge RV Volunteers, refuge staff, college students and personnel from representative organizations.

This year, Lisa Myers took over volunteer coordination from Ed Barrios, who is now leading the MC Planning Committee, a job previously headed for many years by David Plunkett. Full information and a Volunteer Service Agreement can be found at:

<http://migrationcelebration.org/volunteers.html>.

To volunteer, contact Lisa Myers at:

lisamyers@tmn-cot.org.

Migration Celebration April 21 & 22

This year's even offers more activities, tours and exhibits than ever before.

Tours include:

- Bobcat Woods Trail
- Kayaking on Cedar Lake Creek
- Wolfweed Reservoir
- Moccasin Pont
- San Bernard Oak Trail

Activities include:

- Bug Sweeping
- Kids Fishing
- Birds of Prey Program
- Nature Studies Microscope Lab
- Touch Tank
- Butterfly Encounter
- Kite Flying
- Pond Life
- Turtle Excluder Device
- Fish Prints
- Live Critters
- Refuge Firefighting
- Water Stream Trailer
- Bubbles
- Junior Naturalist Passport
- Nature Art Table
- Sand Pile

Exhibitors include (not finalized):

- Brazoria County Master Gardeners
- Brazoria County Parks Department
- Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges
- Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
- Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue
- Refuge Junior Naturalists
- Sea Center Texas
- Sweeny/West Brazos EMS
- Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service
- TMN-COT Chapter
- Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Complex Turtle Patrol
- MC Photo Contest
- MC Nature Store
- MC Bake Sale
- MC Food Service

Visit the NEW Migration Celebration website designed by Kristine Rivers at <http://migrationcelebration.org>.

What Should You do if You See a Live, Stranded or Dead Marine Mammal? compiled by Peggy Romfh

Immediately call the **Southeast Region Stranding Network 24-hour hotline at: 1-877-WHALE HELP (1-877-942-5343)** to be connected to your state's marine-mammals stranding network. The stranding network will send out trained responders who will get to the scene quickly with appropriate equipment.



This dead dolphin was seen on Matagorda beach in February, 2018. Photos by Pete Romfh.

The **Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program** coordinates emergency responses to sick, injured, distressed, or dead seals, sea lions, dolphins, porpoises, and whales. The 1992 Amendments to the [Marine Mammal Protection Act](#) formalized this program and designated NOAA Fisheries' Office of Protected Resources as the lead agency to coordinate related activities.

Reporting a sick, injured, entangled, stranded, or dead animal is the best way to make sure professional responders and scientists know about it and can take appropriate action. If you see one of the animals listed above or a sea turtle, immediately contact your local stranding network (phone numbers provided below).

You can also use the Dolphin and Whale 911 app to report a stranded marine mammal. The app is available for [Android devices](#) and [Apple devices](#).

➤ **To Report:**

Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network Hotline,
Galveston, TX
Phone: (800) 9MAMMAL (800-962-6625)

Texas Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network
Phone: (361) 949-8173 x 226

Source: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/report>.

Beach Finds of Marine Mammal Bones are Okay to Collect...if Registered!

Federal regulation 50 CFR 216.26 states that any bones, teeth, or ivory of any dead marine mammal may be collected from a beach or from land within one fourth of a mile of the ocean, including bays and estuaries. These marine mammal parts *must* be registered and identified by the National Marine Fisheries Service Office and may then be transferred or otherwise possessed.

Snow Geese Flock to Brazoria County in the Winter by Peggy and Pete Romfh



No winter is complete in Brazoria County without the sight of large flocks of snow geese—honking, swirling into the sky *en masse* if startled, eating their way through plants and roots, and flying overhead in large, ragged V-formations.

This flock of 1000+ was spotted in mid-February on the tilled prison fields along Hwy 2611, west of Lake Jackson.



Muddy bills



Blue Morph

White (Snow)
Morph

Snow geese are vegetarians with huge appetites. They eat grasses, sedges, rushes, forbs, shrubs, and willows. Since they consume nearly every part of a plant (seeds, stems, leaves, tubers, and roots) by grazing or even ripping entire stems from the ground, they can decimate a field to bare dirt. A couple of years ago, a large meadow of Olney bulrush near Moccasin Pond was inhabited by an enormous flock of snow geese. They quickly reduced the meadow to a field of dirt and mud. It was two years before the vegetation recovered.

Food passes through a snow-geese digestive tract in one to two hours, so they poop up to 15 times per hour, especially when they have swallowed mud in their attempt to eat rhizomes from sedges or other plants.

The dark color of the blue-morph snow goose is controlled by a single gene. If a pure, dark goose mates with a white goose, the offspring will be dark, likely with white bellies, as seen in the blue morph pictured above.

The percent of blues in a flock varies by region. There are more blue morphs seen in Eastern flocks and more white (snowy) morphs seen in Western flocks. In the flock we saw, there were about 15% were blue morph geese.

Source of snow goose facts:
www.allaboutbirds.org

The Sky is the Limit for Spring Fling at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary by Peggy Romfh

163 DIFFERENT SPECIES SEEN DURING SPRING FLING 2017

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

Spring Fling provides an opportunity for Master Naturalists and others to volunteer mornings, afternoons, or all day. Volunteers post bird sightings daily, provide maps and directions to visitors, and generally welcome visitors to the joys of Gulf Coast birding. We have sent volunteer requests via email to the 2017 volunteers and **will ask additional volunteers to sign up at the March COT meeting.**

Volunteers do not need to be expert birders. New volunteers can either partner with someone more experienced or ask visitors at the site to share what they are observing. Contact Pete or Peggy Romfh if you wish to volunteer.

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



The thick foliage of the Xeriscape provides great habitat and food for migrating birds.

QNBS Volunteer Facts 2017

- 38 Volunteers staffed the host station; Most were Master Naturalists
- 430 Volunteer hosting hours at QNBS station



Visitors with binoculars and cameras delight in sighting birds at QNBS.

QNBS Visitor Facts 2017

An estimated 1000 people visited QNBS in the month of April to enjoy birding and photographic opportunities. People came from:

- 90 Texas locations
- 63 Non-Texas locations from 26 different states
- 10 Locations in other countries of the world, including Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, Ecuador, France, Honduras, Mexico, Switzerland, and Venezuela.

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 coastal species.



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.



Visitors flock to QNBS when news of a fallout spreads. All photos by Pete Romfh.

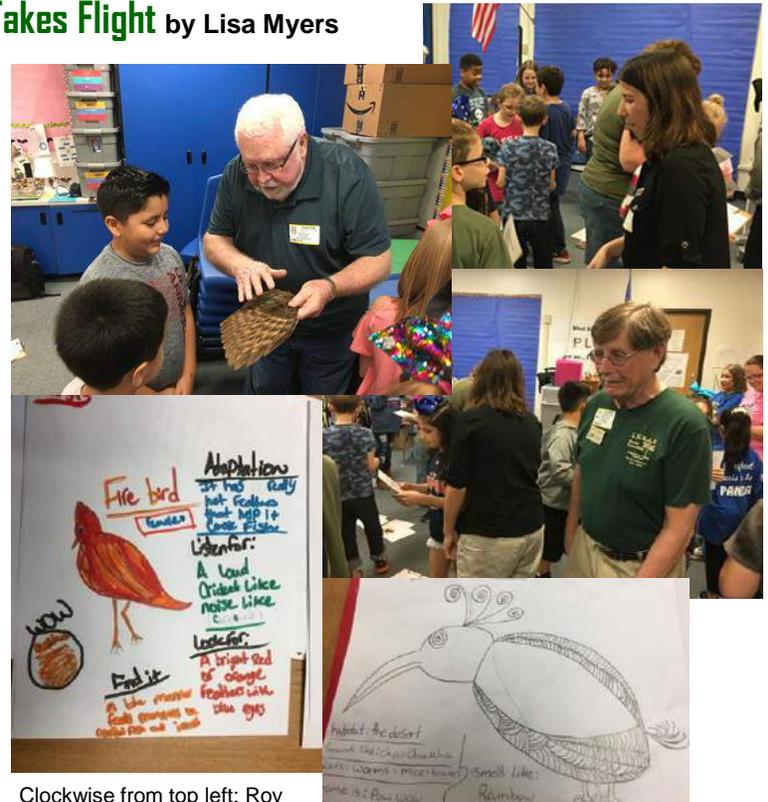
GCBO's SOAR Program Takes Flight by Lisa Myers

SOAR, a new outreach program developed and sponsored by Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's (GCBO) Emma Shelly, Education and Outreach Manager, began in earnest on February 23 at Gladys Polk Elementary School in Richwood, Texas.

Volunteers Marty Cornell, Jackie Hicks, Vicky Kirby, Roy Morgan, and Lisa Myers joined Emma in presenting sessions to three different groups of third graders. After a brief PowerPoint that introduced GCBO and focused on adaptations of birds, students invented their own species of bird that has adaptations to live in either the desert or near water. They also examined bird artifacts that included wings, skulls, and feet with talons—a big attraction. Students then played a bird-call game that allowed them to practice a bird call and find another student of “their species.”

While the sessions are designed for third through sixth graders and to run from one to one and a half hours, including 30 minutes outside, time constraints imposed by the school dictated that the February 23 sessions be 40-45 minutes in length. However, that did not hamper learning or the students' enthusiasm.

To volunteer with SOAR, contact Emma Shelly at emma.shelly@yahoo.com.



Clockwise from top left: Roy Morgan shows a bird wing; Emma Shelly helps with bird calls; Marty Cornell reacts to the bird calling; student drawings of invented birds and adaptations. Photos by Jackie Hicks.

Lisa Myers named Volunteer of the Year by Fish and Wildlife Service by Neal McLain

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, at its Volunteer Recognition Dinner held on February 27, recognized Lisa Myers as its *Volunteer of the Year*. The award included a framed, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department *Collector's Edition Upland Game Bird Stamp* of a quail and a limited-edition, Calvin Carter print, on which the stamp was based.

A member of the TMN-COT Class of 2016, Lisa serves our chapter as Board Secretary and as the editor of our monthly newsletter, *Chapter News*. Since joining the Chapter, Lisa has participated in many activities including DEEP, HWEEP, Sea Turtle Patrol, Migration Celebration, Brazoria Heritage Day, Lake Jackson Festival of Lights, and KBR Kids Day. She has participated in Christmas Bird Counts at San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge—this year as part of Marty Cornell's gumbo cooking crew.

Lisa notes: I became a Master Naturalist to explore an entirely different field, about which I knew very little, and to become familiar with the flora and fauna of my new home. As a result, I've met wonderful, welcoming people who have been so generous in sharing their knowledge with me and the community." As a member of Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges, she is the Volunteer Coordinator and Publicity Coordinator for this year's Migration Celebration and serves on the FOBWR Board as Vice President.



USFWS' Jennifer Sanchez presents Lisa Myers with the Volunteer of the Year award. Photo by Dick Schaffhausen.

Lisa hails from New York City and graduated in 1975 with a B.A. in English Literature from the State University of New York at Cortland. She lived in Atlanta for many years, where she earned an M.A. in Secondary Language Arts from Georgia State University in 2001 and then worked as a high school language arts teacher. Lisa's husband Heardy is an instrumentation and controls engineer at BASF.

When asked about her favorite volunteer activities, she responded, "I enjoy anything with young people, such as DEEP and the Library Program. Although I love working with children, I also enjoy the satisfaction of using skills gained over many years as a marketing communications executive in the high-tech software arena. I have created materials for activities/events such as DEEP and *A Taste for Nature*."

Her favorite bird? "I never knew about Roseate Spoonbills until I lived here—amazing." She also loves to observe water birds: "They are easier to see and identify than 'little brown birdies.' It is also satisfying to teach students about invertebrates in the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge *Discovery Center* lab."

The Cradle of Texas Chapter thanks Lisa for her service to our chapter and congratulates her for her award from USFWS!

Monthly Field Trips Launched by Lisa Myers

At a recent Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (FOBWR) Board Meeting, Jennifer Sanchez, Project Leader of the Texas Mid-coast NWR Complex, suggested monthly, informal field trips to less-commonly visited or not-generally-open-to-the-public areas of the refuges. Except for holiday conflicts, the trips will be held on the first Sunday of the month, and FOBWR and COT members and their friends and family will meet at or near the site at noon.

This month, Jennifer led a small group on a tour of “The Farm Fields,” part of the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, a few miles north of the Brazoria Office off CR 316. Generally closed to the public, this area consists of former and leased rice fields and other, formerly-farmed acreage, some of which is now intentionally flooded for use by water birds and other wildlife.

We had hoped to find numerous Sandhill Cranes, but they were either gone for the season or elsewhere at the moment. However, we spotted quite a few species including: Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, White Ibis, White-faced Ibis, Black Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Kestrel, American Coot, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Willet,

Lesser Yellowlegs, Western Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Dunlin, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Barn Swallow, Common Grackle, and Red-winged Blackbird.

In addition to Jennifer and myself, Ed Barrios, Marlies and Bill Greenwood, Pam and David Peltier, and Kim Richardson attended.

Next month’s field trip attendees will meet on April 8 at noon to visit San Bernard NWR’s Brazos River Unit across from Columbia Lakes, West Columbia (we are skipping the first Sunday of the month, April 1, due to the Easter holiday). This area was flooded, post Harvey, with five to six feet of water that brought a lot of sand deposition into the forest floor. We will be walking down the road toward the sand pit. An ATV will be available for those who have difficulty walking. Birds could be hit or miss due to vegetation dieback, but it should be an interesting trip, approximately two hours in duration, as we look at the impacts of flooding on the bottomlands.

An invitation was emailed to the FOBWR and COT lists along with a Google Maps image with a pin locating the site (no address is available). No RSVP is required, but you can direct questions to lisalmyers@gmail.com.

Come for the birding and wildlife; stay for the fellowship.



March 4 field-trip participants viewing a farm-field wetland. A flock of Ibis, startled by our presence, soon settled down a bit farther down the road. Photo by Ed Barrios.

Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

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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.