

Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the Statler Brothers informed us in 1966:

Countin' flowers on the wall,
That don't bother me at all
Playin' solitaire till dawn with a deck of 51
Smokin' cigarettes and watchin' Captain
Kangaroo
Now don't tell me I've nothin' to do.

Well, I'm here to inform you in 2020, and thanks to Oron Atkins, that things aren't quite that bad for us. Be sure to check out the continuing work on FOBWR's Bobcat Woods Trail project and the new trash collection/analysis/disposal citizen science project that Oron arranged for COT to participate in as a partner with Brazoria County Parks Department.

From the TMN Chapter Presidents Meeting (virtual) on June 29, I learned that **all** AT hours for 2020 may come from webinars if there are associated Q and A sessions. The four-hour max limit for yearly AT credits from webinars has been lifted. Please run all webinars through AT Director Bob Whitmarsh before participating. Bob is also actively searching for AT opportunities and recently posted one on controlled/prescribed burns that looks very interesting.

Also, there could be a change afoot in the number of VT hours required for certification/recertification in 2020. There may be no change, but several chapters have made inquiries about this and state leadership is reviewing requirements with regards to the current pandemic.

During the President's meeting, we also reviewed the latest updates to Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension's "Transitioning Back" document. The major point: Transitioning from Wave 2 to Wave 3 is postponed until at least

August 1. So stay with-in the Wave 2 guidelines until notified to do otherwise, but most importantly (I can't stress this strongly enough, and neither can our local and state TMN leaders), **LOCAL RESTRICTIONS STILL RULE.** I'll cover more items from the Presidents Meeting at our July 8, General Meeting.

Kathy Pittman, our Class of 2019 Representative to the COT Board of Directors, is heading up a one-week takeover of the state TMN social media (an opportunity offered to all chapters by the state office). She is looking for ideas about our activities and projects, our accomplishments, our members who have "gone to the max" in their volunteer efforts, etc. Please contact Kathy with your ideas at pittmankw4@aol.com.

One last thing... Once a week I see a good doctor who is also a GOOD doctor. Inevitably, by the end of my visit, we're talking about COVID-19. And inevitably, the conversation ends on the same note: With him asking me if I know what the medical field knows about the virus. Inevitably, he answers his own question before I can by saying, "Just about nothing." He also assures me that the only way we're going to beat this pandemic is by taking *personal responsibility* for our actions, always wearing masks, socially distancing, washing our hands, and staying home.

That's all I have for now. Hope to see you very soon.

Best regards, stay safe, and be ever watchful, Bill

Bill Ahlstrom is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at ahlstrom@tmn.com.



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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

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 – July 2020

REMINDERS

1. Check the Calendar for VT and AT opportunities
2. Please consider submitting (short or long) articles to Chapter News news@tmn-cot.org

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

Wednesday, July 8, 2020, 9 AM

Via email meeting invite to Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service's
Microsoft Teams Meeting license

9:00 AM – 9:10 AM	Welcome and Meeting Participation Notes
9:10 AM – 10:00 AM	Advanced Training Speaker: Susan Heath, Director of Conservation Research, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Topic: “Eastern Willet Migration and Nesting” <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>
10:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Nature Notes Speaker: John Boettiger Topic: “White-tailed Deer in Texas—Facts and Figures”
10:15 AM – 10:45 AM	General Membership Meeting <i>[This meeting is approved for 1.00-hour volunteer time]</i>



Susan (Sue) Heath is a native Texan who returned to the state in 2007 after being transplanted to Virginia for 24 years. After serving in the U.S. Navy for four years and working as a computer security analyst in the Washington, D.C., area for 12 years, she returned to school to focus on employment that was more personally meaningful. In 2003, Sue received a Master's in Biology from George Mason University for her work on wintering waterfowl on the Northern Virginia Piedmont and a Ph.D. from the same institution in the spring of 2008. Her dissertation involved the effects of pesticides on birds that nest in agriculture in the north central states.

At GCBO, she coordinates conservation research projects including American Oystercatcher Stewardship, Beach Nesting Birds, Non-breeding Shorebirds, Black Skimmer monitoring, Motus Tower Network, Eastern Willet Migration, Bird Use of Intertidal Reef, and the Smith Point Hawk Watch.

NOTE: Stay tuned for information and instructions via email in order to “attend” the July, virtual General Meeting.

MEMBERSHIP DATA REPORT by Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Congratulations to those achieving awards or recertification as of June 30:

Recertification

Melanie Hollenshed
Dick Schaffhausen
Andy Smith

500 Volunteer Hours

Larry Peterson

1000 Volunteer Hours

Georgia Monnerat

Impact Data YTD—30 June 2020

158 Adults 101 Youth 259 Total

Hours Totals YTD—30 June 2020

6548 Hours VT 1081 Hours AT

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST 2020 ANNUAL MEETING



When: October 14th-18th, 2020

Where: From the comfort of your home office, back patio or reclining chair.

As a result of the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Texas Master Naturalist Program has decided to suspend this year's in-person event in Houston, Texas, in favor of a fully virtual experience.

The decision reflects TMN's responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of its members, conference attendees and the general population while still serving its mission to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas.

While we may not be seeing you in Houston this fall in person, we are committed to creating a valuable and engaging educational and networking experience that mirrors our in-person Annual Meeting. In fact, we're quite excited about all of the new possibilities that a virtual conference opens up for our event!

Please save the dates for us now! We've shifted the dates to **Wednesday through Saturday** to accommodate the virtual setting. We'll be online with you **October 14th through 17th** with four days of sessions, interactive programs, and some surprises we'll be sharing later this summer.

More information will be available at: <https://txmn.org/2020-annual-meeting/>.

COT KICKS OFF TRASH PICKUP PROJECT

Trash collection is not approved for TMN volunteer hours; however, collecting and recording data on the trash collected, e.g., via the Ocean Conservancy's Clean Swell App (see information provided by Oron Atkins and via the COT Calendar) or on a paper form provided by Brazoria County Parks Department (contact Mike Mullenweg) renders the activity a citizen science project.

On June 23, several COT members gathered on and near the jetty at Quintana Beach County Park (QBCP) to clean up an area continuously in need of trash removal. Dubbed "Team Q," the group cleared trash from a large portion of the beach and jetty. The effort was coordinated by Jimmy and Luanne Salinas, who were joined by Joel Cobb (also a BCPD ranger working on his day off), Kyle and Kathleen Purvis, Susan Potts, Andy Smith, and Kathy Sweet. Team Q spent three hours and collected over 400 pounds of trash.

As park manager and COT member Patty Brinkmeyer posted on the QBCP Facebook page, "We are so thankful and proud of these great volunteers, including one of our own Brazoria County Park rangers. If you follow [QBCP] on Facebook, you have seen some of the videos and photos we post of trash that people leave behind. This was a spectacular effort and had a huge impact on the area!"



Clockwise from above left:

- Kathleen Purvis, Kyle Purvis, Joel Cobb, Luanne Salinas, Kathy Sweet and Susan Potts with some of the 400 pounds of trash collected
 - Andy Smith after logging a bucketful of trash
 - Joel Cobb ready to continue trash collection
 - Luanne Salinas, Andy Smith, Joel Cobb, and Jimmy Salinas give a "thumbs up" to giving trash the boot.
- All photos by Jimmy Salinas and Patty Brinkmeyer.

Continued next page

COT KICKS OFF TRASH PICKUP PROJECT Continued



Before



During
(Kathleen and Kyle Purvis)



After



Above from left: Luanne Salinas clearing trash from the dunes; Kyle and Kathleen Purvis with Susan Potts after clearing a stretch of Quintana Beach; a Great Blue Heron enjoys the beautiful, trash-free beach.



Link to Clean Swell:

<https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/cleanswell/>

HUMMINGBIRDS SEE COLORS WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE

Posted by Deborah Byrd in EARTH | June 23, 2020

“Our experiments enabled us to get a sneak peek into what the world looks like to a hummingbird.”



Male broad-tailed hummingbird. Researchers trained birds like these to perform experiments that revealed that the birds see colors invisible to human eyes. Image via Noah Whiteman (UC-Berkeley)/Princeton University.

You know the old idea that dogs see only in shades of gray? [Studies](#) have shown that's not true. Dogs do see some colors, though their color vision doesn't reveal a world as richly or intensely colored as the world we see. Now a new study by scientists, published this month in the peer-reviewed journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, shows that our human color vision can't compete with that of wild hummingbirds. These fleet little birds perceive a world far more richly hued than ours, full of visual cues humans never notice, via colors we can't imagine. In fact, said evolutionary biologist Mary (Cassie) Stoddard at Princeton: “Humans are color-blind compared to birds and many other animals.”

When it comes to color vision, you can thank the cone cells in the retina of your eye. Humans have three types of color cones, making us sensitive to red, green and blue light. Birds have a fourth color cone that can detect ultraviolet light. The tiny hummingbirds also see combination colors like ultraviolet+green and ultraviolet+red, according to the new research. The hummingbirds rely on their heightened color sense to find food, dazzle mates, escape predators and navigate diverse terrain, these scientists said.

To investigate how birds perceive color, Stoddard and her research team explored bird color vision in a natural setting. They worked at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Gothic, Colorado, training wild broad-tailed hummingbirds (*Selasphorus platycercus*) to participate in color vision experiments. In the scientists' statement, Stoddard explained:

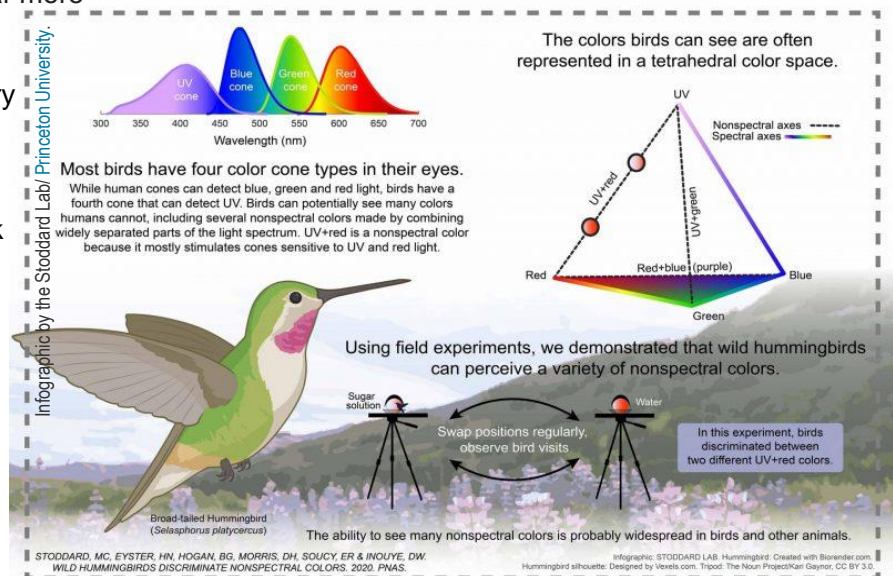
Most detailed perceptual experiments on birds are performed in the lab, but we risk missing the bigger picture of how birds really use color vision in their daily lives.

Hummingbirds are perfect for studying color vision in the wild. These sugar fiends have evolved to respond to flower colors that advertise a nectar reward, so they can learn color associations rapidly and with little training.

The team said it was particularly interested in nonspectral color combinations, which involve hues from widely separated parts of the color spectrum. That's as opposed, they said:

...to blends of neighboring colors like teal (blue-green) or yellow (green-red). For humans, purple is the clearest example of a nonspectral color. Technically, purple is not in the rainbow: It arises when our blue (short-wave) and red (long-wave) cones are stimulated, but not green (medium-wave) cones.

While humans have just one nonspectral color – purple – birds can theoretically see up to five: purple, ultraviolet+red, ultraviolet+green, ultraviolet+yellow and ultraviolet+purple.



Stoddard and her colleagues designed a series of experiments to test whether hummingbirds can see these nonspectral colors. They performed outdoor experiments each summer for three years, starting with a pair of custom “bird vision” LED tubes programmed to display a broad range of colors, including nonspectral colors like ultraviolet+green. Next, they performed experiments in an alpine meadow frequently visited by local broad-tailed hummingbirds. Their statement said:

HUMMINGBIRDS SEE COLORS WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE

Continued

Each morning, the researchers rose before dawn and set up two feeders: one containing sugar water and the other plain water. Beside each feeder, they placed an LED tube. The tube beside the sugar water emitted one color, while the one next to the plain water emitted a different color. The researchers periodically swapped the positions of the rewarding and unrewarding tubes, so the birds could not simply use location to pinpoint a sweet treat. They also performed control experiments to ensure that the tiny birds were not using smell or another inadvertent cue to find the reward. Over the course of several hours, wild hummingbirds learned to visit the rewarding color. Using this setup, the researchers recorded over 6,000 feeder visits in a series of 19 experiments.

The experiments revealed that hummingbirds can see a variety of nonspectral colors, including purple, ultraviolet+green, ultraviolet+red and ultraviolet+yellow. For example, hummingbirds readily distinguished ultraviolet+green from pure ultraviolet or pure green, and they discriminated between two different mixtures of ultraviolet+red light – one redder, one less so.

Harold Eyster, a UBC Ph.D. student and a co-author of the study, commented:

It was amazing to watch. The ultraviolet+green light and green light looked identical to us, but the hummingbirds kept correctly choosing the ultraviolet+green light associated with sugar water. Our experiments enabled us to get a sneak peek into what the world looks like to a hummingbird.

Even though hummingbirds can perceive nonspectral colors, appreciating how these colors appear to birds can be difficult, the scientists said. Ben Hogan, a

postdoctoral research associate at Princeton and a co-author of the study, commented: It's impossible to really know how the birds perceive these colors. Is ultraviolet+red a mix of those colors, or an entirely new color? We can only speculate.

Stoddard added: "To imagine an extra dimension of color vision—that is the thrill and challenge of studying how avian perception works. Fortunately, the hummingbirds reveal that they can see things we cannot."

David Inouye, who is affiliated with the University of Maryland and the center where the study took place, added:

The colors that we see in the fields of wildflowers at our study site, the wildflower capital of Colorado, are stunning to us, but just imagine what those flowers look like to birds with that extra sensory dimension.

The scientists said the wide variety of nonspectral colors available to birds is the result of their ancient four color-cone visual system. Stoddard explained:

Tetrachromacy—having four color cone types—evolved in early vertebrates. This color vision system is the norm for birds, many fish and reptiles, and it almost certainly existed in dinosaurs. We think the ability to perceive many nonspectral colors is not just a feat of hummingbirds but a widespread feature of animal color vision.

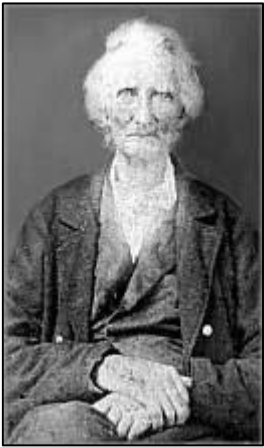
Bottom line: A new series of experiments shows that wild hummingbirds perceive a world far more richly colored than ours, full of visual cues humans can never perceive via colors we can't imagine.

Source: [Wild hummingbirds discriminate non-spectral colors](#) and <https://tinyurl.com/EarthSkyHummer>
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BRAZORIA COUNTY HISTORY: LEVI JORDAN PLANTATION STATE HISTORIC SITE

By Neal McLain



Historic photograph of Levi Jordan

Photo: Public domain.

This story begins in the year 1820, in a period known as the “Westward Expansion” — when immigrants from England and other European countries migrated to the United States in search of freedom from the political, social, and economic discrimination of their home countries... and, perhaps of greatest importance, the right to own fertile land and establish their own farming and ranching operations.



Levi Jordan Plantation Home, November 2006

Photo: Neal McLain

During the 1820s and several years thereafter, thousands of immigrants crossed the Appalachian Mountains into the Great Valley of Appalachians, then migrated on west, establishing communities and farms as they moved.

Immigrants from other European countries arrived during the same period. Many came from Spain or Portugal, bringing their native languages with them. They settled in lands located in areas that would eventually be known as Mexico, Texas, California, and other border states.

In 1837, American settlers joined forces with their Mexican neighbors and won independence from Mexico, forming the independent Republic of Texas.



Levi Jordan Plantation Home, November 2015

Photo: Neal McLain



Texas in 1845.

Daughters of the Republic of Texas

The Republic of Texas was an independent nation, bordering the United States and Mexico, that existed from 1836 to 1845. This new Republic was formed by the defeat of Mexico in the Texas Revolution and claimed borders encompassing an area that included the present State of Texas, as well as parts of present-day New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Levi Jordan was born in Georgia in the early 1790s and acquired land in Brazoria County, Texas, in 1848. Jordan is believed to have traveled to Texas with approximately 12 slaves to begin the development of the plantation, before returning to move his extended family. Previously, he had owned adjoining plantations on the Louisiana-Arkansas border with his son-in-law, James Campbell McNeill, who married the Jordans' only daughter, Emily. Jordan established a sugar and cotton plantation near the San Bernard River, near the current city of Brazoria. His slaves built a brick sugar-house, brick slave cabins, and a large sugar mill with six-foot rollers [1].

Continued next page

BRAZORIA COUNTY HISTORY: LEVI JORDAN PLANTATION STATE HISTORIC SITE

Continued

Archaeological Research

In 2001, the property was acquired by the State of Texas and placed under the jurisdiction of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Under TPWD, the property was designated a State Historic Site.

The Cradle of Texas Chapter established a partnership agreement with TPWD. In 2006 and 2007, members of the chapter conducted a series of five species surveys at the site.

In 2008, the Texas Legislature transferred several State Historic Sites, including Levi Jordan, to the Texas Historical Commission.

In the years since, extensive archaeological and historical research has been undertaken by the project's archaeological director, Dr. Kenneth L. Brown, of the University of Houston. Numerous reports have been published by Dr. Brown and his team members.

To facilitate the research, the entire building was lifted off its foundation and raised a few feet. During this period, new foundations were constructed for the building and for the two fireplace chimneys.

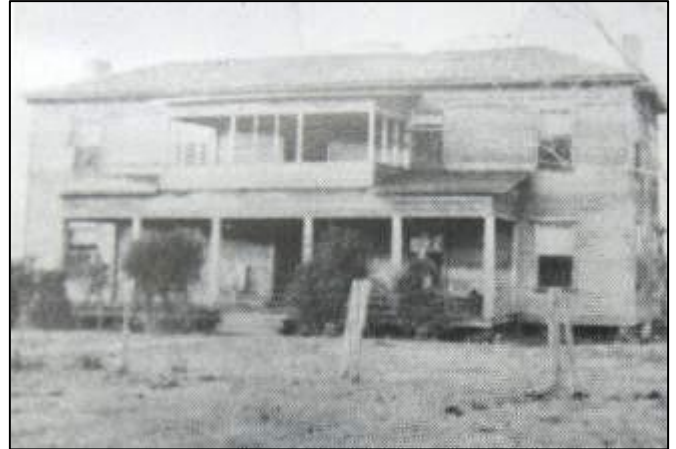
The Texas Historical Commission continues to invest in the restoration of the site. Plans are now underway for the construction of a visitor center and an associated museum to display the thousands of artifacts recovered during archaeological surveys.

Kenneth L. Brown Principal Investigator

Dr. Brown holds the rank of Professor in the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Houston. He holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Pennsylvania State University. His research interests include Archaeological Method and Theory, Historical Archaeological Method and Theory, African American Archaeology, Mesoamerican Archaeology and Ethnohistory, and Urban Archaeology.



Source: University of Houston
<https://tinyurl.com/K-Brown>



Undated photos of the plantation house from *A Window to the Past: Brazoria County, Texas* [2]



Undated photo of the plantation house. Original source unknown; public domain photo courtesy of JQ+Tsen, Austin, Texas.

[1] *Levi Jordan Plantation State Historic Site*.
<https://tinyurl.com/Levi-Jordan>

[2] *A Window to the Past: Brazoria County, Texas*, Brazoria County Historical Museum and Brazoria County Historical Commission, 1986.

A NOTE OF NATURE LEVITY



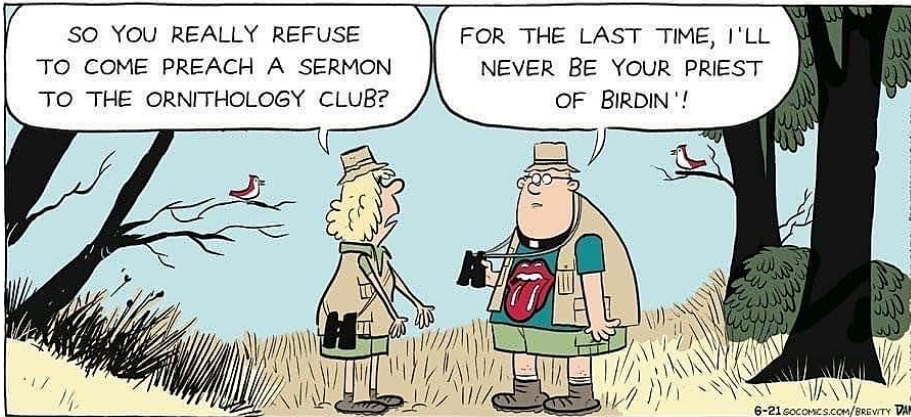
IF 2020 WERE A PIÑATA



When you get home and take off your mask.

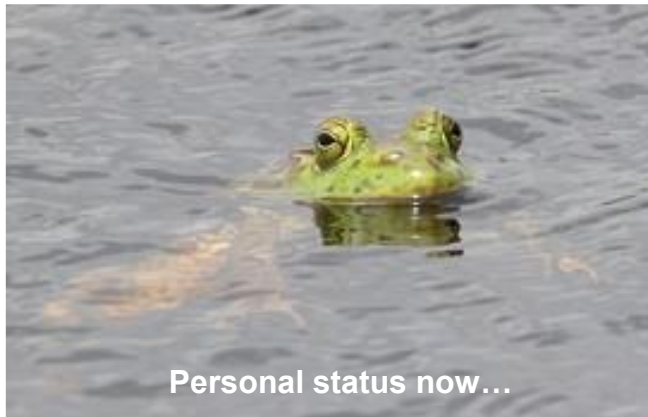
BREVITY

BY DAN THOMPSON

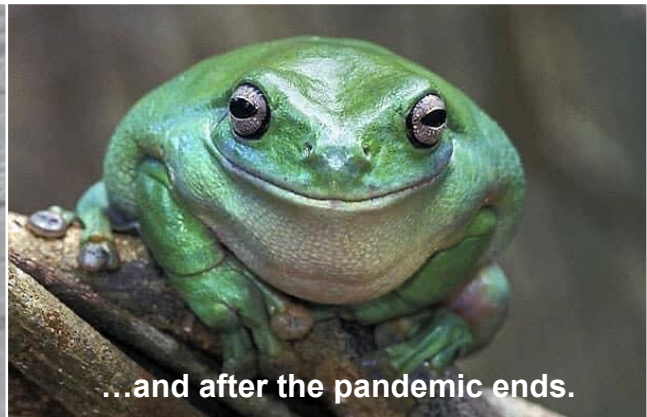


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"Face it, Fred—you're lost."



Personal status now...



...and after the pandemic ends.

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Newsletter Editor	Lisa Myers, Lake Jackson
Newsletter Contributors	Neal McLain, Bill Ahlstrom, Dave Brandes, Charles Jesse Miller Jr., Jimmy Salinas, Patty Brinkmeyer

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- 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 Thursday 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.