



MARCH 2020

# Chapter News

## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BILL AHLSTROM



Is it just me, or did February blow through southeast Texas in record time (even with Leap Day)? And it sure seems like spring is a couple of weeks early too – my street is already mostly green. The goldfinches and pine warblers have left the feeders, and I even saw a male indigo bunting in Sargent a little over a week ago while we were looking for Shrikes. Martin Hagne (at GCBO) thinks there may be a couple of breeding pairs (wintering pairs) down that way.

Have you made your plans for Migration Celebration on April 25 and 26 and Spring Fling April 4 to May 6? Have you purchased your tickets for the Migration Celebration kickoff dinner on April 17? This year's Keynote Speaker is Geoffrey Haskett, President, The National Wildlife Refuge Association. Please go to: [migrationcelebration.org/kickoff-dinner.html#KP](http://migrationcelebration.org/kickoff-dinner.html#KP) and check out his bio. He has done it all.

Also, don't forget the Migration Celebration Photo Contest. The deadline for entries is March 20.

If you're like me and set your release mode to 'high speed continuous', set the mode to auto, and fire away hoping that something has to come out looking fairly decent, you're going to have a lot of pics to go through to find those special ones. Don't wait until the last minute to pick your 'winners'. And don't forget to read the new rules – there are some significant differences this year.

Bob Whitmarsh has already started us working on next year's Bonus AT Day and

is looking for committee members. If you are interested, please contact Bob. He also has some amazing final figures and stats to report for this year's Bonus AT Day. Bob is doing a great job as AT director.

Have you been in touch with Regina Tippet and signed up for host duty at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary for Spring Fling? Do so quickly before all the time slots are taken. On the other hand, if you're waiting to see what's left so you can fill in the gaps, more power to you.

While I was out and about the last couple of weeks, I've seen some very green poison ivy, so beware. I've also seen a couple of dead snakes on the road (another sure indicator that spring has sprung).

That's about it for this month's column. I'll leave you with the following reminder... Never go camping with Mickey Dufilho!

And lastly, I occasionally see these *Chrysididae*s around the house in the summer. See *What Am I* on page 7 for the answer.

Cheers!



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 – March 2020

## REMINDERS...

1. Pay \$25, COT 2020 dues now; see Don Sabathier.
2. FYI: Board meetings are open to all; first Wednesday each month, 9 a.m. at AgriLIFE, Angleton.
3. Buy Migration Celebration Kickoff Dinner tickets at [migrationcelebration.org](http://migrationcelebration.org) or March General Meeting.

## Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter General Meeting and Advanced Training

**Wednesday, March 11, 2020**

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

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	<b>Fun and Fellowship</b> <b>Snack Team:</b> Jim Calvert, Julia Geisler, Mike Hampy, Joanne Harlon, Kim Richardson
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	<b>General Membership Meeting</b> <i>[This meeting is approved for 1.00-hour volunteer time plus travel up to 1.00 hour]</i>
9:45 AM – 10:00 AM	<b>Nature Notes</b> <b>Speaker:</b> Kristine Rivers <b>Topic:</b> “Invasion of the Apple Snails”
10:15 AM – 11:15 AM	<b>Advanced Training</b> <b>Speaker:</b> Barbara Hicks Burkhardt, COT member <b>Topic:</b> “Gardening for Habitat” <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>



**Barbara Hicks Burkhardt**

Born and reared in the small, central-Texas town of Luling, Barbara Hicks Burkhardt started helping her Dad in his garden when she was four years old and grew up helping in her Mother’s flower shop.

Barbara earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Southwest Texas University and moved in 1960 to the Brazosport area, where she continued her gardening activities by becoming a member of the Lake Jackson Garden Club. She served as president from 1968-1969.

After raising two beautiful daughters, Barbara went to work at The Dow Chemical Company, where she was trained in X-ray crystallography and electron microscopy. During her different endeavors, one thing was constant—her gardening. She certified as a Texas Master Gardener in 1997 and served as President in 1998. Additionally, she is an instructor for the Hummingbird, Butterfly, and Habitat Gardening class for Master Gardeners’ training.

Barbara became interested in gardening with native plants so she could reduce water usage. This led to her learning about native plants and habitat gardening and becoming a birder; she has had a Certified Texas Backyard Habitat (TPWD) since 1998. Barbara’s viewpoint on habitat gardening sometimes leads to “interesting” conversations with purists who believe only natives should be used in the landscape. Barbara has helped schools design their habitat gardens.

Certified as a Texas Master Naturalist in 2003, Barbara has been active in the Cradle of Texas chapter’s educational programs for young people at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge (DEEP) and Hudson Woods (HWEPP). She served as TMN-COT president in 2011 and 2012 and also volunteers at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. Barbara has been recognized for her volunteer work with the President’s Call to Service Award for over 4000 hours.

# MEMBERSHIP DATA REPORT by Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Congratulations to those receiving awards or recertification at COT's March 2020 General Meeting:

### Recertification

- Susan Falcone-Potts
- Phil Huxford
- Kathy Pittman
- Kathleen Purvis
- Kim Richardson
- Don Sabathier
- Barbara Yoder

### 2500 Hour Milestone

John Boettiger

**Impact Data\* YTD—29 February 2020**  
987 Adults    1431 Youth    2418 Total

**Hours Totals\* YTD—29 February 2020**  
2985 Hours VT    712 Hours AT

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



Awards at the February General meeting (left): President Bill Ahlstrom presents 2019 initial certification pins to Dwight Steffler and Brenda Stitt (not pictured, Elizabeth Reeves and Cindy Vincent). Recertifying for 2020 are (below): Oron Atkins, Sandy Henderson, Kyle Purvis, Bill Ahlstrom, Ruby Lewis, Lisa Myers, Regina Tippett, Dave Brandes, Kristine Rivers, Paula Hanson, and Chip Sweet.



Clockwise from above left: Membership Director John Boettiger presents Lisa Myers with a 2500-volunteer-hour pin. Bill Ahlstrom and John Boettiger present Ruby Lewis with a 5000-volunteer-hour pin; the cake shared by members to celebrate Ruby's achievement; Ruby enjoying cake during the meeting break.



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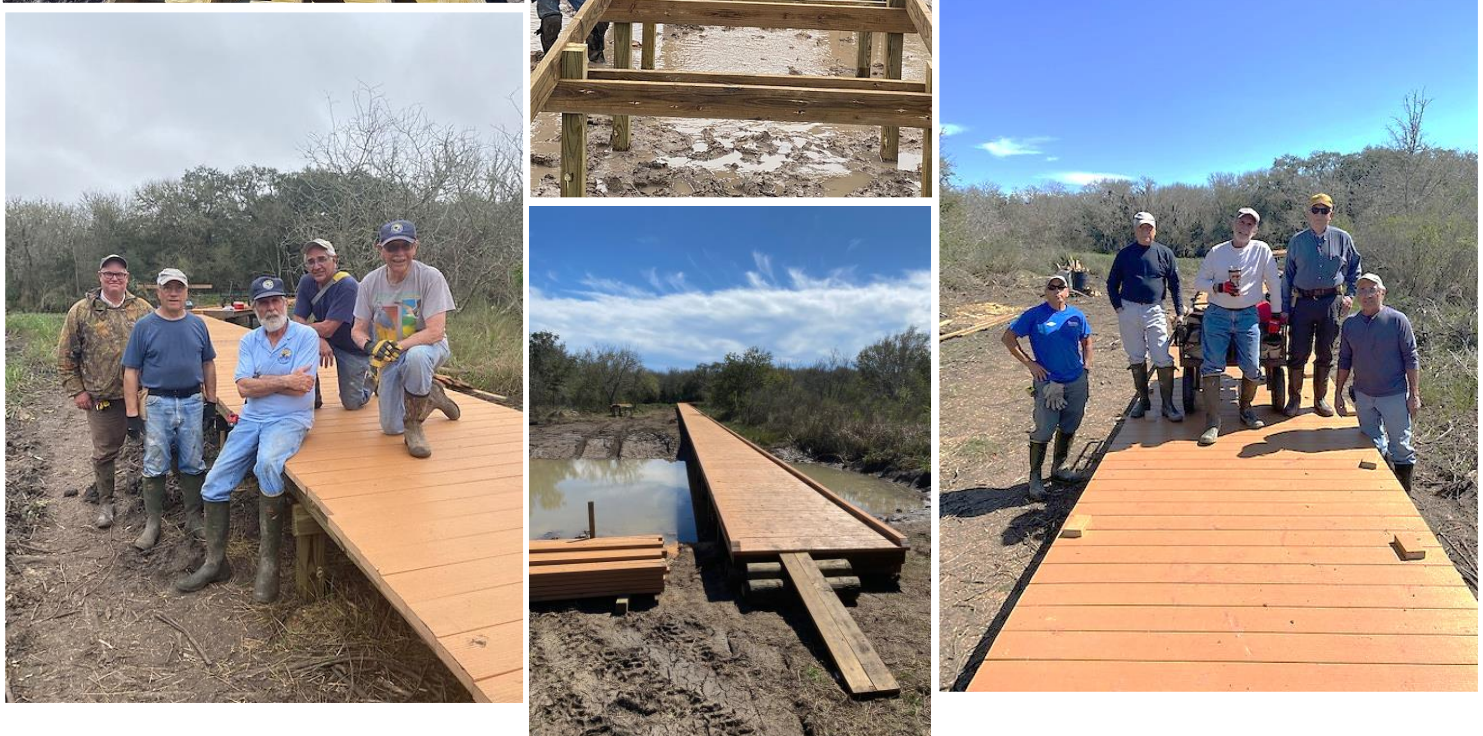
"Think about it, Ed. ... The class Insecta contains 26 orders, almost 1,000 families, and over 750,000 described species—but I can't shake the feeling we're all just a bunch of bugs."



### THE END OF THE TRAIL...

#### Intrepid Work Crew Completes Rebuild of Bobcat Woods Trail at SBNWR

Under the project management of COT's Oron Atkins, the 2+ year rebuilding of the Bobcat Woods Trail, a project of the Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges and the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, is almost complete. In addition to Oron, several other COT members pitched in during February on the muddy work (along with Refuge personnel), including Marty Cornell, Don Sabathier, David Heinicke, Chip Sweet, Tom Taroni, and George Valadez. Photos courtesy of Oron Atkins.



The very end of the line... 2/25/2020

## TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM COOKING UP ITS OWN BRAND OF OYSTERS

News Release by tamus | Jan 29, 2020 | [System News](#)

*“We could even make a maroon one, if we wanted to.”*



Dr. Joe Fox (left) and Dr. Hugo Magaña

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Researchers at the Texas A&M University System soon could be developing a Texas A&M-branded oyster you’ll be able to order on the half-shell at your favorite seafood restaurant.

“We could even make a maroon one, if we wanted to,” said Dr. Joe Fox, HRI Chair of Marine Resource Development at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi’s Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies and a jointly appointed research scientist with Texas A&M AgriLIFE Research.

“By spawning oysters in the lab from different bays, we can produce seed stock that are ultimately grown out in cages, yielding a consistently attractive and high-quality oyster for you to enjoy at the raw bar,” Fox said. “From there on, it’s all about the branding.”

Farming oysters in off-bottom cages allows for their harvest without destroying ecologically valuable oyster reefs. Overfishing, freshwater intrusion and hurricanes — which cover oyster reefs in sand and mud — have reduced traditional oyster harvests off the Texas coast by 43 percent over the past four years. Meanwhile, oyster aquaculture off the coasts of Florida, Alabama, Louisiana and other states brings [in] more than \$200 million each year.

“Practical research with real-world impact is the hallmark of The Texas A&M University System,” said Chancellor John Sharp. “Dr. Fox’s research is creating an entirely new and sustainable industry for the Texas Coast, producing jobs and improving the quality of Texas oysters.”

See a video about the oysters at [https://www.youtube.com/user/tamusystem?sub\\_confirmation=1](https://www.youtube.com/user/tamusystem?sub_confirmation=1).

Fox worked with State Representative Todd Hunter and Corpus Christi restaurant owner Brad Lomax to make oyster farming legal in Texas — the last state along the Gulf Coast to do so. By September 2020, tens of thousands of acres of shallow water along the Texas Coast will be available for commercial oyster aquaculture. Fox’s work was funded in part by a Chancellor’s Research Initiative Grant through The Texas A&M University System. Fox and his team are working to develop a breeding program for Texas oysters to improve salinity tolerance, disease resistance and other desirable traits. They will also provide oyster hatchery and farm training for those willing to invest in the new industry.

Spawning oysters in the lab will be key to providing consistent seed stock for future oyster farmers. Dr. Hugo Magaña, an AgriLife Research associate research scientist working at the Texas A&M AgriLIFE Research Mariculture Laboratory in Flour Bluff, recently succeeded in spawning oysters for the first time in 27 years in Texas. Magaña started with about 200 Copano Bay oysters, selected for their appearance.

### 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.



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.



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

## FOBWR's FEBRUARY REFUGE WALK AT SBNWR LIVE OAK UNIT



Eleven 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 Live Oak Unit of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge on February 16 for the monthly FOBWR Refuge Walk. The Live Oak Unit, located along Hawkins Road in Sargent, Texas (approximately 2.75 miles south of the intersection of State Highway 457 and Farm to Market 2611), is not open to the public. Photos are by Marty Cornell.



**NOTE: The March walk is scheduled for Friday, March 20 at 8:30 a.m. (location to be announced via email to all COT members and others). The change in day and time is an effort to reduce church and family conflicts and improve viewing of birds and other animals.**

## SAN JACINTO DAY FESTIVAL on APRIL 18



The family-friendly, Texas-sized festival features music, games, living-history displays and food. Reenactors attired in period dress make the epic events of April 1836 come alive, and five distinct reenactments focus on the dramatic events that led to one of the most decisive and impactful military encounters in the history of North America.

A living "Timeline of the Texas Revolution," showcases the chronology of the San Jacinto Story, with living history demonstrations featuring major events that occurred in

Gonzalez, the Alamo, San Felipe de Austin, Goliad, and Washington-on-the-Brazos, culminating in the Battle of San Jacinto and capture of General Santa Anna. Participatory activities allow visitors to interact with reenactors as they cook food, check weapons and engage in the daily routines of Texans almost 200 years ago.

The San Jacinto Museum of History, located at the base of the San Jacinto Monument, will be open to visitors. For information about the museum's fees and attractions, visit <https://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/>.

**When:** Saturday, April 18, 2020; 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Where:** San Jacinto Monument, One Monument Circle, La Porte, TX 77571

**Cost:** Festival is free; parking is \$10.

Source: <https://tinyurl.com/sanjacintodayfest>

## What Am I?: The Cuckoo Wasp—A Gorgeous Parasite

Continued from Page 1; by David Lukas, 1 July 2012



A cuckoo wasp is one of those remarkable animals that appears for just a few seconds and makes you wonder what the heck you just saw. Fast-moving and no larger than a skinny

housefly, these wasps stand out nonetheless: They glow an outrageous iridescent blue-green, as if illuminated from within.

Cuckoo wasps pack a lot of drama into their tiny bodies. Their color is part of the mystery. These wasps are parasites, and like their namesake cuckoo birds, they lay their eggs in the nests of

other species (wasps or bees in this case). Since cuckoo wasps depend on trickery and camouflage to fool their hosts, you might expect them to be drab. Scientists have not figured out whether the bright colors serve any function, and it wasn't known until 2009 that the color is produced by light refracting through open spaces between six layers of cuticle in the wasps' exoskeletons.

Cuckoo wasps are most active in dry, open areas between May and August, with adults foraging on flower nectar as they follow favored routes multiple times a day searching for solitary wasps and bees to parasitize.

## Brazosport Planetarium Show March 2020

### Earth, Moon and Sun

Tuesdays March 3, 10, 17, 24,  
31 & 4th Friday, March 27  
at 7 pm

This family show explores the relationship between the Earth, Moon and Sun with the help of Coyote, an amusing character adapted from Native American oral traditions



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 5 – adult



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FOR THE ARTS & SCIENCES

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## 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.

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