



Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BILL AHLSTROM



Greetings and happy new year!

Normally, you would be reading this column first in the newsletter, but I emailed it in advance to introduce myself and let the Chapter know what I think the year has in store for us.

My story: I entered the COT intern program in January 2017. I was 66 at the time (and still employed) and retired on July 31, 2017. In May of 2017, I joined the board as the Class Representative.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, I served as VP/Programs, and as of January 1, 2020, I began my term as Chapter President.

Kristine Rivers is the only Chapter President with whom I've served. After three years as president, she'll slide into the Immediate Past President board position, and I can only hope that I do as good a job as she has. I'm glad she will be remaining on the board as I will be looking to her for guidance. Thank you, Kristine.

In 2019, we witnessed the passing of several TMN members, member spouses, and COT friends. Our hearts go out to their families, and we wish them the strength to carry on.

Year 2019 was also a sad year for us as it was the last year that Peggy and Pete Romfh were with our chapter. They're heading west to California on January 7th to be closer to their children and grandchildren. We will miss you very much. You were/are hard-working volun-

teers, and you'll always remain our friends, but most of all, your biggest impact was as our mentors. You showed us what to do and how to do it. You made me aware of more aspects of nature than I ever dreamed of, and you taught me how to find beauty in the smallest of its slices. Your enthusiasm is contagious, and you were my source of inspiration from the moment I touched down at COT. Your sneakers will be hard to fill!

Now to provide an overview of the 2020 board—those wonderful, never-asleep-at-the-wheel folks who keep this ship upright. I've mentioned Kristine already, but she has also assumed the non-board position of Speakers Bureau Coordinator.

- Replacing me as the VP/Programs is Mickey Dufilho. She recently retired from BCC (microbiology is her specialty).
- As Secretary, Lisa Myers is a busy member of the board. She publishes the minutes of board and chapter meetings and makes sure all the data we generate is recorded. In her spare time, she writes the Chapter newsletter and is also President of the Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges.

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Bill Ahlstrom is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at ahlstrom@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 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 Charles Jesse Miller Jr. taken at BNWR.

Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
Chapter News – January 2020

REMINDERS...

1. January General Meeting at AgriLIFE (see page 2)
2. Bonus AT Day on January 25 (see page 5)
3. Pay annual dues (\$25) at the General Meeting

Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter General Meeting and Advanced Training Wednesday, January 8

Texas AgriLIFE Ext. Bldg., 21017 CR 171, Angleton TX 77515-8903



8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Snack Team: Patty Brinkmeyer, Jackie Hicks, Ellen Lasseter, Michael Lasseter, Ruby Lewis, Candace Novak
9:00 AM – 9:50 AM	General Membership Meeting <i>[This meeting is approved for 1.00-hour volunteer time plus travel up to 1.00 hour]</i>
9:50 AM – 10:00 AM	Nature Notes Speaker: Mickey Dufilho Topic: “A Lethal Parasite of Monarch Butterflies”
10:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Advanced Training Speaker: Susan Conaty, TMN-COT member Topic: “History of Nash Prairie and Other Dumb-Luck Stories According to Me” <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>



Susan Conaty

A Master Naturalist with the Cradle of Texas Chapter since 2001, Susan Conaty has also been a volunteer land steward for the Nash Prairie since 2010. Recently, Conaty completed an 11-month job as an AmeriCorps member working as an assistant land steward for the Columbia Bottomland Preserves for The Nature Conservancy, which includes the Nash Prairie, Mowotony Prairie, Brazos Woods, and The San Bernard Woods in Brazoria and Matagorda county.

The story of how a hay meadow of the Kittie Nash Groce Ranch became The Nash Prairie Preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy could be interpreted as a story of divine intervention full of serendipitous events or just plain dumb luck. Either way, the events that led to the preservation of this tallgrass prairie took more than seven years for everyone and everything to come together and save this crown jewel.

MEMBERSHIP DATA REPORT by Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Congratulations to those who will be receiving certification at COT's January 2020 General Meeting:

Recertification 2019

Kathy Pittman (Class of '19)
Kyle Purvis (Class of '19)

Impact Data YTD—December 31, 2019*

15,718 Adults 33,199 Youth 48,917 Total

Hours Totals YTD—December 31, 2019*

17,085 Hours VT
1,828 Hours AT
118** Volunteers

* Final numbers for 2019 will be available after February 15 due to the 45-day rule regarding hours entry.

** of 122 active members



At the December General Meeting, Membership Director John Boettiger (right) and President Kristine Rivers (left) presented Regina Tippett with the 500-volunteer hours mile-stone pin.

President's message continued from page 1

- Don Sabathier returns as Treasurer. He is also a Master Gardener and member of several more organizations.
- Connie Stolte is a retired TPW-SCT Manager and returns as our TMN State Representative. She keeps us straight with the "home office".
- John Boettiger returns as Membership Director and keeps the official roster, tracks certifications and milestones and presents awards.
- Bob Whitmarsh returns for a second year as Advanced Training Director and finds learning opportunities for us. He is also running the Bonus AT Day event.

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President Kristine Rivers (left) presented Lisa Myers with a certificate for achieving Entomology Specialist Certification. Photos by Dick Schaffhausen.



SPECIALISTS ARE... "SPECIAL"

With the new year come various resolutions. If you resolved in the past to increase your knowledge of Texas waters or insects, Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) and Texas A&M AgriLIFE each offer certification programs for Master Naturalists.

The following links provide information about each program.

Texas Waters Specialist Certification

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/water-education/texaswatersprogram/texaswatersspecialist>

Texas Master Volunteer Entomology Specialist Certification

<https://agrilife.org/insectspecialist/>

...AND A SPECIAL REQUEST FROM YOUR NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Your monthly newsletter, *Chapter News*, is only as "good" and relevant as its content. Your ideas, input, photos, **whatever**, are more than welcome. You don't necessarily have to write an article—just provide some information on the topic or activity and an image (hopefully) and send to Lisa Myers at lisamyers@tmn-cot.org.

CLASS OF 2019 TRAINING CLASS PRESENTATIONS

The COT 2019 training class presented project presentations at the COT General Meeting held on December 11, 2019, at the First Presbyterian Church in Angleton. The presentations were informative and very well received.

**TEAM A: Riparian Forests—
What are They and Why are
They Important, as Observed
Along Chocolate Bayou**

Kathy Pittman
Beth Reeves
Brenda Stitt
Janet Townsend
Cindy Vincent

**TEAM B: Assessment of Wildlife
Supported by the Ecosystem at
Brazoria County Parks' Quintana
Beach County Park**

Joel Cobb
Susan Falcone-Potts
Hunter Gibson
Kathleen Purvis
Kyle Purvis
Luanne Salinas

**TEAM C: Nash Prairie
Burn Study**

Cynthia Grandjean
Paula Hanson
Melanie Hollenshead
Dwight Steffler
Beverly Walton
Barbara Yoder



Team B



Team A (above left) advisor was Herb Myers (second from right).

Team B (above right) advisor was Jimmy Salinas (far left).

Team C (left) advisor was Susan Conaty (far left).

Photos by Dick Schaffhausen.

2020 BONUS ADVANCED TRAINING DAY SCHEDULE

Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter
Bonus Advanced Training Day—Saturday, January 25, 2020
 First Presbyterian Church, Angleton, TX 77515

START	END	TOPIC	TITLE	SPEAKER	COMMENT
7:30a	8:00a	Breakfast Snacks and Social Time			
8:00a	8:05a	Welcome		Bill Ahlstrom Bob Whitmarsh	
8:00a	9:00a	Entomology	Aquatic & Terrestrial Insects of BNWR	Ed Barrios	TMN-COT Member
9:00a	10:00a	Brief Description of Displays	Various	Display Owners	TMN-COT Members
10:30a	11:30a	Bats	Our Neighborhood Bats	Diana Foss	TPWD Wildlife Biologist
11:30a	12:25p	Lunch/Exhibits			
12:30p	1:30p	Reptiles	Frogs and Toads of Brazoria County	Dr. Candace Novak	TMN-COT Member
1:30p	2:30p	Jellies	Jellyfish of the Upper Texas Coast	John O'Connell	Brazoria County AgriLIFE Extension Agent/TMN-COT Member
2:30p	2:40p	Break			
2:45p	3:45p	Birds	Spring Migration Warblers at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary	Martin Hagne	Executive Director Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
3:45p	4:00p	Grand Prize Drawing & Closing Remarks		Bill Ahlstrom	President, COT Chapter

President's message continued from page 3

- Oron Atkins remains the Volunteer Service Director and a certifiable workaholic. He is always building something and finding us volunteer opportunities. Let him be an inspiration to us all.
- Ruby Lewis is our “permanent” Outreach Director and pulls too much of the load. Whenever you can, give Ruby a hand.
- Rose Wagner, as Chapter Host, takes over from Pam West, who will help through the Bonus AT Day.
- Larry Peterson, Communications Director, is our man with the e-lec-tron-ic plan. Larry's role is expanding to cover media apps and transitioning our website to the State TMN platform. Neal McLain, who has selflessly given many, many years to the board, will be working with Larry on the transition. Thank you, Neal, for your contributions.
- Mary Schwartz is the New Class Director after playing a major role on this year's training team.
- Kathy Pittman joins the board as Class of 2019 Representative. Her job is to provide a fresh pair of eyes to the board and act as liaison to her class.
- Our Chapter Advisors remain—John O'Connell of AgriLIFE and Paul Cason from Sea Center Texas. More information about them at the general meeting (see page 2 for the agenda and speaker topics).

Remember to sign up for the Bonus AT Day. Lunch is free!! Finally, you will be hearing more about the chapter's role at the Annual State Meeting (in Houston!) October 16-18. Save the dates!!

NEW BOOKS ADDED TO THE TMN-COT MEDIA LIBRARY by Neal McLain

Two new books have been added to the Cradle of Texas Media Library.

Title: ***Texas Waters: Exploring Water and Watersheds***

Author: Johnnie E. Smith, Editor
 Binding: Spiral
 Publisher: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
 Pagination: vii + 174

Title: ***Texas Watershed Steward Handbook***

Author: Texas A&M University Department of Soil and Crop Sciences
 Binding: Spiral
 Publisher: Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service
 Pagination: v + 142

The Cradle of Texas Media Library was initially created by bequests of the estates of Carl Elton

Dodson, Jr. (Class of 2003) and Charles "Charlie" Michael Clements (Class of 2010). Relatives of Carl and Charlie donated the deceased COT members' book collections to the Chapter. In the years since its founding, the library has grown through donations by other chapter members. It now occupies an entire four-shelf bookcase located in the AgriLIFE Extension Building in Angleton. In addition to books, the library holds CDs, DVDs, and several folders of research reports donated by chapter members.

The library is open to all COT members, AgriLIFE extension employees, members, and volunteers. Books may be borrowed for any desired time period.

A list of the library's contents is posted on the chapter website at:

<http://tmn-cot.org/MediaLibrary/index.html>

GULF COAST BIRD OBSERVATORY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

by Celeste Silling, GCBO

Our COT Chapter partner has provided an overview of two upcoming events and "general" volunteering at GCBO. If you are not already on their volunteer email list, contact GCBO's Education and Outreach Coordinator, Celeste Silling, at csilling@gcbo.org, 979-480-0999. Celeste is also the contact for the opportunities listed below.

BREW ON THE BAYOU

On **March 21**, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory is throwing our third annual Brew on the Bayou event, our biggest fundraiser of the year. Located at GCBO headquarters in Lake Jackson, Brew features specialty brews from local breweries, wine from local wineries, a huge silent auction, a live raptor show, and more! While Brew is an incredibly fun night, it takes a lot of helping hands to make it happen! GCBO needs help setting up, taking down, and running the event, so if you're interested in helping (and maybe tasting some brews), please sign up to volunteer!

SPRING FLING

From **April 4 through May 10**, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory coordinates our annual Spring Fling event, a celebration of migration. Visitors to our Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary see incredible

numbers and species that they've never seen before, as the birds fly through on the way to summer nesting grounds across North America. GCBO strives to have four volunteers present every day throughout Spring Fling to answer questions, record sightings and visitor information, sell merchandise, and of course, help ID birds. That takes a lot of volunteers! If you are interested in being outside, meeting new people, and seeing LOTS of birds, please sign up to be a volunteer!

GULF COAST BIRD OBSERVATORY

GCBO is a nonprofit organization specializing in bird research, habitat acquisition, and education. We are in Lake Jackson, Texas, but our work spreads all along the gulf coast and into Latin America. GCBO offers lots of volunteer opportunities—from working in our plant nursery, staffing our education booths, helping with scientific research, and more. To become a GCBO volunteer, attend one of our orientations; the next will be held on **February 1**, 11 a.m., at our headquarters: 299 Hwy 332 West, Lake Jackson, Texas 77566. Stop by to hear about all our opportunities, tour the facility, and fill out paperwork.

Going "Hog Wild" at the 15th Annual Holiday Party, December 11, 2019

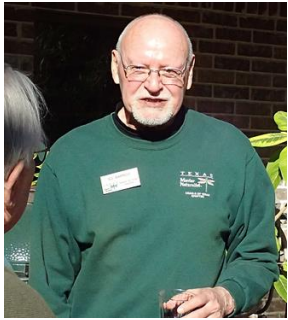


Photos by Pete Romfh.

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Going "Hog Wild" at the 15th Annual Holiday Party, December 11, 2019



Photos by Pete Romfh.



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Going "Hog Wild" at the 15th Annual Holiday Party, December 11, 2019



Photos by Pete Romfh.



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Going "Hog Wild" at the 15th Annual Holiday Party, December 11, 2019



Photos by Neal McLain.

Farewell Master Naturalist Friends by Peggy and Pete Romfh



When Pete and I joined the TMN Cradle of Texas Chapter in 2012, it was with a goal of learning something about all the species we were photographing along the coast

and a firm desire not to turn into couch potatoes in our retirement! Ten thousand plus combined volunteer hours and eight years later, we laugh at how smitten we became with the Master Naturalist program!

At the beginning of our training, we maybe knew a Northern Cardinal from an egret, but we were woefully ignorant about everything found along the Texas Mid-coast. Thanks to the generosity of all of you, who as fellow Master Naturalists shared your knowledge, time and energy with us, we started to learn what Pete calls all the “-ologies”—you know what I mean: ornithology, entomology, herpetology, etc.

We have volunteered for many projects and events over the years. Pete’s early and ongoing favorite was water-quality testing with the Texas Stream Team. We routinely tested four sites each month and marveled at the changes in oxygen during different seasons and changes in salinity at estuarine sites. We both fell in love with citizen science projects offered by USFWS and other partners.

Two favorites were the Louisiana eyed silkworm project and the American eel project. We used a UV light trap at sites in Brazoria NWR and the Sargent Unit during the new moon each month, and while we never found the target silkworm, we captured, photographed, and released hundreds of insects seen in a dazzling array of colors and types. The American eel project provided the opportunity to look for migrating eels by the boat dock at Cedar Lake Creek. We never found any eels, but we had a great time counting and photographing everything we

found. From copepods, ostracods, mud shrimp, and serpulid tube worms, to swimming and estuarine mud crabs and naked goby, we counted almost 5000 specimens over the length of the study. We continued to be amazed at the incredible species diversity in Brazoria County.

Two other projects combined our love of nature

with nature photography. The first, the creation of a reference book of species found in the Big Slough, has been used by countless students in the joint Friends of Brazoria Wildlife and USFWS DEEP program. The second was a partnership with Thomas Adams, Botanist at USFWS, to create a book on the sedges and rushes of Brazoria County.

We have served in a variety of positions on the COT Board over the years and have participated in everything from Migration Celebration to Christmas Bird Counts to presentations at State Master Naturalist meetings. Of particular joy was coordinating volunteers for GCBO’s Spring Fling at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary.

We are going to miss all of it and all of you. You have enriched our lives tremendously, and we admire you all and the work that you continue to do. We told ourselves that we would one day move closer to one of our adult children. Since the choice then became California’s San Francisco Bay Area or the Boston area, we decided we no longer

wanted to live in a snowy climate (we lived over 30 years near Denver before coming to Texas), so California will become our new home. Redwood City is close to the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR and other Bay Area parks, so we hope to begin volunteering again once we are settled. Also, that area is on the Pacific Flyway, so there are lots of birds to enjoy year-round.

Thanks for the memories... We will miss you all!



Photos by Pete and Peggy Romfh

Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

President	Bill Ahlstrom, Angleton
Vice President/Programs	Mickey Dufilho, Brazoria
Secretary	Lisa Myers, Lake Jackson
Treasurer	Donald Sabathier, Pearland
State Representative	Connie Stolte, Palacios
Immediate Past President	Kristine Rivers, Manvel
New Class Director	Mary Schwartz, Clute
Membership Director	John Boettiger, Lake Jackson
Advanced Training Director	Bob Whitmarsh, Lake Jackson
Volunteer Service Director	Oron Atkins, Lake Jackson
Outreach Director	Ruby Lewis, Angleton
Speakers Bureau Coordinator	Kristine Rivers, Manvel
Chapter Host	Rose Wagner, Sweeny
Publications Director	Larry Peterson, Manvel
Class of 2019 Representative	Kathy Pittman, Rosharon

Chapter Advisors	John O'Connell, AgriLIFE Extension Service Paul Cason, Sea Center Texas
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Newsletter Contributors	Neal McLain, Dave Brandes, Peggy Romfh, Pete Romfh, Celeste Silling, Bob Whitmarsh, Bill Ahlstrom

Website	http://tmn-cot.org
Facebook	http://facebook.com/TMN-COT
Twitter	https://twitter.com/tmncot
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.

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