



Texas Master Naturalist Brazos Valley Chapter Meeting Agenda for November 10, 2016 Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History

I. Old Business

- A.** Amanda Chau - I contacted the City of College Station's Adopt-A-Greenway Program and extended our commitment to Gabbard and Brison Parks for another two years as directed by the Board.
- B.** Donell Frank - Updates on Butterflies in the Brazos volunteer opportunity:
Gabbard Park has been chosen as our contribution to the Butterflies in the Brazos project. The forms have been submitted to the City of College Station. Stephan Richardson replied with the following:
Good afternoon, We would love to work with you on this project. The only area that has irrigation (which is necessary for your beds success) at Gabbard Park is the sign bed. This will be a good location to place the butterfly garden as the bed and irrigation already exist. Let me know when you plan to install plants so we can program the irrigation clock. Thanks.
 - 1) Need to set up a volunteer opportunity on VMS for Butterflies in the Brazos to submit hours.
 - 2) Cheryl Lewis has offered to be the Gardens Project Director. She would like to present a status report to the board on all five of our projects with a description and where they are at.

II. New Business

- A.** Sean Wall - I've been working on a new volunteer project with Bruce the past few weeks, and now I've been trying to get it approved by the coordinator.
- B.** Amanda Chau - Proposed purchasing/reimbursement procedures for chapter supplies:
Because of our tax exemption status, we have to make changes to how we purchase supplies for our chapter. I would like to propose the following purchasing/reimbursing procedure:
 - 1) Before buying any taxable items for our chapter, you must complete the exemption certificate which is available from the Treasurer or Committee Director. The completed exemption certificate must be presented to the seller or vendor before buying taxable items for our chapter. This exemption certificate will allow us purchase the item(s) tax-free. If the items were bought without the exemption certificate, the sales tax will not be reimbursed to the purchaser.
 - 2) The exemption does not apply if the purchase is for the personal benefit of an individual. Please make sure you purchase our chapter supplies separately from your own items.
- C.** Amanda Chau - Proposed membership dues for 2017:
As we discussed back in our Chapter retreat in February about the need to raise membership dues to provide more funding for chapter projects. Membership dues is our main and only source

of revenue. I proposed to raise our membership dues from \$15 to \$25 for individual membership.

Our chapter is now 501(c)3 organization and will gladly accept donations from our members as well as other organizations.

- D. Bruce Neville - Updated Chapter Management and Operating Protocols (CMOP). Please read prior to the meeting. Major changes are primarily to Article VIII, Disciplining and/or Removal of Members. We need to have any questions to the State Office by 23 November. We will be governed by it beginning in January.
- E. Bruce Neville - Chapter Annual Planning Meeting, early 2017.
- F. Bruce Neville - Directors for 2017.

I. Officer and Committee Reports

- A. President – Bruce Neville – I want to thank Amanda Chau and Mike Stecher for their efforts in obtaining 501(c)3 and tax-exempt status for our chapter. As Amanda has indicated, if you are purchasing supplies or services for the chapter henceforth, you must use our tax-exempt certificate and must separate personal from chapter-related purchases. Otherwise, you cannot be reimbursed for taxes paid on chapter-related purchases. Having made any number of purchases for Texas A&M, I can assure you that vendors in Bryan/College Station are used to seeing the tax-exempt certificates.

Next week is the final class for our New Member Training. Because of the new curriculum, we had to add an additional Tuesday evening, for 49 hours of training. We had a record 28 trainees begin the class; I don't know how many will graduate. I've been to nearly all the sessions, and it's been a highly involved class. This could not have happened without the incredible efforts of our New Member Training Committee. I know I'll miss someone, so I'll just thank those who arranged for speakers, hosted speakers, provided classes, kept track of registration, kept track of attendance, mented students, hosted first and last sessions, and did many other tasks.

I also want to thank our Membership Director, Betty Vermeire, for her (until now) thankless work on the Volunteer Management System (VMS). She has put in countable hours (at least I presume she's been counting them) getting the data into the system, getting it working for our chapter, entering late hours, and fixing entry errors. I know that our chapter is not alone in our "fondness" for this "Gift From Above," in all its idiosyncrasies. I know that Betty has spent much of the last two State Meetings in sessions on the VMS when she would much rather have been on a field trip or in any of a number of other sessions.

As the year ends, I have to think of the annual report. Membership and other statistics will be "harvested" from the VMS by the State Office, so it's imperative that our data be up-to-date as soon after the new year as possible. I will be putting out a plea to our members to record their AT and volunteer hours. We may need to train a corps of "hour buddies."

I would like to hold a planning meeting again early in 2017. I think this year, we'll just have the Board, but invite the membership. Please check your calendars for 28 Jan, 4 Feb, or 11 Feb.

I'm preparing the First Annual Brazos Valley Chapter Trivia Quiz for the holiday party. Mary Dabney Wilson has agreed to donate a piece of hand-thrown pottery as the prize.

While our officers now have two-year terms, Directors have one-year terms and are eligible for indefinite reappointment. Directors are appointed by the President and approved by the Officers and Advisors. I have appreciated the efforts of all of the current Directors. Please let me know by the winter party if you do not wish to be reappointed.

State Meeting Report

The Brazos Valley Chapter was well represented at the State Master Naturalist Annual Meeting in Conroe with 13 members. A myriad of programs was available for advanced training. I attended both advanced training sessions and chapter admin sessions, including the State Representative meeting. Some of our members attended a program on Friday morning, "Texas Waters: Exploring Water and Watersheds." This is a new training and certification for Master Naturalists. We brought back samples of the curriculum. For the second year in a row, Brazos Valley took home the honors in the TMN Quiz Bowl Friday evening. Blacklighting for night-flying insects was conducted both Friday and Saturday nights. Carol Henrichs led a workshop, "Nature Photography: Good to Better and Better to Best," on Saturday afternoon.

Members stepped up to provide many items for the silent auction. I want to thank Mary Dabney Wilson particularly. Her hand-thrown pottery brought in over \$250 in highly competitive bidding! Jim Anding again donated a handmade walking stick that received numerous bids. The insulated cups camouflaged and adorned with dragonflies contributed by the Ashes also brought in a good bid.

As is traditional, the venue for next year and next year's certification pin were announced at the Saturday evening awards dinner. The State Meeting next year will be at the Omni Hotel in Corpus Christi. The certification pin for 2017 is a terminally cute Kemp's Ridley. 2018 will be the 20th anniversary of the State Program. They are hoping to do a big bash, including a publication, so will be seeking pictures, stories, etc. The venue has not been announced.

Administrative items from the State Meeting: The Chapter Operating Handbook template has been updated. We should be seeing that soon. Most of the changes are minor. The major changes involve disciplining and removal of members. Since we have not had to do that, I don't see that as an issue for us, and it will likely be beneficial, should such a situation arise. The State Office is beginning a perpetual funding campaign. They are working with TPWD Foundation and Texas A&M Foundation to establish an endowment to fund the program beyond the grants on which it is now run. They are NOT asking for handouts from the chapters. They are looking for large donors, estate planning, etc. They will, of course, take individual gifts. They will be providing promotional materials, probably in early 2017. They can always use help on the annual meeting. They usually put out a call for volunteers late in the process, but the State Reps suggested that chapters could "adopt" a task, such as the bookstore, the silent auction, registration, etc. (Note: the Chapter adopting the silent auction gets a percentage of the profits!) I attended a panel session on "Big Chapters: Unique Challenges." What I found out is that big chapters don't have unique challenges, and we're not alone. What I didn't find out is, how do the chapters with budgets of \$25,000 a year get their money?!

B. Vice President – Donell Frank –

- C. Secretary- Amanda Booth – sign in; approve October 13 minutes
- D. Treasurer- Amanda Chau – As of today, 11/05/2016, we have a total of \$6079.70 in our account and 56 members who paid their 2016 membership dues.

Updates on Texas Sale Tax Exemption: I am happy to report that TMN BV Inc., is granted exempt status for the Texas sales and use tax as 501(c)(3) organization. The sales tax exemption extends to goods and services purchased for use by our chapter.

The exemption does not apply if the purchase is for the personal benefit of an individual or private party, or is not related to the chapter's exempt purpose.

E. Committees

1. Immediate Past President, Olivia Ash –

2. Membership – Betty Vermeire, Chair – We currently have 63 members who are eligible to hours into VMS. This number includes everyone who paid dues this year and the 2015 Training Class, but does not include the 2016 Training Class. Thirty-nine of these have entered hours in VMS and 24 have not = 62%. Of the have-nots, two emailed hours to BAV for entry, and three are known to be active, but have not submitted any hours. Quite a few members submitted hours in the early months of the year, but stopped. I am willing to work with anyone one-on-one. Do we need another training session?

Three members of the Class of 2015 have certified: Dana Roese, Kim Roese, and Geke Verspui. To date, seventeen established members have recertified: Jim Anding, Kitty Anding, Jim Balthrop, Jo Anne Bates, Laura Biddle, Amanda Chau, Liz Crompton, John Cupps, Katharine Cupps, Bill Eisele, Donell Frank, Jackie Girouard, Carol Henrichs, Madge Luquette, Bruce Neville, Betty Vermeire, and Mary Dabney Wilson. Eight more are close to recertifying, and at least seven probably would if they submitted their hours.

State Meeting

I attended six hours of training, workshop, roundtable, and discussion on the VMS system. All of this was helpful; I know more than I did, though not all of it yet. I owe our Chapter a huge apology for what I didn't know, and thus didn't convey correctly.

The biggest take-home message, one that affects all of us, is that hours entered after the 45-day window will not be counted by the Federal auditors, and thus will not count toward the State TMN's Federal grant. I had not heard this before. If the Hours-Keeper enters the hours, that is recorded, and the Federal auditor may not count those hours. Then, there is the issue of, if the hours don't count for Federal reporting, they should not count toward our milestones. I don't know whether that is being enforced.

The VMS team was gratified that 77% of the TMN members in the system are using VMS. As stated above, our Chapter's participation is 62%, and more than a few of our members entered some hours, then stopped.

Many questions were raised about the Criminal Background Checks (CBC). Those in attendance at that session were sent a PowerPoint; a copy of that is attached as a pdf. Please review it; Chapter Boards may want to incorporate part of it into their Chapters' Bylaws.

I also attended a briefing by Michelle Haggerty on Updates to the Chapter Management and

Operations Protocols (CMOP), pronounced see-mop. This is the document that Bruce mentioned, shared, and asked that we review and report back to Michelle. The State Office intends to publish an updated document each December for the following year. Changes include: tweaks in verbiage, updates on State information and contacts, clarification in areas for which the State Office typically receives questions, and significant changes to and a complete rewrite of Article VIII, the section on disciplining and removing members. Updates include how to order the new curriculum, the roles and responsibilities of TMN members, where and how to order pins, rules for when you are working as a Master Naturalist, points to consider when reviewing and approving service projects, clarifications and additions to the bad-better-best table, changes and examples to the chart of service project opportunity categories, the advisor's role, and FAQs.

A. Archivist-Historian, vacant –

B. Data Manager, Betty Vermeire -

F. Advanced Training – Laura Biddle, Chair – There were many good advanced training opportunities at the state meeting last month. Unfortunately, some of the speakers could not be convinced to present at our chapter meetings due to the great distance they would have to travel. For those of us willing to travel, the cities of Houston and Austin have lots of opportunities to learn. One upcoming AT opportunity is this Saturday, 11/12/16 at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - Identifying plants in Central Texas.

Keep on the lookout for AT opportunities outside of BCS and alert me if there are any worth sharing. That way I can review them for whether they meet the guidelines for AT, and I can alert the members. Thank you to the members who have forwarded me emails about AT with other chapters, etc. I appreciate the help!

G. Volunteer Service Projects – Steve Simcik, Chair –

H. Host – Deb Wilson, Chair – 1. Continued weekly reminders to 2016 class for refreshments.

2. Sent membership a reminder/invitation to attend the November 15th - 2016 class graduation and requested volunteers for refreshments. Response at this time is dismal.

3. Sent December 10th holiday meeting and invitation to google group and VIPs supplied by Bruce Neville. Invitation has not been sent to inactive members.

4. Olivia Ash volunteered to help with holiday party/meeting and decorations. I have received a few refreshment responses.

I. Communication and Outreach – vacant –

1. Webmaster – Carol Henrichs –

J. New Class Training – Mary Dabney Wilson, Chair –

K. New Class Representative, Sean Wall –

L. Agrilife Advisor, Dusty Tittle –

M. Advisor, Heather Prestridge –

N. Program, Donell Frank –

1. Youth Programs, vacant –

2. Field Trip Coordinator, vacant -

2. Announcements

Upcoming Programs Dates/Calendar Items

1. **TMN Fall/Winter Meeting Schedule:** (Second Thursdays at 6:30 PM, BVMNH)

November 10, December 10, January 12, February 9

2. **Monthly Meeting speakers** (each monthly meeting counts for one hour of AT credit)

November 10 - Dr. Timothy Birdsong, TPWD, Texas Native Fish Conservation Areas

3. **Garden project at the City of College Station Community Services bldg** (1207 Texas Avenue.) Join Cheryl Lewis **on a Saturday** that works for you. 571-6448
4. Brazos County Health Department looking for committed volunteers to **host a Mosquito Ovitrap in their yard for a long term baseline study of Aedes mosquitoes** in BCS (V approved)
5. **2016 BVTMN Training Class hosts**, Sept. 6 – Nov. 15, 2016 (V approved)
6. **Stream Team Project**. If you already completed Stream Team water sampling trainings and are interested to help, please contact the team leader directly. If you did not have the trainings, you are welcome to help out. (V approved)
Lick Creek- Donell Frank (donellfrank@tdi-bi.com)- 11/12, Saturday, 8:00 am
Wolf Pen Creek Tributary- Steve Simcik (steve.simcik@blinn.edu)- 11/12, Saturday, 9:00 am
Bee Creek at Brison Park- Jackie Girouard (jackiegir@gmail.com)- 11/13, Sunday, 9:00 am
Bee Creek near College Station Cemetery- Kim Roesse (kimir77845@yahoo.com)- 11/13, Sunday, 4:00 pm
7. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin is presenting a program on **Native Plants of Central Texas**, Saturday, 11/12/16. Speaker portions will count towards AT)
8. **Ensuring the Wild Conservation Summit**, Monday, 11/14/16, 11:30 am – 3:30 pm in Austin. (AT approved)
9. **Growing Up WILD Workshop**, November 19, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, BRTC (AT approved)
10. **Trash Abatement Project**, Gabbard/Brison Parks in College Station on 11/19, from 8:00 to 10:00 am. This project is part of the City of College Station Adopt-A-Greenway Program. If this is the first time you join us, please complete this [waiver form](#) and turn it in on 11/19.