



# Chapter News

## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BILL AHLSTROM



The 2020, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Bonus AT Day, “Fauna of the Upper Texas Coast,” was a success on many levels. The presenters, their topics, the comradery between visiting chapters, the chow, the donations to the chapter, and the loan of the church auditorium—you name it—we excelled at it.

The fact that with over a week left before the event was to take place, we were turning away potential attendees due to occupancy limitations of the venue, speaks to our previous success with the Bonus AT Day event and our ability to get the word out to our sister chapters. A whole lot of kudos needs to go out to this year’s Bonus AT Day Committee, Topic Presenters, and Display Contributors.

After this year’s event was over, many TMN members approached the committee (members from the “home team” and from visiting chapters) and basically overwhelmed us with compliments. For example: “We have the best topics and the best presenters,” and “We wish our chapter was more like yours.” However, what really hit home to me was that no distinction was made, in terms of excellence, between our in-chapter speakers and our partner-speakers (who normally have a narrower focus and a more in-depth knowledge of their subject matter). To me, that confirmed my initial opinion of TMN-COT

that I developed after going through the intern class in 2017: “Yikes, these people know everything! What am I doing here, and who/what in the he\*\* are a Peggy and Pete Romfh, and why are their names on everything natural that can be found in our county?”

So, next year, if all goes as planned, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Bonus AT Day topic will be “Flora of the Upper Texas Gulf Coast.” Keep this in mind as you volunteer throughout the year.

Hey – Chris Kneupper! Aren’t you going to be doing a botanical survey of the Levi Jordan State Historic Site in the next month or so? And if I remember correctly, won’t part of the survey be looking into how early settlers made use of indigenous plants and herbs for food and medicine—a field of study known as ethnobotany? This would be a great presentation for next year’s Bonus AT Day.

Finally, don’t forget the great seasonal opportunities for volunteering coming up in the next two months: Migration Celebration and Spring Fling. These are excellent opportunities to earn a lot of VT hours and interface with guests from all over the world.

Hope to see you there!

*Bill Ahlstrom is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at [ahlstrom@tmn-cot.org](mailto: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 – February 2020

## REMINDERS...

1. Want TMN-COT business cards? Contact Neal McLain at [mclain@tmn-cot.org](mailto:mclain@tmn-cot.org); cost: \$25 for 100 cards.
2. FYI: Board meetings are open to all; second Wednesday each month, 9 a.m. at AgriLIFE, Angleton.

**Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter**  
**General Meeting and Advanced Training**  
**Wednesday, February 12**

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

<b>8:30 AM – 9:00 AM</b>	<b>Fun and Fellowship</b> <b>Snack Team:</b> Bill Ahlstrom, Dave Brandes, Jerry Krampota, Dick Schaffhausen, Ken Sluis, Linda Sluis, Lorna Witt
<b>9:00 AM – 9:45 AM</b>	<b>General Membership Meeting</b> <i>[This meeting is approved for 1.00-hour volunteer time plus travel up to 1.00 hour]</i>
<b>9:45 AM – 10:00 AM</b>	<b>Nature Notes</b> <b>Speaker:</b> Mickey Dufilho <b>Topic:</b> “A Case of Poisoning”: A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing”
<b>10:15 AM – 12:00 PM</b>	<b>Advanced Training</b> <b>Speaker:</b> Taylor Bennett, Coastal Biologist, GCBO <b>Topic:</b> “Beach Nesting Birds of the Texas Coast—What a coastal biologist does during non-breeding and breeding seasons” <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>

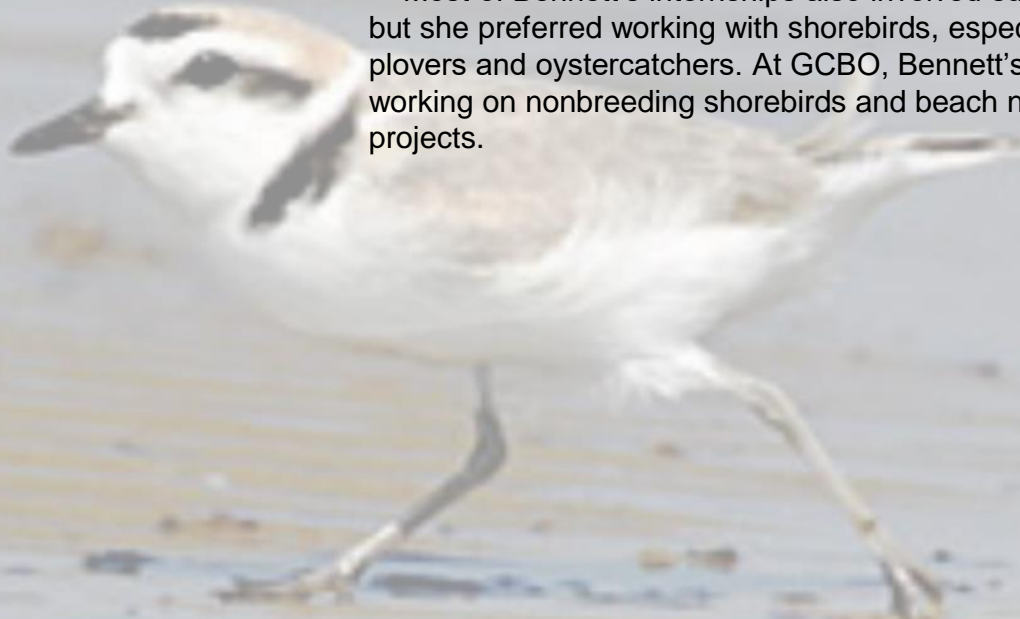


**Taylor Bennett**

Taylor Bennett grew up in Virginia Beach, Virginia, but moved to Humble, Texas, in 2015. She has a Bachelor of Science in Biology (focus on Marine Biology) from Old Dominion University and is passionate about all aspects of biology—especially wildlife.

For the past six years, Bennett interned for various organizations, mostly through the Student Conservation Association. She worked with the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and non-profit organizations such as Audubon Texas. A primary focus has been conservation, especially for endangered and threatened species. She has worked with various organisms of all types and sizes, from microscopic invertebrates—such as the Roswell spring snail—to mammals—such as the Mexican gray wolf.

Most of Bennett’s internships also involved surveying birds, but she preferred working with shorebirds, especially with plovers and oystercatchers. At GCBO, Bennett’s focus is working on nonbreeding shorebirds and beach nesting-birds projects.



# MEMBERSHIP DATA REPORT by Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Congratulations to those receiving awards, certification or recertification at COT's February 2020 General Meeting:

### Initial Certification

Beth Reeves	Brenda Stitt
Dwight Steffler	Cindy Vincent

### Recertification

Bill Ahlstrom	Ruby Lewis
Oron Atkins	Lisa Myers
David Brandes	Kyle Purvis
Paula Hanson	Kristine Rivers
Sandy Henderson	Chip Sweet
	Regina Tippet

### 500 Hour Milestone

Garry Ellis

### 2500 Hour Milestone

Lisa Myers

### 5000 Hour Milestone

Ruby Lewis

### Impact Data\* YTD—31 January 2020

807 Adults	1134 Youth	1941 Total
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### Hours Totals\* YTD—31 January 2020

1630 Hours VT	470 Hours AT	80 Volunteers
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\* Final numbers for 2019 will be available after February 15 due to the 45-day rule regarding hours entry.



Clockwise from top right: In January, Membership Director John Boettiger (center) and President Bill Ahlstrom (right) presented Kathy Pittman, Kyle Purvis, and Paula Hanson with 2019 recertification pins. The new-member training class of 2019 receives graduation certificates. President Bill Ahlstrom (right) presents outgoing board member Neal McLain with a thank you gift. Bill presents outgoing president Kristine Rivers with an appreciation gift.



Photos by Dick Schaffhausen.

## 2020 BONUS ADVANCED TRAINING DAY

The third annual Bonus AT Day, held on January 25 at First Presbyterian Church in Angleton, boasted a record number of attendees: 84 COT members and 33 guests (117 total!) from five other chapters: Coastal Prairie, Galveston Bay Area, Gulf Coast, Heartwood, and Lower Trinity Basin. In addition to the announced speakers, each of whom spoke on some aspect of fauna in Brazoria County, seven members prepared and described



display boards that attendees perused during breaks. The displays included: Bill Ahlstrom's "Embrace the Gulf 2020—Brazoria County Commissioners Court Proclamation and TPWD Conservation Action Plan for Avian Fauna"; Candace Novak's "Calls of Frogs and Toads of Brazoria County," and "Killer Cones"; Kristine Rivers: "Apple Snails"; Patty Brinkmeyer: "Butterflies and Pollinators (Habitat Gardening); Roy Morgan: "Sea Center Texas"; Ruby Lewis: COT Outreach Displays; John Boettiger: "Feral Hogs."

Thank you, committee members for planning such an enjoyable and informative event!

## MIGRATION CELEBRATION NATURE PHOTO CONTEST

Each year, as part of the Migration Celebration, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife event from Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Complex that is underwritten by Friends of Brazoria National Wildlife Refuges, FOBWR organizes a Nature Photo Contest. The winners are announced at the event Kickoff Dinner—this year on April 17—and are also displayed at the April 25-26 Migration Celebration.

In addition to six longtime categories for Texas-only images: Wildlife Vertebrates; Wildlife Invertebrates;

Birds; Plant Life or Fungi; Landscapes/Scenery; Nature-themed Digital Art, a new category has been added: Photos from Around the World. Also new this year is a change to digital-only entries and judge Charles Jesse Miller, Jr., an area professional photographer who frequently photographs area refuges.

Until 2020 contest information is posted to the [migrationcelebration.org](http://migrationcelebration.org) website, contact Kim Richardson at [lawfirm1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lawfirm1@sbcglobal.net).

Deadline for entries is March 20.

## GCBO's LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE STUDY—A Brief Overview by Kyle Purvis

The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's (GCBO) latest Loggerhead Shrike Project study is being run by Dr. Susan Heath of GCBO and surveys shrikes in the Sargent area and on the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge (BNWR). The project boasts 21 COT volunteer members who are assigned to one of six teams. Four teams are surveying shrikes on the BNWR, and two teams are surveying in the Sargent area.

Currently, four shrikes are being monitored on BNWR. All four are banded and three are equipped with radio transmitters. Five shrikes are being monitored in the Sargent area of which three are equipped with transmitters. However, two of those transmitters have stopped transmitting.

The birds tend to stay in the general area where they were initially caught and banded, says Heath. Volunteers are asked to locate the birds either visually or with receivers that pick up a signal from the bird's transmitter. Once visually located, the bird's exact location is documented on a data collection form. If possible, a GPS reading is taken at the observed location. If that is not accessible, location is documented by using GPS and compass bearings from two separate points in order to triangulate the location. In the event the subject cannot be identified visually, location is determined by triangulation using directional antennas with radio receivers.

Additional information on the shrike project can be found on GCBO's website:

<https://tinyurl.com/GCBOshrike>



Left top: A banded Loggerhead Shrike; the black wire hanging down from the bird's tail is the transmitter antenna.

Below: COT member Kathy Purvis uses a directional antenna and handheld GPS unit to triangulate a shrike's location. Photos by Kyle Purvis.



## FOBWR's FEBRUARY 16 REFUGE WALK AT THE LIVE OAK BAYOU UNIT

Ed Barrios announced that this month's refuge walk, sponsored by Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges and led by Jennifer Sanchez, Refuge Complex Manager for the Texas Mid-coast NWR Complex, will be to the Live Oak Bayou Unit on **Sunday, February 16<sup>th</sup>** starting at **noon**. Please arrive ready **to begin at noon**.

The unit is located along **Hawkins Road**. From the intersection of SH 457 and FM 2611 (north of Sargent, Texas), go south (left) on SH 457. Hawkins Road is right before the yellow church in Sargent. Turn right and proceed 2.75 miles to the gate on the right. Jennifer will be there waiting for attendees. All COT members, friends and family are invited.

**Note:** FM 2004 changes name to FM 2611 when you cross the San Bernard River. Also, FM 2611 dead ends into SH 457.

Jennifer will open the gate and discuss with all the attendees how long of a walk everyone wants to do.

The current long-range weather forecast: 68 degree high, 40% chance of showers (no details on morning, day or evening showers). Ed recommends hiking or other sturdy boots; the terrain should be dry. You will be walking along the road and levee, not through high vegetation. Consider bringing binoculars, camera, field guides, insect repellent, a hat, sunscreen and water.

## PRELIMINARY AREA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Martin Hagne, GCBO’s executive director, provided the following data for the **Brazoria-Columbia Bottomlands** count.

- 156 Total species
- 34,611 Individual birds counted
- 12 Writeups for rare birds
- 2 New species for this count (Horned Lark and Tropical Parula)
- 70 Observers (counters)



Horned Lark.  
Photo credit: abcbirds.org.

Ron Weeks reported the following for **Freeport**:

- 197 Total species
- Best bird Tropical Parula



Tropical Parula.  
Photo credit: birdsna.org.

And Ron reported the following for the **San Bernard NWR**:

- 192 Total species

### City Nature Challenge 2020

## City Nature Challenge

Cities around the world will be competing to see who can make the most observations of nature, find the most species, and engage the most people in the 2020 City Nature Challenge.



More information at:  
<http://citynaturechallenge.org/>

Thousands of people from across the globe will get outside to look for nature in their cities!

The 2020 City Nature Challenge takes place in 2 parts



**April 24 – 27**

Taking pictures of wild plants and animals.



**April 28 – May 3**

Identifying what was found.



#### Find Wildlife

It can be any plant, animal, or any other evidence of life found in your city.



#### Take a Picture

Take a picture of what you find. Be sure to note the location of the critter or plant.



#### Share!

Share your observations through iNaturalist or your city's chosen platform.

## FIELD NOTES—A Duck Gets “Harrier-ed” by Peggy Romfh

*From Cornell Labs: Northern Harriers forage on the wing, coursing low over the ground. Unlike other hawks, they rely heavily on their sense of hearing to capture prey. In the breeding season, they eat small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds. During winter, harriers in the northern part of the range feed almost exclusively on meadow voles; they also eat deer mice, house mice, shrews, rabbits, and songbirds (including meadowlarks, Northern Cardinals, and Song Sparrows). Harriers wintering in the southern part of their range eat cotton rats, house mice, harvest mice, rice rats, shrews, and songbirds.*

The following series of photos, taken by Peggy Romfh at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge’s Olney Pond on December 8, 2019, show a Northern Harrier’s successful hunt. Peggy’s notes follow.

I guess a duck probably weighs less than a rabbit, though it is certainly bigger than a songbird. To give you an idea of how fast all of this happened, here’s some timestamps from the photos (view by row from left to right):

Photo 5: 13:00:12

Photo 7: 13:00:15

Photo 16: 13:00:43

So it took the harrier less than 30 seconds to dispatch the duck. I don’t know if it intended to hunt the duck. I think the duck was foraging under water and mistakenly came up right in front of the harrier. After standing over the dead duck for a bit, the harrier took flight. I am not sure whether it came back later and ate the duck or not.



### FOBWR's JANUARY REFUGE WALK AT THE MEDIA LUNA UNIT

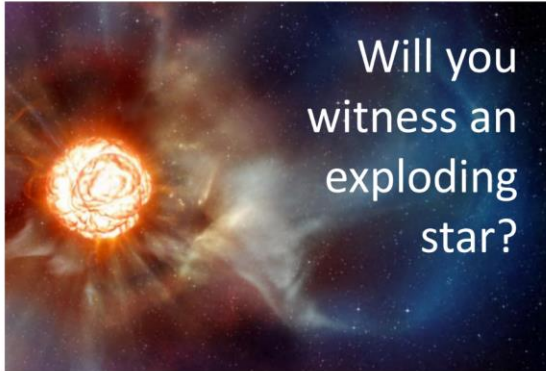
Fifteen members of COT and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (FOBWR) met Jennifer Sanchez, Refuge Complex Manager for the Texas Mid-coast NWR Complex, at the Media Luna Unit of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge on January 12 for the monthly FOBWR Refuge Walk. This unit, located about two miles north of the intersection of highways FM 2611 and FM 457, is not open to the public, but this relatively-new addition to the Complex offers beautiful Columbia Bottomlands, well-populated marshes (wood ducks and other birds) and beautiful vistas. Photos are by Heardy Myers unless otherwise noted.



Photo right by Marty Cornell; photo bottom right by Brenda Stitt.



## Brazosport Planetarium Show February 2020



Will you  
witness an  
exploding  
star?

ESO/L. Calçada



**THE CENTER**  
FOR THE ARTS & SCIENCES  
400 College Blvd., Clute, TX 77531  
979-265-7661 | [TheCenter@bcfas.org](mailto:TheCenter@bcfas.org)

**Tuesdays February 4, 11, 18, 25  
& 4th Friday, February 22 at 7 pm**

### Will you witness an exploding star?

The winter constellation Orion's bright star Betelgeuse has made some sudden changes. Are we expecting a supernova? Investigate the how and why of this galactic news story.

Lobby & Box office open at 6:30 pm

Adults \$5 Children \$3

Cash or Check - Purchase at the door

Advanced online purchase available at

<http://bcfas.org/planetarium>

Recommended for ages 4 – adult

This artist's impression shows a vast amount of material being flung into space from Bebelgeuse.

### Notes from Judi James...

The star Betelgeuse is significantly dimmer! This is MOST unusual in stars, which maintain their brightness for hundreds and thousands of years. Something is happening with this closest of all giant stars. It is possible, according to astronomers worldwide, that we may witness a Supernova, the great, final explosion of large stars. No danger to Earth or human life as this star is 640 light years away from the Solar System, and stars are on a different time scale than humans. Tonight and 10,000 years from now are about the same in the life cycle of stars. If it does Supernova tonight or in your lifetime, you will see the star during the day for about a year, and it will be bright enough to cast shadows at night! This show is about this galactic news story.



## Scholastic Bowl 2020

🕒 February 20 @ 7:00 PM - February 20 @ 9:00 PM

### Brazosport Planetarium Scholastic Bowl

As one of the most anticipated events of the year, Brazosport Planetarium's Scholastic Bowl welcomes adult and high-school teams to The Center for the Arts & Sciences' Freeport LNG Theater for an evening of trivia and fun. Teams of four sit together and, over three rounds, answer a litany of questions concerning, art, science, pop culture and local interests.

Scholastic Bowl is the main fundraising event for Brazosport Planetarium and relies on the entry fees, individual and corporate sponsorships for this event to help fund its educational activities throughout the year.

**Date: February 20, 2020 in the Freeport LNG Theater at 7:00 PM**

Adult and High School Student Teams

Four members per team

Registration is \$100 per team

To register or sponsor the Scholastic Bowl 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/PlanetariumScholasticBowl>

**16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**

# HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATION

**MARCH 7 | 9AM - 5PM**  
202 W. Smith Street | BRAZORIA

**Bobcat Café** | Breakfast & Lunch  
Breakfast 7am - 9:30am  
Chicken Fried Steak Lunch 11:30am - 1:30pm

**Parade & Cattle Drive** | 11am - 1pm  
Contact Bob Schwebel 979.236.0241 or  
Ashley Lancaster 979.798.6100

**Gun Show** | \$5 Entry Fee  
Saturday 9am - 5pm, Sunday 9am - 3pm  
Contact Bruce Gotcher 979.798.8075

**Car & Motorcycle Show**  
Contact Dale Libby 979.236.5393

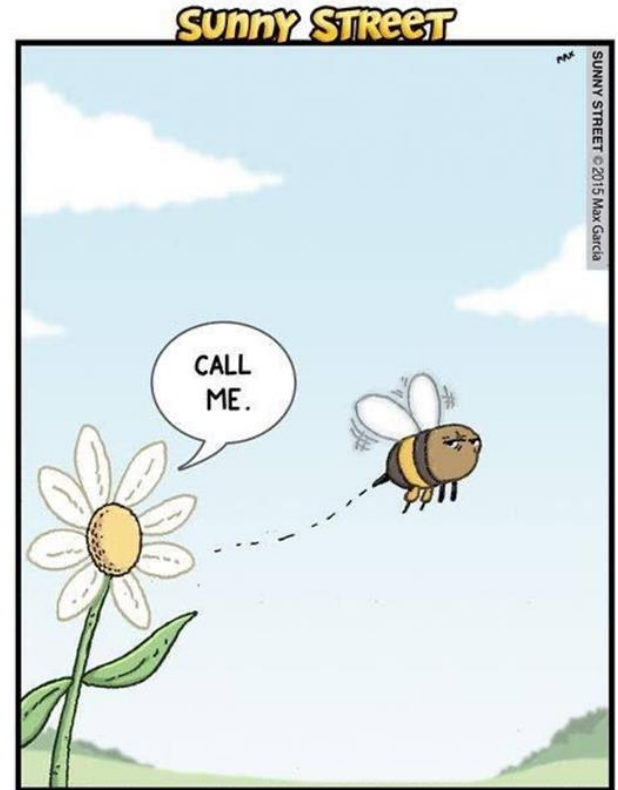
**Carnival Desserts**  
Contact Pam Browning 979.292.6932 or  
Bob Schwebel 979.236.0241

**Games (FREE!)**  
Kid Rodeo, Petting Zoo, Bucking Bull,  
Laser Tag, Western Kid Games,  
Dixie Chairswing, Airborne Adventure,  
Hungry Hippo and Toddler Zone

**Miss Brazoria Pageants**  
March 2, 3, 5 & 6 | 7pm  
Contact Ashley Lancaster  
979.798.6100



**BRAZORIAHF.ORG**  
Joint project of Brazoria Heritage Foundation & Chamber of Commerce



More info on GCBO's February E-News at:  
<https://www.gcbo.org/connect/brew-on-the-bayou/>

# Brew on the Bayou 2020



# Brew needs YOU!

**Saturday, March 21, 2020 5:00 pm-9:00 pm**  
Preorder tickets now: 979-480-0999  
**WWW.GCBO.ORG**

Sign up now to volunteer for GCBO's biggest fundraiser of the year. Have fun, help birds, and enjoy the best event of 2020!

## Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

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Vice President/Programs	Mickey Dufilho, Brazoria
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Treasurer	Donald Sabathier, Pearland
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Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/tmncot">https://twitter.com/tmncot</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.