

# *The Coastal Prairie Reporter*

**"Covering and Recovering the Coastal Prairie"**

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

**November 2008**

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## **CEC recognizes three Texas Master Naturalist Chapters**

### *CPC not among local groups honored at the group's 11<sup>th</sup> annual assembly*

The Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC) awarded its President's Award to the Heartwood, Gulf Coast and Galveston Bay chapters of Texas Master Naturalist. And they, reported Coastal Prairie Chapter (CPC) President Cheryl Sedivec, subsequently urged the CEC to include our chapter. She noted "the CEC did not know we existed nor did they know of the Cradle of Texas chapter, which should also share in this award."

Heartwood serves Montgomery County, Gulf Coast operates in and around Harris County and Galveston Bay is active in its namesake county. Cradle of Texas represents Brazoria County, and CPC serves Fort Bend and Waller Counties.

According to its website, CEC is "an information clearinghouse and communications network for environmental issues in the Houston / Galveston, Texas, area." The group hosts annual Synergy Awards for Environmental Excellence, given to individuals and groups for distinguished environmental achievement. This year's event was held on 23 October at the Houston Racquet Club.

Synergy Awards categories include: the Army and Sarah Emmott Environmental Conservation Award, given for outstanding work in the field of conservation; the Community Activist Award, presented to an individual who has worked at the grassroots level to improve our environment; the Media Award, presented for outstanding efforts in the field of environmental reporting; the Corporate Awareness Award, presented to a corporation that has shown exemplary sensitivity to and awareness of our environment; the Environmental Education Award, presented for outstanding efforts in bringing environmental awareness to the classroom; the Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing an individual who has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to the environment; the Government Award, given to a government agency or an individual employed by the government for outstanding support of the environment; the Sustainable Planning Award, introduced in 2002, recognizing an individual or group that has made a consistent



*Please see Award, continued on page 2*

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## NOMINATING COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES 2009 CANDIDATES' SLATE

### *CPC President and Committee Chair urge member participation.*

**Make plans to attend our Chapter winter party** and meeting on Thursday, 4 December, and cast your vote for next year's officers!

Candidates recently announced by Nominating Committee Chair Peg d'Hemecourt include: Karl Baumgartner, for President; Nancy Sparrow, for Vice President; Jeff McMullan, for Treasurer and John Cotterell, for Secretary. Peg and committee members Elizabeth Abraham and John Cotterell are working now to gather more information on the candidates, which they'll send to you to prior to election night.

Chapter President Cheryl Sedivec noted of the meeting's two dimensions: "The party is lots of fun; the election part is serious." Of the former, she mentioned the possibility of holding a "white elephant" gift exchange. About the latter, she commented that chapter elections are "not quite like choosing between Obama or McCain" and "No one will be twisting your arm to vote." She added that officers may "twist your arm to run for a ... committee position, however."

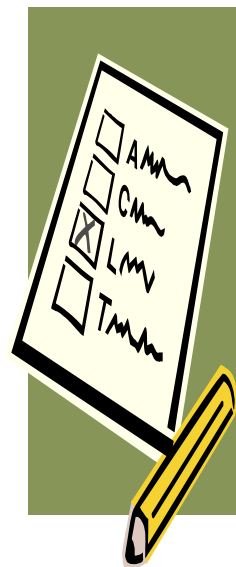
Both Cheryl and Peg feel that the value and strength of the chapter depend on its members. Peg encourages members to consider the volunteer opportunities – including serving on a committee – that will be available in the new year. She also suggests that we reflect on how we can employ our individual interests and talents to benefit the chapter's efforts in community outreach.

In urging members to consider serving on a committee, Cheryl observes that "One-person committees don't work well. This is your TMN chapter. Help give it direction and make it grow." She also wants chapter volunteers to know committee members don't have to attend board meetings.

While the party planning is still in flux, plans at press time call for it to be held at Karen and David Showalter's home in Richmond, from 7pm until about 8:30pm. Details will be coming your way soon.

Don't forget: After the partying is over, volunteering remains a great way to get to know your colleagues.

*Compiled from contributions by Cheryl Sedivec and Peg d'Hemecourt*



### **Award**, continued from page 1

effort to include sustainable ideas in local planning efforts, and the Founders' Award, presented to an individual selected by the founders of the CEC.

That part about the CEC not knowing of our chapter?

All of that has changed, Cheryl said, because she was invited to the awards ceremony; now they know about us. She encourages us to pat ourselves on the back. Not just because of the award, but because "we do great work."

Cheryl offers one other idea: "All this boils down to - we have to get our name out there."

*Contributed by Cheryl Sedivec with additional information from the CEC website, [www.cechouston.org](http://www.cechouston.org)*



Yellow-crowned night heron, *Nyctanassa violacea*,  
Photo by Rob Fogal

## *A Word From Cheryl*



*Hello, everyone.*

This past weekend, October 24-26, was our annual state meeting. As always, it is a great way to meet others and see what other chapters are doing. It is also a great place to get good ideas or share problems, and their solutions, with others. Dr. Barron Rector is always there and always livening up the place. While talking with various chapters' members, I learned that they, too, are having trouble with getting the general public to be aware of who or what a Texas Master Naturalist is. I think we need a good PR person.

*Some chapter items:*

Our potluck, November 6<sup>th</sup>, is designed for everyone in the chapter to touch base with one another and to learn about what projects are going on in the chapter. It's a great way for you



to meet and mingle and to decide on which project or committee you can best help. It's an informal affair; just bring your favorite dish and sit with someone you don't know.

Just so you know, we have dropped the Katy Home and Garden Show, held in January, from our volunteer service project list. We felt that all of the effort required for this event resulted in too small a return.

I'd like to thank everyone for your support and help throughout the last two years. The chapter couldn't have reached this point if members didn't work together. That's what makes chapters great. A good working relationship exists between chapters, too, as seen with the CEC award, and that's great to know. I think this is a fundamental aspect of the Texas Master Naturalist program. We might be small in numbers, but together we can achieve great things. Let's continue to work together with our next president and build a stronger, more vibrant chapter.

And let's not keep our chapter a secret any longer; blab and brag to everyone you know and meet.

*Cheers,  
Cheryl*



## THE RIPPERT REPORT



Membership Secretary Linda Rippert reports this month that Val Fogal certified for 2008.

Additionally, Linda sent in this report on her recent visit to San Diego. The San Diego Zoo is a botanical garden all by itself. Its message is one of education in conservation and taking care of our world. The various creatures – including rescued animals - live in wonderful spaces, which offer many educational opportunities on a variety of topics. It would take many trips to see it all, although there's a wonderful narrated bus tour and express buses to three different spots on the grounds. For those who tire easily or have mobility difficulties, escalators and uphill moving tracks help folks along. Beautiful polar bears, two baby grizzlies, koalas, giant pandas, lovely flamingos are among the current wildlife population. A family membership allows entry to the other zoo venue, a Wild Animal Park where animals roam over large spaces. Hubby Rippert has been good-natured, but is more used to horseback riding, and has ridden a few times at a horse ranch.

*Text contributed by Linda Rippert, Membership Committee Chair*

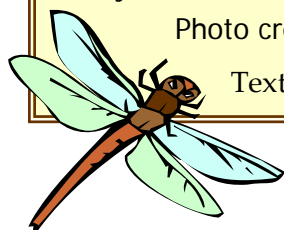
*Photo contributed by John Rippert*

### 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: Peggy d'Hemecourt, Rob Fogal, John Rippert, Linda Rippert, Cheryl Sedivec, David Showalter and Nancy Sparrow.

Photo credit: page 3 by S. Hobbet

Text and photographic submissions to the CPR are enthusiastically welcomed.



### 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](http://www.kslb.org)

#### Texas Master Naturalists

<http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>

#### Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/)

#### University of Houston System at Sugar Land

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

## 🌍 Volunteer Projects 🌍 Volunteer Projects 🌍 Volunteer Projects 🌍

**Prairie Restoration Weekend** at Buffalo Run Park in Missouri City offers CPC members two days of volunteer opportunities. On Friday, 7 November, you can help to plant native trees, and on Saturday, 8 November, assist with the Prairie Seed Toss. While the event is open to the public, contact chapter member Don Johnson, who's coordinating the event, to participate as a CPC volunteer.



Every Friday in November, and on Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup>, CPC member Ron Morrison will be at Brazos Bend State Park, leading the **Trail Trimming** efforts there. He'll teach you the proper way to prune branches large and small, and show you the trails that need lots of grooming and those that can stay a little untidy. Meet Ron there at 8:30am to lend a hand.

Also on Friday, 7 November, the CPC **Creative Ceramicists** will meet at David Showalter's Law Firm building in Richmond at 10am. Member Bill Petty heads up that group's activities, and he'll show you the ropes – no need to be an accomplished artist, or even to have tools. Contact Bill for more information. *Ceramic trivet photo by Cheryl Sedivec*



In preparation for the Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) Winter Seed Grow-Out (see associated website News Brief), that organization is hosting a **Seed Kit Party** on Friday, 7 November, from 10am 'til noon at the KPC Home Office, 3015 Richmond Avenue, Houston. Volunteers will assemble growing kits containing seeds, instructions, and growing flats, which will be mailed to volunteer seed growers, and that also will be made available for pick up at KPC's home and field offices). Seed Kit Party participants are invited to stay for lunch at noon. No need to register for this event, just swing by and help out!

Brazos Bend State Park is the site of the second **Prairie Heritage Day** on Saturday, 15 November, from 10am 'til 4pm. We'll be making seed balls, helping with hikes, and generally being TMN ambassadors. Dennis Jones, Assistant Superintendent of the park, and Flo Hannah and Mary Ann Weber from Houston Audubon will be there, as will Texas AgriLife Extension Agent Cody Dennison and Jaime Gonzalez, from Katy Prairie Conservancy. Contact CPC member Cheryl Sedivec or Nancy Sparrow to sign on.



**The Farmers Market at La Centerra** at Cinco Ranch is open on Saturdays from 8am 'til noon. Manning a booth there has been an ongoing project since summer, so if you like people – and want to test out the locally grown products sold there – tag a volunteer buddy and contact Cheryl Sedivec for details. The next scheduled assignment is on 22 November. (Right before Thanksgiving! Yummmmm)

**The New Year is sure to bring more Volunteer Service Projects. Be sure to visit the website Calendar for additions, or for more information on the projects listed above.**

### 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 and 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 CPC member Nancy Sparrow to apply or for more information.*

## Advanced Training Advanced Training Advanced Training

**Winter Birding on the Upper Texas Coast** promises to be an extraordinary learning opportunity. Two Thursday classes, 4 & 11 December, and two field trips on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> will offer the classroom and turf experiences you need to become an adept bird watcher. Naturalist, conservationist, writer, birder - instructor Glenn Olsen will show you how to use a bird's form and shape, its behavior, its habitat and other characteristics to help you in identifying it. Then on Saturdays you can practice the skills you learned two days before. Thursday classes are at Houston Audubon Society's Edith L. Moore Sanctuary Library near the intersection of Memorial and N. Wilcrest in Houston, from 7pm 'til 9. Field trip sites are still to be announced. There's also a fee: check out details on the website Calendar.



The Katy Prairie Conservancy is continuing its PrairieEConnections series of activity-based interpretation classes for experienced and new KPC volunteers. On Saturday, 6 December, the session is **"Stories and Statistics"**, just one of the modules that focus on making connections between the biological, historical, economic, and cultural dimensions of the Katy Prairie. Class size is limited, and registration is required. You can read all of the details on the website calendar.

Our own Jim Lawrence will present January's program on the 8<sup>th</sup>, at the Brookshire Library. The topic is not firmly established at present; most likely it will revolve around **Storm Strengthening**, Jim's research into determining a hurricane's potency based upon the salinity of its rain water. Keep your eyes peeled for more information on the website calendar.

## Of Special Interest Of Special Interest Of Special Interest

The works of two Texas artists are featured at the **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center**. More than 20 of Linda Calvert Jacobson's paintings celebrating spring flowers will be exhibited through 14 December. Touchable, kinetic, nature-themed and welded - Barry George's sculpture will be on display through January 2009. The Wildflower Center is at 1 La Crosse Avenue, Austin, Texas 78739; call 512 232 0100 or visit [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org) for more information.

A 77 million-years-old intact adult duckbilled dinosaur "mummy" nicknamed "Leonardo" is on display through 11 January 2009 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. **Dinosaur Mummy CSI:**

**Cretaceous Science Investigates** was developed in association with the Judith River Foundation. With most of its soft tissue – skin and internal organs, and including stomach contents – fossilized, this *Brachylophosaurus Canadensis* was discovered in a Montana wetland in 2000. Other dino specimens on display include an adolescent duckbill, a female *Ichthyosaurus* mummy with four babies preserved inside her body, and the only mummified *Triceratops* skin ever found. Also at the Museum: **BODY WORLDS 2 & The Brain – Our Three Pound Gem: The Original Exhibition of Real Human Bodies**, through 22 February; **National Geographic Crittercam: The World Through Animal Eyes**, through New Year's Day; and **Stones From the Sky**, photographs of geologic landscapes, through 1 March 2009. Visit [www.hmns.org](http://www.hmns.org) for more information on these and other exhibits.



## Lessen flooding in your yard with a Rain Garden

*Several chapter members attended this year's Wildscapes Workshop, an event that, itself, was re-scheduled because of storm water – Hurricane Ike storm water. This review of one of the presentation was contributed by Peg d'Hemecourt.*

Chris LaChance, the WaterSmart Program Coordinator, gave an excellent presentation on rain gardens at the 2008 Wildscapes Workshop. Rain gardens are bowl-shaped depressions that absorb runoff. By creating a rain garden, a homeowner engages in on-site storm water management in a way that mimics nature. The objective is to allow storm water to be filtered and absorbed into the ground instead of running off into a storm sewer, carrying with it pollutants which are deposited into streams, rivers and bays.

The key to a successful rain garden is to enable water to enter the garden on its low side, and be held there for one to two days. This is made possible by creating a berm opposite the low side to hold the water in place.

A sunny location is preferred over a shady one. It should be at least 10 feet from



building foundations and slope away from structures. Excavate the ground six to eight inches, tapering gently. Amend the soil with 1/3 compost and 2/3 sharp sand. Direct the flow of storm water by creating a swale, using corrugated pipe, or relying on the natural slope of the land.

Plant the rain garden with native plants, using a zoned approach. Position plants that tolerate "wet feet" in the deepest part, or center zone. Position plants that need to dry out between wet spells in the median zone. Set plants that require well-drained conditions on the edges, atop the berm.

Some plants should be avoided because they are invasive and/or too aggressive. Examples include Taro (Elephant Ear), Yellow Flag Iris, Parrot's Feather, and Cattails.

Add a three-inch layer of mulch. Water during periods of drought, especially during the first year or two. Apply an organic fertilizer once or twice a year.

*Pond plant photographs courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Top, right: Pink milkweed, Asclepias incarnata, by Sally and Andy Wasowski; Above, left: Great Blue Flag, Iris virginica, by Mrs. W. D. Bransford*

*See more about Wildscapes 2008 in our web site News Briefs.*



### You didn't squoosh that caterpillar, did you?



In the last edition of Coastal Prairie Reporter, CPC Membership Committee Chair and butterfly enthusiast Linda Rippert offered tips for identifying specific caterpillars. Among those was the Gulf fritillary (Agraulis vanillae), pictured at right.

Allowed to dine on passion-flower leaves (Passiflora incarnate), that not-so-pretty creature will develop into the silver-spotted beauty pictured at left.



*Caterpillar photo contributed by Linda Rippert  
Adult fritillary photo contributed by David Showalter*

## Graduation Party – Class of 2007 -----

### Food, Fun, Friends – and a name tag!!

Everyone in attendance at the Class of 2007's graduation celebration in August enjoyed the festivities there, and three attendees received their official, permanent, Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter name tags.



One of those was Grace Liggett, left, who smiles as she reads over her TMN certification, as does Mimi Lawrence, right. Both of these new TMNs have put in many hours at Katy Prairie Conservancy, with Grace also serving as CPC's liaison there.

Kurt Bundy was the third member to receive a name tag. He's also been very active in the chapter, heading up the Training Committee and logging enough volunteer hours that he was certified several months ago.



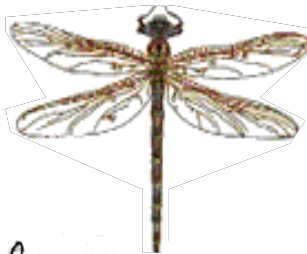
Many veteran members were on hand to congratulate the graduates. Don Johnson, Margaret Giebelhaus, Margo "Mac" McDowell and Penny Johnson are pictured in the photo at left. In the photo, below, right, are Program Committee member and party planner Val Fogal, Margaret Thuesen and Margaret's husband Ed – who attends so many chapter functions, he SHOULD be a member.



Linda, chapter President Cheryl Sedivec and Val, pictured at left, presented the name tags, certificates and, not visible in this photo, fresh local honey. The last was donated to the cause by beekeeper and member Jeff McMullan and Rob Fogal, Val's husband and a member of the current crop of CPC students.

*All graduation party photos by Rob Fogal*





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



## Interested in Becoming a Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist?

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Our annual training course will begin in  
Autumn of 2009.

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

[classes@coastalprairie.org](mailto: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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