



The Coastal Prairie Reporter

“Covering and Recovering the Coastal Prairie”

Newsletter of Texas Master Naturalist of
Suburban Houston, Ft. Bend and Waller Counties, Texas

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Activity is the brainchild of CPC member

Eco-Explorers at Brazos Bend State Park

An exciting new program for families with young children made its debut this summer at Brazos Bend State Park.

Designed by CPC member Carrie Sample, weekly sessions of Eco-Explorers featured a lesson, a hike, a game and a craft centered on a particular animal, plant or nature concept. Sharon Hanzik, park naturalist, gave each topic a sizzling – and alliterative – title, such as Armored Armadillos, Sunflowers to Sycamores and Link by Link; the last explored the forest food chain and its resemblance to a grocery store.



Thursday mornings, an average of 18 children met at the park's Nature Center to participate in the activities and to share a snack. To help defray the costs of food and crafts materials, program administrators charged a \$2 fee per child.



Pam Tatge took the reins while Carrie vacationed, Bill Godley contributed his bird expertise for Feathers and Flight, and Tom Prentiss, former CPC member, assisted with the reptile programs. Several other BBSP volunteers also gave of their time.

One measure of the series' success is that not just parents attended with their children; several grandparents also were enticed to participate. A second measure is that it was featured in articles in both the Fort Bend "Star" and the Fort Bend "Herald".

At the June board meeting, CPC officers discussed the possibility of authorizing Eco-Explorers as a chapter volunteer project in 2009.

----- *Contributed by Carrie Sample*

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A Word From Cheryl



Hello, everyone.

Last year at this time I was wondering when the rain would stop. This year: WHERE IS THE RAIN?! Well, that's Texas for you, flood then drought with little in between. Kind of reminds me of our training classes. First two years: full; second two years: wondering if we are going to have enough people to hold a class.

The training committee has been working hard not only to recruit students for our upcoming class, but also to promote, generally, our chapter. While that hard work is paying off – we've received two applications for this fall's class – the committee needs your help; two people is 'way short of a full class.

Tactics used to spread the word about Coastal Prairie include posting fliers on community message boards and publishing the flier in homeowners' associations' newsletters.

Margo McDowell – "Mac" – at the AgriLife Extension Service office on Band Road in Rosenberg will be glad to make copies of the flier for you. Please let her know in advance how many you'll need.

If you think of other creative and effective means of exposing the chapter to potential recruits, please don't hesitate to let us know. (Please see editor's note, next page.) Member Elizabeth Abraham didn't hesitate. Her suggestion that we contact Cinco Ranch Farmer's Market resulted in the chapter being one of that

group's featured guests.

The state meeting this year will again be held at Mo Ranch, on Oct 24-26th. Details for classes, speakers and costs are still up in the air. I do know that the ever-popular two-day rainwater harvesting class, presented by Dr. Rector (hopefully), is being taught again (or that's what they told me two months ago). Sonny and Michelle are provided a scholarship for each chapter again this year, too. In the past the scholarship has been \$75.00. If you would like to be considered for the scholarship, just let me know. All names will be put into a hat and one will be drawn out as the winner. This is also the TMN organization's 10th year anniversary. I think there will be some special events this year. The state meeting is a great deal of fun and a great opportunity to meet others.

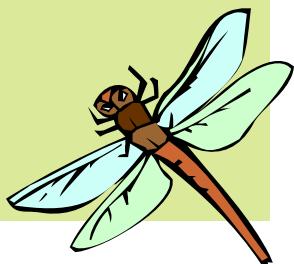
August brings graduation and a party for the graduates. Everyone is invited to the festivities, including those who didn't quite get all their hours in. Details will follow soon.

I'm excited to let everyone know we are trying to obtain salvage permits for collection and education. If anyone would like to help with the preservation of the collected birds (and mammals too), please let me know.

In closing, I'll leave you with the TMN mission statement:

To develop a corps of well-educated "Master Volunteers" to provide, education, outreach and service dedicated towards the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas.

*Cheers,
Cheryl*



THE RIPPERT REPORT



The July chapter meeting found attendees honoring several members for their accomplishments.

Linda Rippert and Ron Morrison had recertified for 2008 early in the year.



Recently recertified for this year are John Cotterell, Janet Irby, Bill Petty, Cheryl Sedivec and Nancy Sparrow.

Having attained both certification and recertification for 2007, new members Kurt Bundy and Carrie Sample recertified for 2008, too. Even before their graduation, Kurt and Carrie completed 16 hours of Advanced Training and 80 hours of Volunteer Time!

Other noteworthy service awardees include Janet Irby and Bill Petty, who received bronze dragonfly pins for donating 250 hours, and Linda Rippert, who received the 500-hour silver dragonfly pin.

The 2007 pin is of a prickly pear cactus, and the 2008 pin, shown in the photo at right, depicts a purple sage.

----- *Text contributed by Linda Rippert, Membership Committee Chair*
 ----- *Photos contributed by John Rippert*



Editor's Note:

Rumor has it that some members are putting fliers into neighbors' mailboxes. While I don't know how often that act is prosecuted, I do know that it's a violation of Title 18 of United States Code, Part 1, Chapter 83, § 1725, which states: *Whoever knowingly and willfully deposits any mailable matter such as statements of accounts, circulars, sale bills, or other like matter, on which no postage has been paid, in any letter box established, approved, or accepted by the Postal Service for the receipt or delivery of mail matter on any mail route with intent to avoid payment of lawful postage thereon, shall for each such offense be fined under this title.*

Let's be good citizens, and mind our Ps & Qs while we engage in PR.

Thanks.

nls

Southern Leopard Frog (*Rana sphenocephala*)
 Photo by Kurt Bundy





Water Education Team Update

While I seem to be getting this committee off to a trickle instead of a flood, we have made some progress. As you know, WATER is an incredibly broad topic. How do we narrow it to something our chapter can tackle? The Water Education Team - [WET](#) - would like to focus on water conservation. That is still a huge topic so we will continue to work to narrow our message in an effort to make the most impact.

WET will coordinate our education efforts, but we need help from the entire chapter. One of our most exciting ideas to date is to "put a face on water conservation". Huh? We all read recommendations about making changes in our daily lives and how much water or money those changes may or may not save. We aren't really sure how the numbers were calculated or just who did the calculations. WET wants to do our own calculations!! We hope to initiate a chapter-wide study on how different conservation methods affect real people. We'll be asking members to make one change. It could be switching to a water-saving showerhead, changing your irrigation schedule, putting a brick in your toilet, turning the water off while brushing your teeth, or some other water saving idea that pops into our heads. Then we will use a somewhat scientific method to actually track water usage. We'll be able to educate the public using real-life stories about how folks we know saved water (or not - depending on the results). We hope our results will help us guide folks to making changes that make the most impact.

Watch the next newsletter for more information. If you are interested in being all WET, why not join our committee? Contact team chairperson Tricia Bradbury at 281-242-2338 or Triciabrad@aol.com.

----- *Contributed by Tricia Bradbury*

Look up!

Jupiter and Saturn are among the notables in August's night sky.

Every year around mid-August, the Perseids appear in the night sky. Tailings from the comet Swift-Tuttle, this meteor shower was seen best in the early morning hours, after about 1:30 - 2 am on 12 August, although they're usually visible for several days, between the 10th and 15th. They'll look as if they originate in the constellation Perseus, in the northeastern sky.



In the western sky, Venus will outshine everything else. On the 13th, Saturn accompanied the bright small planet, and after the 14th, tiny Mercury will appear as a dim third partner. Towards the end of the month, Saturn leaves the group to be replaced by Mars. You may need binoculars to spot Mercury and Mars, even in dark skies.

Jupiter puts on a solo act in the southern sky, remaining brightly visible throughout the night. And the star-spangled Milky Way is more than evident directly overhead.

----- *Contributed by Nancy Sparrow*

Upcoming Events Upcoming Events Upcoming Events



All members and their family and friends are invited to the **Class of 2007 Graduation Celebration**, on Saturday, 23 August, from 6-8pm, at Sugar Lakes Club House, 930 Sugar Lakes Drive, Sugar Land TX 77478. Program Committee member Val Fogal's already sent an email to members with the details; please be sure to reply so she can get enough chicken, fried and otherwise, to go 'round! She can be reached at 281-239-8844 or val.f@earthlink.net. We hope to see you there!

Missouri City offers programs such as "**Mulch Madness**" during August. Ongoing activities include a photography project and an identification and interpretive endeavor at Buffalo Run. Member Don Johnson is the CPC liaison, and Missouri City Forester Paul Wierzbicki coordinates the events. Expect more information from Volunteer Service Project Committee Members Amy Bradford and/or Margo "Mac" McDowell. These projects are Master Gardener-approved, too.

Make plans to attend **September's chapter meeting**, when Flo Hannah, Senior Sanctuary Steward of Houston Audubon, will present "What Bird Food Looks Like". Inspired by Douglas W. Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*, Ms. Hannah's program underscores the importance of even the smallest animals in the grand Web of Life. The disappearance of native plants leads to a decline in native insect populations, a food source for birds and mammals, whose populations in turn decrease. Growing native plants in our home gardens can stem that distressing progression. Note that the meeting day is changed for this month only: it's on Wednesday, 3 September, at 7pm, at the Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Road, Rosenberg TX 77471. The event is free and open to the public, and reservations are not required; tell your friends and neighbors! Doors open at 6:30 pm. For more information on Flo Hannah, see the CALENDAR entry on the chapter website.

Be on the lookout for VSP information at the **Ag'Tivity Barn** at Fort Bend County Fair late in the month.

Margo "Mac" McDowell and TPWD's David Lobpries are casting about for locations for the **October field trip** on Saturday the 13th. Details are still to come, so try to remember: patience is a virtue.



This year's **TMN Statewide Annual Meeting & Advanced Training** will be held October 24th through 26th at Mo Ranch in Hunt, Texas. Please see "A Word from Cheryl" on page 2. Please also let Michelle Haggerty or Sonny Arnold know of any ideas you have for advanced training topics that you'd like to be presented at the Annual Meeting, as well as potential presenters for those topics. Their email addresses are: mhaggerty@wfscgate.tamu.edu and sarnold@ag.tamu.edu.

The November chapter meeting, on Thursday the 6th, will be our **Second Annual Partner Appreciation Potluck**. Expect more information from Cheryl soon.

Also in November, in cooperation with Brazos Bend State Park, the chapter is helping to organize **Prairie Heritage Day**, on Saturday the 15th. We'll need volunteers for publicity as well as for the event itself. And, at July's chapter meeting, Cheryl put out a call for pop-up canopies that we can borrow for the occasion. If you can help in any way, contact her at cheryl_sedivec@comcast.net.



Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)
Photo by Grace Liggett



► Special Events ► Special Events ► Special Events ► Special Events ►

Texas Bonsai Exhibit, through August, at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 1 La Crosse Avenue, Austin, Texas 78739; phone - 512 232 0100. Bonsai made from native plants! The Wildflower Center hosts a one-of-a-kind exhibit of bonsai trees, featuring a rotating display of native plants such as Texas Ebony [*Pithecellobium (Pithecellobium) flexicaule*], or False Acacia, some of which are half a century old or older. All plants are on loan from the Austin Bonsai Society. Visit www.wildflower.org to learn about a "Go Native U" workshop on growing your own bonsai, August 30. For information on other LBJWC offerings such as designing, installing and maintaining a native plant garden, visit <http://www.wildflower.org/gonativeu>.



Our Chapter Partners

Brazos Bend State Park

<http://www.brazosbend.org/home.htm>

City of Sugar Land

<http://www.sugarlandtx.gov/>

Fort Bend County AgriLife Extension

<http://fortbend-tx.tamu.edu/>

Waller County AgriLife Extension

<http://waller-tx.tamu.edu/>

George Ranch Historical Park

<http://www.georgeranch.org/>

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

<http://www.gcbo.org/>

Katy Prairie Conservancy

<http://www.katyprairie.org/home.html>

Keep Sugar Land Beautiful

www.kslb.org

Texas Master Naturalists

<http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/

University of Houston System at Sugar Land

<http://www.sugarland.uh.edu>



HELP WANTED

Local volunteer group seeks reporters and photojournalists, to submit news items, personal accounts and photos of the organization's events and activities. Also highly desired: columnists, book reviewers, and writers of any & all articles on any & all topics and happenings of interest to a wide variety of nature-leaning readers. This is an unpaid position: **No experience necessary!**

Contact Nancy Sparrow at sparrnan@co.fort-bend.tx.us to apply or for more information.

Don't squoosh that caterpillar!!

It might be a butterfly in the making.

The life cycle of a butterfly starts with a tiny egg. After a caterpillar hatches, it grows and molts and eventually goes into a pupal stage inside a chrysalis. After a couple of weeks or so, a beautiful butterfly comes out and brightens our lives and gardens for a while. Then the cycle repeats itself.

Are all of the caterpillars gone from your garden? Save this for future reference.

Below are some examples of the caterpillars that become beautiful butterflies.



Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillars can eat lots and lots of milkweed leaves! The caterpillars have four thin black filaments, two on the front and two on the back of their beautiful white, black and yellow bodies.

The Queen butterfly (*Danaus gilippus*) caterpillar looks much like the monarch in color, but has two additional filaments on its body. It also uses milkweed as a host plant.



Gulf fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) caterpillars are dark orange with black spikes that look scary but are harmless. These little critters can strip the leaves off passionflower (*Passiflora*) vines pretty quickly.

The sulphur butterfly (*Kricogonia lyside*) caterpillar host plant is *Senna* or *Cassia*. The one pictured is on a *Cassia corymbosa* small tree; Candlestick plants are also good. The caterpillar will be yellow if it eats the yellow flowers of these plants; it will be green if it eats the green leaves.



Giant swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) caterpillars look like "bird droppings" on a rue plant during early stages, and the brown and white coloring remains the same during the growth stage of the caterpillar. These fellows like Rue and Citrus for food.



Continued on next page



Black swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) caterpillars are brown and orange during early instars and then turn to a combination of green, black and yellow during later stages. They eat herbs like dill, parsley and fennel, as shown in the picture. (An "instar" is a developmental stage between moultings.)



Pipevine swallowtail (*Battus philenor*) caterpillars begin life as a light orangey brown with black heads and as they grow, turn a very dark brown with bright orange fleshy spikes. These little fellows like to cluster together for feeding or resting as they grow, and they prefer *Aristolochia fimbriata* (commonly called

pipevine or Dutchman's pipe); they sometimes eat the trilobed variety or one called Calico. However, these caterpillars cannot survive on the Gigantea Dutchman's Pipevine.



Polydama swallowtail (*Battus polydamas*) caterpillars also cluster together for feeding or resting as they grow. They're shades of brown, from dark chocolate to a more milk chocolate color, and have short orange or brown spikes and a light beige-colored line in the area behind the head capsule. These hungry fellows feed on *Aristolochia gigantea* Pipevine and other plants in the pipevine family.



-----Text and photos contributed by Linda Rippert

News from the "Flat Out Wonderful" Katy Prairie!

Many volunteers and the Katy Prairie Conservancy staff made great progress with the restorations there: completion of weed barrier placement at the Native Seed Nursery; harvest of the first batch of Brown Seed *Paspalum* seeds; installation of a Native Prairie Display Garden in the front of the KPC office and transplantation of many native plants from the Saums Road Prairie. Tilled and irrigated, the Katy Prairie is ready for very big plans for the very near future.



Thanks to all who worked tirelessly - in the Texas heat, no less! - to save so many plants from the bulldozers and to bring them to KPC for nurturing. It's a great start to a great program, one that's worth continuing. To achieve goals of restoring our prairies and leaving a legacy for future generations will require more hours from more dedicated volunteers, such as Mimi (far left) and Jim (left) Lawrence.



A soaker hose steadfastly tends to watering its young charges, above.

-----Text and photos contributed by Grace Liggett

Training Committee seeks to put a body in every seat of 2008 class



As our first class date of September 4th quickly approaches, your Training Committee has launched into high gear, making final preparations for our new Volunteers! As our flyer states, "We are training a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within the community." With everyone's efforts, here is what's happened so far.

We are at the point of 'fine tuning' our Training Schedule. All of the Instructors are committed to the designated time and the locations are set. We are also tracking our Training Activity Plan as this provides the step-by-step method - time frames and so forth – by which we'll ensure that all of the details are really covered. Now we need somebody to train! So, we are really focused on Recruiting.

This year it became part of the Training Committee's responsibility to formalize a recruiting effort making better assurances that, as in previous years, we have a full class of able-bodied (OK, well at least 'enthusiastic') Volunteers. With the economy, gas prices and other such concerns that might affect our September Training Class, we have launched an all out recruitment attack.

Committee Member Karl Baumgartner organized an Action Team to do some serious recruiting. Using their own time and resources, they have approached this by phone, newsletter, speaking engagements, flyers and maybe most importantly, individual recruiting. These are great and effective 'canvassing' techniques but we want to see applications in our mail.



Our best sources for great Volunteers is to talk to the people WE know! In those casual moments when you are talking with friends about the Coastal Prairie Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist, please take a moment to point out how they can become involved. We would love to have them, but it's much more important than that.

As an organization partnering with other organizations and many skilled professionals dedicated to it, we are our community's BEST and ONLY organized resource for the preservation and management of the ecosystems of this Coastal Prairie. Just read the Newsletter to see the many great things we are doing. But there is so much more! What a great opportunity to do something really good for our whole community, which includes EVERYTHING that lives in it. We can help preserve the natural gift of this unique ecosystem. And frankly, we must! So, call a friend! Tell them how they can be involved and that we really would love to have them. They can call 281-633-7042 and we will get them what they need.

----- *Contributed by Kurt Bundy*

Thanks to Our Contributors

Articles and photographs from contributors inside and outside of our chapter are featured in this edition of CPR. Warm thanks to all: Tricia Bradbury, Kurt Bundy, Grace Liggett, John Rippert, Linda Rippert, Carrie Sample, Cheryl Sedivec and Nancy Sparrow

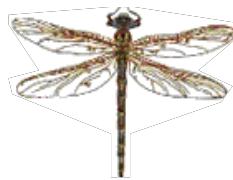
Photo credit: page 2 by S. Hobbet

*Text and photographic submissions to the CPR are enthusiastically welcomed.
Send them to Nancy Sparrow at snarrnan@co.fort-bend.tx.us.*



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Cody Dennison".

J. Cody Dennison
CEA—Waller County
Agriculture / Natural Resource Agent



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David S. Lobpries".

David S. Lobpries
Wildlife Division
Natural Resource Specialist IV

Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists
Texas Cooperative Extension
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

Interested in Becoming a Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist?

Our annual training course will begin on 4 September 2008.

Deadline for application is in late August. For more information, please contact us: classes@coastalprairie.org

Or call the Chapter office: 281 633 7042. Please provide your name, home address, home phone number and email address so that we may contact you.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socio-economic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A & M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

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