



DECEMBER 2018

# Chapter News

## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KRISTINE RIVERS

Somehow, it is already December, and yet another year has flown by. As I reflect on 2018, I am so proud of everything that our chapter has accomplished. Some of the more notable COT achievements year-to-date include:

- Successful hosting of our Bonus AT Day in January, during which we provided training to members of nine other chapters in addition to our own
- Transition intern training from spring to fall to allow chapter members and the community to heal from the impact of Hurricane Harvey
- Reconstruction of Bobcat Woods boardwalk in San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge
- Implementation of new citizen-science opportunities such as the American Eel monitoring program and new resource-management opportunities such as the Cactus Moth monitoring program
- Participation in nearly 1,700 hours of Advanced Training
- Logging over 16,000 hours of Volunteer Time
- Directly or indirectly impacting approximately 50,000 children and adults.

I know there were many more accomplishments not included in the above list, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your efforts and hard work. The Cradle of Texas Chapter rocks!

Please be sure to join us for the December Chapter Meeting, during which the 2018 Intern Class will present team projects and graduate.

We've got another great group of interns, and I can't wait to see these presentations.

We will also elect executive Board positions for 2019 (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary).

Following the business meeting, we will celebrate with a holiday party at AgriLIFE. Please bring a potluck dish (appetizer, side, or dessert) to share.

Registration is now open for COT's 2019 Bonus AT Day, "A Little R&R (Research & Resource Management)"—we're already at half-capacity, so be sure to register soon at:

<https://tinyurl.com/2019-AT-Day>.

You don't want to miss out, as registration will be opened to other chapters on January 9. The event is free to attend, and lunch will be provided. At the TMN State Meeting, I was told that we're known as the friendly chapter, and that's due to the warm welcome that all of you extended to members of other chapters who attended last January's Bonus AT Day.

I have been honored to serve as your President for the past two years, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to continue to serve in 2019. I'm excited to see what the new year will bring.

*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).*



## CONTENTS

- Page 1**  
President's Message
- Page 2**  
Next General Meeting; Holiday Celebration Announcement
- Page 3**  
Membership Report; USFWS/ FOBWR Field Trip
- Page 4**  
Roy Morgan 4000 Hours
- Page 5**  
American Eel Monitoring Station 13 Report
- Page 6**  
Christmas Bird Counts 2018-19
- Page 7**  
Salt Wedges
- Page 8**  
Holiday Wishes



<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>  
[news@tmn-cot.org](mailto:news@tmn-cot.org)

The Texas Master Naturalist program is coordinated by the Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. 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 Neal McLain

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



**Area CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS  
Begin December 14!  
See Page 6 for details.**

**Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter  
General Meeting, Elections, Intern Graduation, and  
Holiday Celebration**

**Wednesday, December 12, 2018  
Texas AgriLIFE Extension Building  
21017 County Road 171  
Angleton, TX 77515-8903**

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	<b>Fun and Fellowship</b> <b>Morning Snack Team:</b> Bill Ahlstrom, John Boettiger, Neal McLain, Lisa Myers, Don Sabathier
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM	<b>Agenda</b> - Intern class project presentations (AT) - Election of officers for 2018 - Intern graduation - General meeting (VT) <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) for intern presentations TBD at close of meeting]</i>
12:00 PM – 4:00 PM	<b>Holiday Celebration Potluck at AgriLIFE Extension Building</b> *Cleanup help requested after the celebration

## HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2018  
12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

(Following General Meeting and Intern Presentations)

### AGRILIFE BUILDING

#### MENU

PORK  
BARRACHO BEANS

#### PLEASE BRING

APPETIZERS  
SIDES  
DESSERTS

**NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, PLEASE**



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

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

### Recertification 2018 (Ocelot Pin)

Mary Holler  
Mike Mullenweg

### 2500 Hours Milestone (Polished Silver Dragonfly Pin)

Dick Schaffhausen

### Impact Data—January 1—November 30

14,226 Adults      35,109 Youth      49,335 Total

### Hours Totals—January 1—November 30

16,122 hours VT    1,663 hours AT    107 Volunteers

## USFWS/FOBWR December Field Trip

The December 2 field trip led by Texas Mid-coast NWR Complex Project Leader Jennifer Sanchez and promoted by Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges, was to the Pentagon Marsh on the Sargent Unit of the San Bernard NWR. In addition to Jennifer, Mickey Dufilho, Warren Pruess and Lisa Myers tore themselves away from holiday happenings to enjoy an abundance of plants, birds and other wildlife—including a rattlesnake!—on a beautiful day. Mark your calendars and watch your inbox for next month's trip, January 6.

Below are most of the birds observed:

American Wigeon	White Ibis
Gadwall	Greater Yellowlegs
Northern Pintail	Lesser Yellowlegs
Northern Shoveler	Great blue Heron
Blue-winged Teal	Great Egret
Bufflehead	Snowy Egret
Ruddy Duck	Northern Harrier
Hooded Merganser	Red-tailed Hawk
Lesser Scaup	Bald Eagle
Snow Goose	Common Tern
Sandhill Crane	Gull (species unknown)
Double-crested	Savannah Sparrow
Cormorant	Meadowlark
Pied-billed Grebe	Marsh Wren
American Coot	Red-winged Blackbird
	Great-tailed Grackle



Top: At the November General Meeting held at the AgriLIFE Building in Angleton, Kim Richardson (left) received a pin and certificate for Texas Entomologist Specialist Certification from President Kristine Rivers and Membership Co-Director Peggy Romfh. Above: Kristine Rivers (far right) presents Patty Brinkmeyer and Christina Hartman with 250 VT hours pins.



Above: Chapter Host Pam West and honoree Roy Morgan serve cake at the November General Meeting.

President Kristine Rivers presents Roy Morgan with The President's Call to Service certificate and pin for completing 4000 volunteer hours. Photos by Pete Romfh.



## Roy Morgan Reaches TMN 4000-Hour Milestone



In recognition of reaching the Texas Master Naturalist 4000-volunteer-hours mark, Roy Morgan was awarded a polished-gold, ruby-inset dragonfly pin at the November meeting. A member of the Class of 2004, Roy has been active in a variety of capacities including:

- Earning the President's Call to Service Award in 2013 for 4000 volunteer hours performed primarily at Sea Center Texas
- Performing various diving-related tasks at Sea Center Texas including duty as "Sandy Claws"
- Volunteered at many fishing derbies, fish casting and kids' fishing events
- COT AT Coordinator
- COT Board Member
- Chief Hog Wild Smoker and Bean Maker
- Docent, Santa Claus, and Volunteer Advisory Board member, Sea Center Texas
- Docent, Brazosport Museum of Natural Science
- Ichthyology trainer for COT and Coastal Prairie interns.



Clockwise, from top right: Roy Morgan cooking with Ron Bisbee at Migration Celebration 2018 Kickoff Dinner; Roy teaching children at Lake Jackson Science Fest 2018; Roy as Sandy Claws at Sea Center Texas in 2011; Roy stirring a dish at the 2010 Hog Wild Holiday Feast; and with Ann McLain at Hog Wild 2010; Roy with Ron Bisbee and Ellis Burkhardt at the Migration Celebration 2016 Kickoff Dinner.



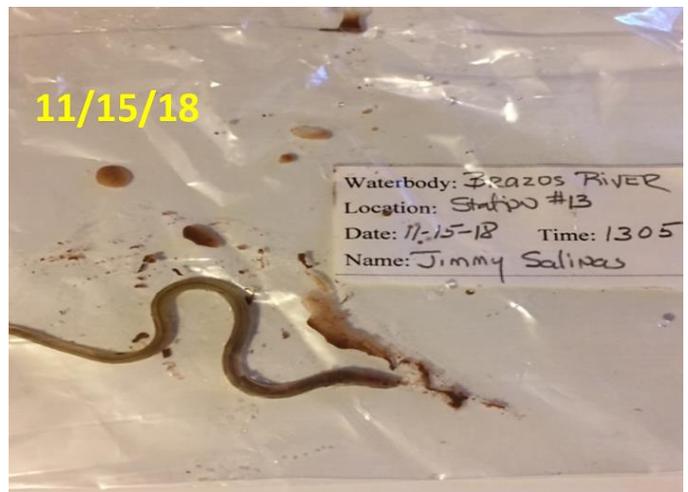
## Notes From the Field: American Eel Monitoring Station 13 by Jimmy Salinas

Since May 11, 2018, I have been monitoring American Eel Monitoring Station 13, located along the Brazos River between the Highway 36 bridge and the Intracoastal Waterway. The monitoring station is at the Bryan Mound Strategic Petroleum Reserve Raw Water Intake Structure.

Since May, I have recorded numerous crabs (different stages of development), shrimp, worms, and small fish. On October 29, I retrieved the "eel mop" after a longer-than-usual period of time (17 days). The Brazos River had been on the move with recent rains upstream. After this retrieval, the eel mop was heavily laden with silt from the recent spate of rain. I did not anticipate getting any organisms due to the increased silt and fresh-water conditions. However, after straining the residual water from the rinse, I noticed an organism that appeared to be "eel like."

When I checked the eel mop again on November 15, under conditions quite similar to those of October 29, I again noticed an "eel like" organism. Both specimens appeared to be Speckled Worm Eels, *Myrophis punctatus*.

Having contacted Stephen Curtis about the initial specimen, and he confirmed it was a speckled worm eel, we were fairly certain that the second specimen was also the same species. I monitored the station on November 27, and no eels were observed.



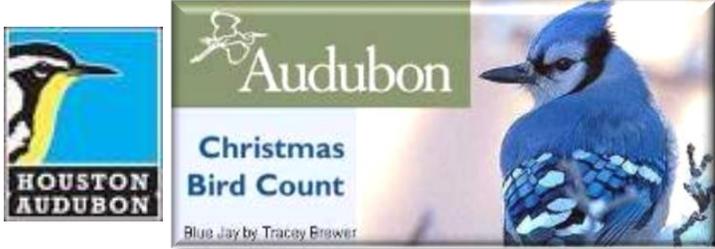
From top, right: Speckled worm eel trapped on October 29, 2018, at American Eel Monitoring Station 13; Brazos River intake near the location of the Station 13 eel mop; a Speckled Worm Eel trapped at Station 13 on November 15, 2018; the Bryan Mound Strategic Petroleum Reserve Raw Water Intake Structure. Photos and videos by Jimmy Salinas.

Click on the links below for videos of Jimmy Salinas documenting each of the collected Speckled Worm Eels.

[Click to Download IMG\\_3078.MOV](#)

[Click to Download IMG\\_3238.MOV](#)

## Christmas Bird Count 2018-19



The 119th annual Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for December 14, 2018 to January 4, 2019. 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. Results are compiled into a database that is shared with federal, state, and private authorities. Past data can be viewed at Audubon's website. Counts are open to birders of all skill levels. Novices are placed in groups with more experienced birders.

New to CBCs? Join us in the fun! Discover new areas to birdwatch that may not normally be accessible and take advantage of this great opportunity to bird with some of the area's foremost birding experts. Be part of a long-standing holiday program that ultimately helps protect our extraordinary birds!

—Houston Audubon

### TMN-COT VOLUNTEERS PLEASE NOTE

The 2018/19 Bird Count Schedule has been announced. 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, visit the Houston Audubon website at:

<https://tinyurl.com/CBC-2018-19>

**The CBCs in our area are listed below and links can be found on the COT Calendar:**

**San Bernard NWR**, 12/14, Ron Weeks, Jennifer Wilson  
**Brazos Bend**, 12/15, Justin Bower  
**Freeport**, 12/16, Mike Austin  
**Matagorda County**, 12/17, Brent Ortego  
**Galveston**, 12/18, Richard Mayfield  
**Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR**, 12/19, Sumita Prasad  
**Boliver Peninsula**, 12/20, Steve Mayes  
**Guadalupe River Delta**, 12/20, Brent Ortego  
**Brazoria-Columbia Bottomlands**, 1/5, Tom Taroni and Martin Hagne

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

**VMS CODING: FR: Citizen Science/Field Surveys**  
**Description: CBC: (+Location of Event)**

### What's it Like to Participate? by Kristine Rivers

If you've thought about participating in one of the many Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) in the area but worry that you don't have enough experience, you're not alone! That is the most common response I receive when encouraging people to get involved. The good news: All less-experienced participants are teamed with veteran birders who can show you the ropes and help with identification.

What's it like to participate in a CBC, you ask? Well, if you listen to all the stories, you'll hear that it is always bitterly cold on your first count. Common sense tells us that weather conditions vary from year to year, so it hardly seems possible that it would be that cold for *everyone's* first time—yet cold weather seems to be a rite of passage. Don't let stories of walking through a field in blustering wind and near-freezing temperatures in order to stir up sparrows and wrens discourage you. Luckily, that's not always necessary.

Participants meet early (at the break of dawn) to review assignments and plan for the day. Each team is given a specific area to cover as thoroughly as possible, to the best of its ability. This may include walking and/or driving through the area to identify and count all birds seen. Although this is not an easy task, it's a fun challenge! By late afternoon, teams wrap up their observations out in the field and double-check their lists for accuracy before turning them in to the count compiler. Many CBCs hold a countdown dinner at the end of the day so that everyone can come together to rest and recover, share stories and photos from the day, discuss exciting sightings, and learn the unofficial tally of the number of species seen. (All reports are reviewed and approved prior to being submitted to the National Audubon Society, so official tallies take a little more time.)

There's usually a friendly competition between teams to see the most unusual bird or the most species and even competition between the individual CBCs. Last year, Matagorda County's Mad Island Marsh CBC (in which some COT chapter members proudly participated) reported the highest number of species in the country!

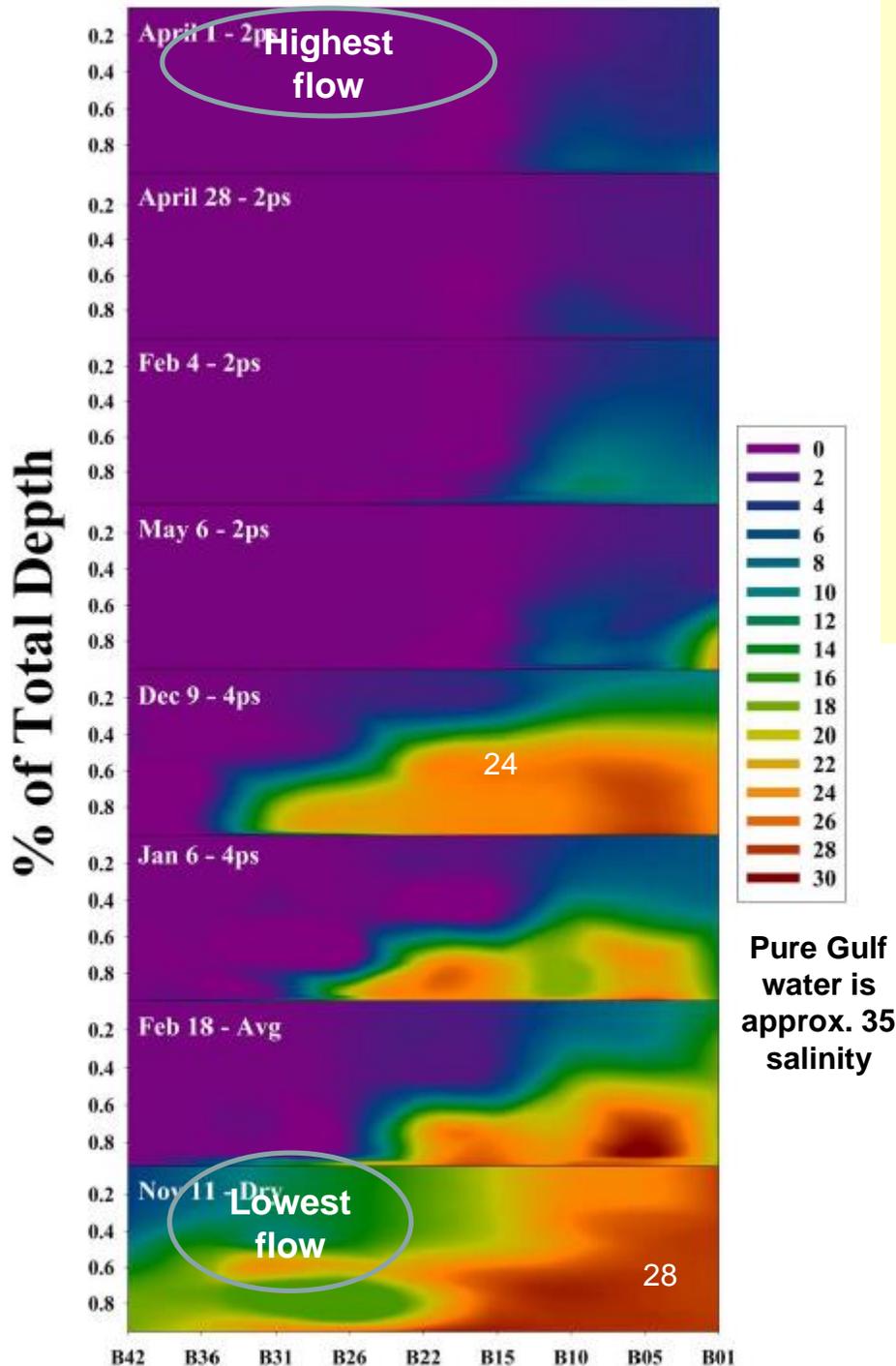
It's not all fun and games, though—the data gained from CBCs provide scientists and researchers with vital information needed to assess long-term health and status of bird populations over time. This is the 119<sup>th</sup> year of the Christmas Bird Count, and your participation will help ensure that this time-honored tradition continues in the future. If you'd like to dig deeper, you can find information about the history and purpose of Christmas Bird Counts on the National Audubon Society site at

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count>.

Check out the list of local CBCs to the left, and then sign up for your first count!

## Salt Wedges compiled by Peggy Romfh

### Salinity (psu)



A **salt wedge** is a layer of salty ocean water flowing underneath the river water in an estuary. Since ocean water is denser than fresh water, it stays at the bottom. As the salty water moves inland, the ocean-water front appears like a wedge, so it is called a salt wedge. The location of a salt wedge is variable and depends upon the tide and weather.

When we measure salinity at estuarial sites during water-quality observations, we typically are measuring the top layer of water and may be underestimating the effect of a salt wedge, below.

Per Stephen Curtis, TPWD, there may be a salt wedge running through the channel at sites such as Cedar Lake Creek in San Bernard NWR. While doing some work on the lower Brazos, he and workers from UH-Clear Lake found that the river could be at a pretty high discharge and the salt wedge would still push upstream quite far. They recorded the salt wedge 42 kilometers from the mouth and saw very fresh water on the surface. Curtis noted, "It's really awesome how these systems work."

**Pure Gulf water is approx. 35 salinity**

Schematic plots from several observations on the lower Brazos River show the influx of saline water (salt wedge) at different times of the year. The actual discharge (cfs—cubic feet per second) is not plotted on each cell, but the plots are ranked from highest flow on top to lowest flow on the bottom. The schematic shows how the salinity wedge looks in the lower Brazos from 42-river kilometers upstream (B42—left side of cell) to the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico (B01—right side of cell). Dark orange denotes higher saline levels.

*Schematic is courtesy of George Guillen—Environmental Institute of Houston, University of Houston—Clear Lake, and was provided by Stephen Curtis, Aquatic Biologist, TPWD.*

*Happy Holidays and Thanks to Cradle of Texas Master Naturalists for all that you do to protect and conserve the species that abound in this great county and for your efforts to educate others.*

*May your new year be blessed with an ongoing love of nature, good health, and happiness.*

*From the TMN-COT Board*



Photo credits: Center, Durand Oak by Chris Kneupper; clockwise from top: Great Blue Heron, Ram's Horn Squid, Beach Morning Glory, Oyster Catcher, False Garlic, American White Pelican (P&P Romfh).

## Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

President	Kristine Rivers, Pearland
Vice President/Programs	Bill Ahlstrom, Angleton
Secretary	Lisa Myers, Lake Jackson
Treasurer	Donald Sabathier, Pearland
State Representative	Connie Stolte, 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	Edward Peebles, Houston
Chapter Host	Pam West, Demi-John
Publicity Director	Richard Schaffhausen, Alvin
Publications Director	Neal McLain, Brazoria
Class of 2017 Representative	Bob Whitmarsh, Lake Jackson
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 & Pete Romfh, Jimmy Salinas, Stephen Curtis, Connie Stolte, Jennifer Sanchez
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>
E-mail Listserv	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail">http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail</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 Thursday 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.