



# *The Coastal Prairie Reporter*

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

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

**November, 2007**

*Volume 1, Issue 4*

*CPC Scores Big at State*

## ***Our Communications Projects Win 1st Place Award as 'Exemplary'***

**The eight representatives from CPC** who traveled to San Antonio in October for the state-wide TMN meeting had a lot to cheer about when the judges announced the winner of the annual project fair. It was us. We now have an 'Exemplary Project Award' to brighten the walls of our office in Rosenberg, and a cash prize will follow.

President Cheryl Sedivec was largely responsible for designing and building the poster that represented our chapter's many on-going communications projects. It highlighted the website, this newsletter, our 'Wanted-Alive' hand-out, our Green Home & Garden Tips (a joint project with the Gulf Coast Chapter), and our upcoming publications: a beneficial snakes hand-out, and the native plant alternatives booklet, our most ambitious publication, which is now well into design and planning.

CPC members who attended the State meeting were: Amy Burt, Val and Rob Fogal, Ron Morrison, Nancy Schaaf, Gloria Scheel, and Cheryl Sedivec. Mark Countryman, Ft. Bend Co. Extension Horticulture agent, was also there.

See Amy Burt's report on the Meeting on page 9 and Cheryl's 'President's Column', page 7, which also reflects on the event.



CPC President Cheryl Sedivec with the poster that represented the chapter's efforts at the meeting.

**More good news: We have a gold-medalist among us**

## ***Conservation Award Given to CPC's Ron Morrison***

**A coveted gold-badge Conservation award** from the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteers Organization went to Ron Morrison last month for his invasive-species mediation at the Park. The award is given annually to a Park volunteer who has shown extraordinary dedication and effectiveness in his volunteer activities. Jim Calvert, a Cradle of Texas Master Naturalist, who works in tandem with Ron, shared the award. Ron and Jim work on curbing the spread of these two highly destructive alien species in Texas: Chinese tallow and the Fire ant. Both men also pitch in at the Park wherever and whenever they're needed, in trail and general maintenance and interpretive tasks at the Park. Ron leads nature hikes for school groups when he can, focusing on ecosystems.

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Ron Morrison is a graduate of CPC's Class of 2006

**See  
what's inside**



***The web at Tawakoni, page 2; Our students offer their introductions, page 4; Linda Rippert's Beauties and Another Beast, page 6; President's Message, page 7; Ag'Tivity Barn Report, page 8; Report on San Antonio TMN Meeting, page 9; San Antonio photos, page 10; Upcoming Events, page 10; The Rippert Report, page 10; December 6<sup>th</sup> Elections, page 11; Thanks to Our Contributors, page 11; Essay by Tricia Bradbury, page 12, Water Education Project Proposed, page 13.***

*Familiar Names: TAMU Entomologists Jackman and Quinn continue their research*

## *The Tawakoni Web, a Rave Scene for Spiders?*



According to Donna Garde, TPWD, Superintendent of Lake Tawakoni State Park, who took the picture at left, "This web was first found by park staff on August 6, 2007, after an approximate two week absence of walking the trail. This web and two other smaller versions are on the park's large northeastern peninsula jutting out into the lake."

Garde is a former volunteer at Brazos Bend State Park.

***The massive spider web*** at Tawakoni Lake State Park in Hunt County that made the national news in late summer was first discovered on August 6<sup>th</sup> by Park employees on a trail that hadn't been used for a couple of weeks. Though giant spider webs containing millions of spiders are not as uncommon as the media indicated, entomologists from Texas A&M were soon on the scene, including John Jackman and Mike Quinn, familiar to many of us in CPC from coursework and publications. According to a report co-written by Dr. Jackman and Allen Dean, also of TAMU, Mike Quinn, "...traveled to the Lake Tawakoni State Park on August 31. He observed and sampled at the web site from 10:00 a.m. until approximately 8:00 p.m. between intermittent rains," and collected spiders "...individually by the use of a beat sheet to knock down the spiders and by manually capturing them with jars or forceps. These spiders were preserved in alcohol or retained live. Identification of the spiders took place back at College Station and named "...250 specimens in 12 families. The samples contained at least 16 identified genera. The spiders sampled included 151 Tetragnathidae, 46 Salticidae, and 19 Araneidae....These three spider families accounted for 86 % of the spiders collected." Predominant among them was the Tetragnathidae. In a 1997 publication, Dr. Jackman wrote that "one of the most common Long-jawed spiders" in Texas, *Tetragnatha laboriosa* showed a "remarkable" ability to "disperse by ballooning...." But webbing continued to be constructed at the site long after its initial discovery, undermining the hypothesis of ballooning, and many other species were also building webs in the area.

So why did the web develop? The story is still unfolding. Check out the main repository of entomological thought and comment on the topic at [http://texasento.net/Social\\_Spider.htm](http://texasento.net/Social_Spider.htm).



Left, a close-up of a tetragnathid spider

*Photo: Joe Pase, Texas Forest Service*



Sharon Hanzik, a BBSP staff naturalist and one of CPC's core instructors, has been awed by the pair's dedication. They "spent approximately 2-3 full days at the park almost every week this past summer," she said. "There were many days that were so hot that the regular maintenance crew gave up and went home by noon. Always a surprise to find Ron and Jim dragging themselves back to the Nature Center just before 5:00, exhausted but satisfied with the knowledge that many tallow trees would be getting their fall colors in the middle of July."

Ron reports that he spends three or four days a week at the Park doing various tasks. "I want to get out as much as I can and still keep all the balls in the air." There are a lot of balls. "I work the Nature Center if a group is present. Lots of times a group that is visiting the George Observatory will come by after lunch. I love to get out the corn snake," he says.



Ron Morrison, CPC, left, and Jim Calvert, from the Cradle of Texas chapter together at Brazos Bend State Park, where they bring the efforts of two TMN chapters together by partnering weekly on vital programs to curtail Chinese Tallow and Fire Ants. Neither species can be eradicated, says Ron, but the goal is to keep them under some control.

*Our 2007 training class zips through its coursework with brio*

## *A talented group of volunteers joins the CPC corps*



*CPC's 2007 Training Class of 13 members completed its eight-week coursework on October 25<sup>th</sup> and has plunged into its internship. Many of them have written short profiles, which you'll find on the following pages.*

Seated from left to right: Carrie Sample, Sharon Hanzik, Bill Godley; standing: Kurt Bundy, Pam Tatge, Karen Showalter, Amy Bradford, Jim Lawrence, Mimi Lawrence, Grace Liggett, Bill Bone, Jeanette Bergen, Frank Seay, and Elizabeth Abraham.

**PROFILES ON NEXT PAGE**



**Elizabeth Abraham...** I have known about the Master Naturalist program for a few years and have wanted to take the class. As my daughter started school year this year I got the opportunity to take the class. I'm interested in learning about the environment - the flora & fauna & what makes it all work together. I feel that if I understood it better I wouldn't find everything to be a weed or nuisance and try to cut it down or kill it as soon as possible. I'm very glad that when my child's friends visit my garden, I can help them name plants and get them interested in the critters in the garden. They don't often have this chance anywhere else.

I'm a chemical engineer by training with a Masters in information systems. I worked for five years in the chemical engineering software business, but am currently taking care of my 6-year-old. I'm interested in organic gardening (fruits, vegetables, flowers, and butterflies). I'm also interested in water issues. I look forward to expanding my knowledge and interests with this group and to having a positive influence in my neighborhood and community on environmental issues. Sometimes I'm not sure how to approach people about my concerns and hence am interested in working with an experienced person to help me develop this skill.

**Bill Bone...** For more than the past 25 years my wife and I have operated a pure-bred cattle business which has given me the opportunity to be actively involved with the land, and its wonders found in fauna and flora. It is my desire that my children, theirs and others have some of the same opportunities. My Bachelor's degree is in Agriculture with a minor in Biology and a Master's Degree in Agriculture and Education. I worked as a public school science teacher and administrator for 11 years then the business world 19 years for a foods manufacturing company. My desire is to become a Master Naturalist with initial interests in renewable sources of energy and water for the future.

**Amy Bradford...** At the end of this summer I made a transition from a full-time position as a Scholarship Program Director at UH to a part-time one so that I would have time to explore other interests before taking full retirement. I wasn't really clear on what those "other interests" might be until I read an article in the Houston Chronicle about the Master Naturalist program. My heart leapt when I read about this Texas-born environmental education program and realized that I had not only found a way to learn more about native plants and wildlife but also to volunteer for ecological projects and most importantly for me, to share this knowledge with the local community. I couldn't believe my good fortune when I discovered that the next session would be starting in a few weeks in Fort Bend County! This program exceeded all my expectations and I am eager to put what I have learned into action through interpretive education and habitat restoration projects.

*Cont'd on page 5*



Top: Amy Bradford and Elizabeth Abraham birding with Park Naturalist David Heinicke at BBSP on 10/18;

Middle: Kurt Bundy with Dr. Barron Rector at Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR on 9/27;

Bottom: Bill Godley and Amy Bradford at BBSP with Cecilia Riley (left), of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory on 10/18.

Photos: Top and bottom, S. Hobbet; middle, Bill Bone



*Cont'd from page 4*

**Kurt Bundy...** Having acquired a property in Lavaca County formerly used for cattle, my wife and I found it necessary to determine how to get the needed agricultural exemption for this property. Among several options, the County Agent suggested we consider a Wildlife Management Plan. Following several visits by the Water Conservation people and the area State Biologist, we have put together a Wildlife Management Plan that is intended to meet the interests of the real 'local inhabitants'. Our goal is to create habitat and feeding opportunities for a number of birds, animals and reptiles through the Wildlife Management Plan. The problem is this is an activity in which I know very little about!

With some assistance from the county agents, The Master Naturalist program has become the basis of my current knowledge in many applicable areas. Through the Wildlife Management Plan we have agreed to make some 'repairs' to the land that should positively affect water flow and erosion control. We are also discussing what plants and grasses we might plant to help repair and restore the land from years of cattle use, as well as provide food sources to the birds and animals in our plan. The resources useful to this personal project through the Master Naturalist class seem endless. So, for very little cost, I am learning from extremely knowledgeable people in areas in which I had little knowledge.

My wife and I will administer parts of this experience into our Wildlife Management Plan for the benefit of the habitats and the flora and fauna which have chosen to spend some time with us. Knowing we have lots to learn but also knowing we have wonderful resources in the program, I plan to give back to the community through volunteering in a variety of ways. The opportunities for doing so are many and varied. All of them represent additional opportunities to learn. We want to be good 'hosts', but there certainly is a lot to learn! The Master Naturalist program has made that learning fun.

**Bill Godley...** Picture this. Grow up in the industrial surroundings of Cleveland Ohio and then go to college in sight of the steel mills in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Follow that with a long engineering career designing oil refineries, steel mills, chemicals plants and related environmentally sensitive facilities. That's a lot of time within the surroundings of concrete, steel and precious little time outdoors unless it is shoveling 24" of snow from your driveway.

Raising children and making trips to national, state and local parks quickly changed all that. As a result, the Master Naturalist program allows me to learn and understand our natural surroundings. As a volunteer at Brazos Bend State Park, my goal is to deliver this new knowledge of mine effectively to those who cross my path at the park. Perhaps my love for these wonders of our natural world will make others aware and able to protect and enjoy such surroundings for the generations to follow.

**Jim Lawrence...** I have been in academia all my life. I graduated in 1970 from California Institute of Technology with a PhD in Geochemistry. From 1970 to 1984 I was at Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University. In August of 1984 I moved to the University of Houston (UH) where I have been an Associate Professor in the Geosciences Department. In September of 2007 I retired from teaching to continue pursuing my research interests in isotope geochemistry and meteorology both at UH and TAMU. At UH I taught Geology, Oceanography, Atmospheric Science and recently a course entitled Introduction to Earth Systems. Becoming a Master Naturalist comes naturally to me, as I love to be outdoors and learn.

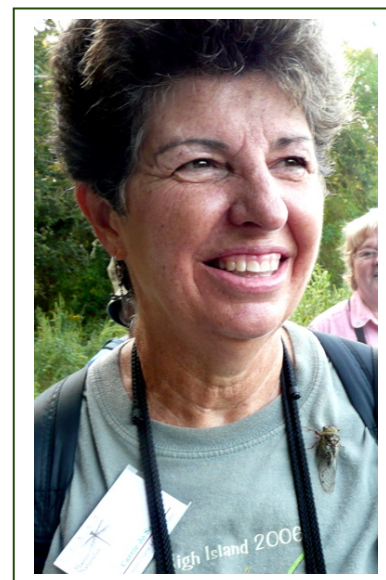
*Cont'd on page 11*



Above, Bill Bone birding with Cecilia Riley at BBSP 10/18;

Below, Carrie Sample at BBSP, 10/18

Photos: S. Hobbet





## *More Beauties and Another Beast*

by Linda Rippert

Swallowtail butterflies are beautiful creatures, and we have several varieties that visit the gardens in our area. I've raised a number of them over the past few years, including the Giant Swallowtail, the Pipevine Swallowtail, the Eastern Black Swallowtail, and the Polydamas Swallowtail.

**The Giant Swallowtail**, below left, has laid eggs on Rue in my yard. It will also use citrus trees. The young caterpillars look like brown and white bird droppings. The tails on the butterfly's hindwings have yellow centers.



**The Pipevine Swallowtail**, directly below, has laid eggs on *Aristolochia fimbriata* and also on other Pipevines including the Gigantea, but the caterpillars cannot tolerate feeding on the Gigantea and will die if they are not transferred to Fimbriata or another vine. This butterfly is a male; the females do not have the blue iridescent shading.



Above, Giant Swallowtail; right, Pipevine Swallowtail; below, Eastern Black Swallowtail; below right, Polydamas Swallowtail

**The Eastern Black Swallowtail**, below, has laid eggs on Rue, Parsley, and Dill in my yard. The caterpillars start out brown and orange and as they grow turn green with black stripes with yellow dots. This butterfly is a female—mostly black with blue; the male is mostly black with rows of yellow spots.



**The Polydamas Swallowtail**, below, has laid eggs on Pipevines including Gigantea, Fimbriata, Calico and Tri-lobed varieties. The caterpillars tend to cluster together on the stems of the vines. This butterfly has no tails like the other swallowtails and is mostly black with a row of triangular or heart-shaped yellow spots on top of the wings.



Photos by Linda Rippert

*... and The Beast of the Month, next page...*



***Cont'd from page 6******The Beast among the Beauties: the land planarian or flatworm, Bipalium kewense***

This month I received the "Dirt Doctor Weekly Newsletter" ([dirtdoctor.com](http://dirtdoctor.com)) which included this article: "Dangerous Beast in the Garden -- Breaking Story". The beast in question is an Asian exotic, a land planarian, or flatworm, that's harmless to people but preys on earthworms. It's appearing in our gardens in the Houston area. I've seen several in mine, usually in moist places, under pots and once on the siding of my garage.

This creature is very flat. It can stretch out as long as 20 inches and is between 1/8 to 1/4 inch wide. The head is shaped like a spade. The color is a light to medium brown with two dark brown parallel lines running along its back. According to the Dirt Doctor, Howard Garrett, the Flatworm is known to be a "parasite that eats earthworms and

can wipe out entire populations". According to TAMU, which is more cautious in its conclusions, "Most terrestrial (non-aquatic) planarians in North America are exotic, having arrived here via the trade in potted foliage plants. Although land planarians do not attack plants, they are predators of earthworms, a fact that has raised concerns among some biologists. Unfortunately, little is known about their distribution, ecology, or true impact on earthworms in Texas."

This worm does not like dry climates or strong sunlight. Mr. Garrett suggests using orange oil in the bottom of a container to kill the Flatworm. I killed the last one I found in my garden by putting it on the sidewalk in broad daylight for a while. It dried up and withered away.

I urge you to familiarize yourself with this earthworm predator and help researchers find out if they are dangerous in our gardens. You can read more at [dirtdoctor.com](http://dirtdoctor.com) and subscribe to the email newsletter. I also urge you to visit TAMU's excellent site: (<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1039.html>).

***And now a word from our Prez***

Greetings,

Just in case you haven't heard, WE WON! We won first place for 'Exemplary Project' at the Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting in October. Our project was, and still is, Chapter Communications. This is a true chapter project. The newsletter alone has involved approximately 29 people, 25 of them chapter members. Along with our win comes not only a certificate but a scholarship. The amount has yet to be determined.

And let's not forget that the third-place winners, our neighbors the Gulf Coast chapter, won for the Green Home & Garden Program. We're their partners on that project. Every one of our members is an important part of this win. By sending out the GH&G tips to various HOA's and other publications, you have helped give us access to an audience of over 10,000 people. Our chapter might be small, but we are mighty.

While on the project front, let me tell you that we're starting an exploratory committee on a new project. This project further expands our chapter's frontiers in communication, by means of education on water. As we all are aware, water is fast becoming a hot topic. With our new project, Water Education, we hope to help the public understand the need to conserve this precious resource. (for more information, see page 13). This project has the potential to strengthen our reputation in the community as a group that provides practical, relevant, and reliable information about the natural resources of Texas.

It will take all our strengths and abilities as a chapter to make this project work. I hope you will consider joining this project.

Well, the year is starting to come to a close and we finally have some great weather. Don't forget Ron Morrison's party on November 10th when we'll honor our training class members. They've just finished their course work and are already earning their hours of VSP and AT. December 6 brings the annual meeting and another party. But more important than the party (could there be something more important than a party?) is our election at the December meeting. Please consider either running for an office, being a committee head, or serving on a committee. This is your TMN chapter. Help it grow.

Cheers,

**Cheryl**

*Margo McDowell, CPC's Volunteer Coordinator Reports on Fair Week*

## ***Ag'Tivity Barn Exhibit Featured Mammals, Snakes, and TMNs at Work***



The Ag'Tivity Barn TMN crew on October 3, one of the busy 'School Days' of the Ft. Bend Co. Fair, included, left to right: A. B. Gartman, Margaret Thuesen, and Kurt Bundy. Margo "Mac" McDowell is at right. She is CPC's Volunteer Coordinator.

**Several of our Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists** participated energetically in the Ag'Tivity Barn at the 2007 Fort Bend County Fair in October. During the four hectic 'School Days' they helped host more than 1,100 kids and about 225 adults at our tables and exhibits.

In case you're new to the Chapter: Ag'Tivity Barn is a real barn packed with educational exhibits that spotlight the agricultural industries in Fort Bend County, including horticulture. Every year, during Fair week, all the elementary schools throughout the county are invited to attend what we call "School Days." The classes are given guided tours of all the exhibits which include seeing live demonstrations and animals. That's where the TMNs come in every year.

This year, the school children learned where milk comes from, and saw a cow being milked. They also saw sheep, and wool being spun on a spinning wheel. They learned how seed is separated from cotton, how rice grows, how the rice kernel is hulled, and how to make butter. At the TMN booth, they got to touch the pelts of local animals and learn about the importance of wildlife.

It was a very lively place. There were chicks being born, goats on a mountain, live cows, horses, sheep, pigs, rabbits, bees and butterflies. And we can't forget the fish!

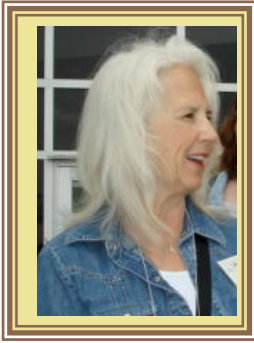
Our booth was part of the "Nature Trail" featuring fish, bees, and the butterfly display of the Ft. Bend Master Gardeners. Our Coastal Prairie members presided over the animal pelts and a wealth of displays showing snakes, animal tracks and camouflage, antlers, and naturally – Master Naturalists. Texas Parks and Wildlife loaned us its mammal trunk for the occasion, and we made good use of it, though we supplied some mammals of our own. A.B. Gartman, Carrie Sample, Kurt Bundy, Margaret Thuesen, Cheryl Sedivec, Nancy Schaaf, Staci Hobbet, and John Cotterell all showed up, and some came several times. Kurt spent parts of three days squatting at kid-level so he could keep his audience focused on his posters of Texas snakes and animal tracks. His legs must really have hurt, but he kept smiling.

Thanks to our TMNs, many of those kids saw for the first time how wonderful our local animals are. We even had a bat to show them, and A. B. specialized in telling the kids about that small mammal. Nancy Sparrow added real value to the exhibit by creating a handout about the species represented in the Mammal Trunk. This 'cheat sheet' design enabled teachers to talk readily to their kids about Texas wildlife.

It was a learning experience for everyone, volunteers included. I found it a great delight to watch kids touch a horse for the first time, feel the fur of a coyote, or realize that milk comes from a cow. The next thing the kids wanted to know, of course, was where chocolate milk comes from.

And of course, they all fell in love with "Flower" the show-off pig. Who wouldn't?





## Report from San Antonio *Amy Burt offers a personal review of the* **October TMN State Meeting**

"What can we do now as TMNs to inspire the generations who will be facing even greater environmental challenges in the future?"

**Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>: After arriving and finishing a quick registration process** I was off to my first AT class on Peregrine Falcons presented by Paul Jergens of the Peregrine Falcon Fund. These magnificent birds of prey have made a comeback since their path to extinction was averted by the establishment of the private non-profit Peregrine Falcon Fund in 1970 by Dr. Paul Cade of Cornell University. The Aplomado Falcon is also reaping the benefits of this fund and can be seen all along our coastal prairie as year round residents.

I asked what my classmates like best about this class and our own Val Fogal remarked, "It was a good presentation and showed commitment to the Peregrine fund. I also liked to know that other birds are included in the fund." Earl Anderson of Rolling Plains Chapter commented that, "The photos were the best." And Catherine Rogers from the North Texas Chapter said, "I liked everything! I knew nothing about these birds before this!"

Then I asked what facts they like the best and Val Fogal's comment was, "Learning about how they are released back into the wild such as the places chosen." Earl Anderson said, "I liked the information about their range increasing." Catherine Rogers remarked, "The statistics about the numbers of birds that it takes to get a breeding pair!" We were instilled with an acute awareness that these and all of our country's birds of prey are a national treasure. Their habitat is steadily shrinking and our commitment to insuring that they will not be lost due to habitat destruction must continue even though many are no longer "officially" endangered.

Friday evening I went on the field trip to the Bracken bat cave which is located on private property adjacent to the Natural Bridge Caverns. The cave's population of Mexican Free-Tailed Bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) had a good summer with plenty of insects available due to the wet weather. We had to wait until it was nearly dark for their wondrous flight to begin. They produced an amazing swirling vortex at the cave's entrance before exiting. We could feel the rush from their wings as they flew by. Bat guano is commercially harvested from this cave.

Here's a piece of truly practical information: Bats like to raise their young in tall palm trees. If you have bats around, avoid trimming your palms during the spring and summer.

My Saturday morning Advanced Training (AT) class was at the Canton Lake gorge where 111 million years of geological history in Texas Hill Country awaited our exploration. The tour was led by geologist Dr. Bill Ward. He guided us through the gorge with enthusiasm. All those millennia of geological record were exposed during that fateful July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend of 2002 from the flow of 71,000 cubic feet of water per second breaching the dam spillway resulting from 1,100,000 acre foot of water run off. What did you think about the experience was the first question I asked. The enthusiastic response by everyone was, "Once in a lifetime experience! Fantastic! It leaves you speechless!" When asked what was the biggest impact of going into the gorge the unified response was that seeing the dynamic impact of water first hand was a great way to educate people on the huge impact geology has on many issues in the entire hill country area.

The afternoon's AT was provided by the Lindheimer Chapter membership at their headquarters. There were many informative displays and hands-on activities. I enjoyed talking with many of the volunteers about their region. Lindheimer Chapter president Ray Laxton taught me everything that all good hunters know about those coveted deer antlers. The local Master Gardeners also had a table. Finally we saw a great presentation on the flooding event by an engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers who was on duty at the lake that weekend and is also a member of the Lindheimer chapter.

The Saturday evening's awards banquet was full of recognition for our chapter. President Cheryl Sedivec was acknowledged for her 500 hours of service (she's now verging on 1,000) and Val Fogal for 250 hours. Cheryl also accepted the 1<sup>st</sup> place 'Exemplary Project' award for our chapter's Communications effort. Sunday's keynote speaker, John Herron, was from the Nature Conservancy. His address, entitled, "Conservation- It Ain't Easy," was fitting. Statistics on the world's future population of 9 billion by 2050, along with all the basic human needs that will entail were overwhelming.

What can we do now as TMNs to inspire the generations who will be facing even greater environmental challenges in the future? Educate, educate, educate! Encourage people to get outdoors so they can form a personal connection with nature. Support local, state, and national funding for parks and meaningful proposals to rein in carbon emissions. Understand the dynamics of alternative energy resources. Promote water conservation through involvement in the decisions making by your local water district management. Finally, in all you do always keep in mind the interdependence of all living creatures with each other as stated by the principal of Ecology.

Sunday's AT class took me to the Last Chance Forever birds of prey sanctuary. Some of the birds currently at the sanctuary had been on display during the Friday evening barbeque. We watched as the wing of a Red-tailed hawk was doctored. There were Bald eagles, various species of owls, a California condor, non-releasable due to serious injury, and many other hawks in rehabilitation. Many were expected to recover completely and be released back into the wild. We also saw a display of falconry with one of the Cooper's hawk resident at the center. We learned of the unique way each species searches for, attacks, and kills prey.

It was a great weekend. I hope to see you all at next year's meeting.

## Some Snaps From San Antonio

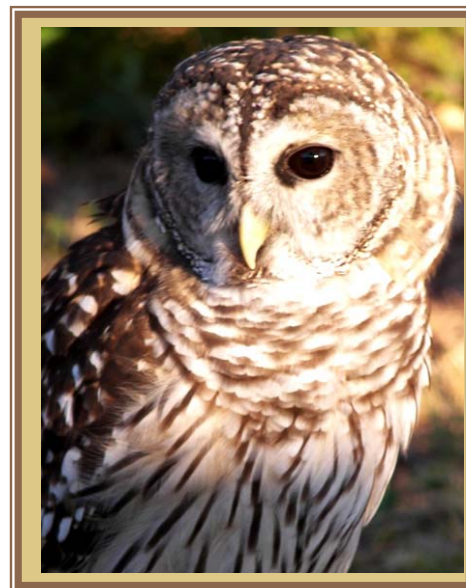
### Celebrating the Texas Master Naturalists' 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Left, CPC Member Val Fogal with Paul Jergens of the Peregrine Falcon Fund (photo A. Burt);

Right, Barred owl, *Strix varia*, (photo, R. Morrison);

Below, some of CPC's participants, left to right: Ron Morrison, Cheryl Sedivec, Mark Countryman, Gloria Scheel, Nancy Schaaf (photo R. Morrison)



#### THE RIPPERT REPORT

by Linda Rippert, Membership Chair

I 'm proud to report that the following members have completed their certification for the 2007 year and received their Shrimp pins at the Nov. 1 meeting:

Peggy d'Hemecourt  
Don Johnson  
Penny Johnson  
Mary Beth McCaughey  
Margo McDowell  
Ed Plant  
Margaret Thuesen

Since the last newsletter was issued, these members have been awarded their Shrimp pins:  
Valerie Fogal  
Bill Petty

250-hour Milestone pins went to:  
Valerie Fogal  
Staci Hobbet

Cheryl Sedivec has not turned in the hours yet, but will certainly have achieved her 1000 hours Milestone pin by now

Congratulations to all and thanks for supporting the CPTMN. I also welcome our 2007 class members. For all of us in CPC, we look forward to working with you and getting to know you better.

#### *Upcoming Events*

**For complete information  
See our calendar at [Coastalprairie.org](http://Coastalprairie.org)**

##### *Saturday, November 10:*

It's a big day in the chapter. We'll have a booth at the opening of the new park along the Brazos in Sugar Land; it's Prairie Day out at Brazos Bend State Park; and in the evening there's Ron Morrison's party honoring our students begins at 7:30 that evening.

##### *Thursday, December 6*

Our Elections and holiday potluck in Rosenberg, 6:30 pm. We'll be giving out some well-earned awards.

##### *Saturday, December 15*

Christmas Bird Count at BBSP, 6:30, AT & VSP opportunity



## ***Elect Your Board on December 6<sup>th</sup>***

The year has flown and we are quickly approaching our annual meeting on December 6 when we will elect officers for 2008. The Nominating Committee (made up of myself, Ed Plant and Peg d'Hemecourt) has just completed an official slate of officers, which is to be announced at our chapter meeting tonight, November 1st:

President – Cheryl Sedivec (second term)  
 Vice President – Nancy Sparrow  
 Treasurer – John Cotterell (second term)  
 Secretary – Carrie Sample

Thanks to all these candidates for submitting their names. An official slate of candidates will be announced 15 days prior to our annual meeting. Other candidates can still be considered and placed on the slate until Nov. 21st. Nominations can also be taken from the floor at our annual meeting. So please consider running for one of the officer positions. You'll find a description of duties for each position in the Operations Manual on our website. Any Board position is a commitment but any Officer's job is one of 13 on the Board and there is a great deal of support provided by the Board working together. This is not to minimize what's involved, but an acknowledgement that no one is in it alone.

Any of our committees could use your help, as well. If you're interested in being considered for a position or in knowing more about what's involved in being an officer, please contact me and I'll be glad to answer your questions. We can't all "just help" – we need people who can take a turn at helping to guide the chapter.

**Mary Beth McCaughey**

281-460-6694

[mccaugheymb2@comcast.net](mailto:mccaugheymb2@comcast.net)

*Profiles cont'd from page 5*

## ***Thanks to Our Contributors***

And an invitation to everyone else  
 From Staci Hobbet, editor,  
[rshob@comcast.net](mailto:rshob@comcast.net)

**Articles and photographs** from inside and outside of our chapter are again featured in this edition of CPR. Warm thanks to all.

*Staci Hobbet*

### **Contributors:**

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### **Photo credits:**

Page 1; eye of Yellow-crowned night heron eye courtesy of Greg Lavaty,  
<http://www.pbase.com/dadas115>; others by S. Hobbet; page 2: web by Donna Garde, TPWD, spider by Joe Pase, TX Forest Service; page 3: award photo by Ron Morrison, class photo by S. Hobbet; page 4: top and bottom by S. Hobbet, middle by Bill Bone; page 5: S. Hobbet; page 6: Linda Rippert; page 7: planarian courtesy of TAMU [citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1039.html](http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1039.html); Sedivec by S. Hobbet; pages 8 & 9: Staci Hobbet; page 10: top left by Amy Burt, owl by Ron Morrison, bottom by Ron Morrison; page 12: Staci Hobbet.

**Mimi Lawrence**... I found out about the TMN class in "Country World", a little newspaper I subscribe to. The article was about the Lost Pines Chapter and from there I did some research and found out about the Coastal Prairie Chapter. I immediately knew this was something my husband, Jim, and I would enjoy doing together. I moved to rural Brookshire almost two years ago. Having lived in the suburbs almost all of my life, this was a wonderful change for me. I found myself becoming more and more involved with my surroundings and wanting to learn more about them. In my earlier life, I was a geography teacher in HISD. Once I became a parent, I decided to be a stay-at-home mom and unschool my twin sons. I have always enjoyed being outdoors and am eager to learn more about nature, especially the prairie.

**Carrie Sample**... Given a choice of vacationing in a great city versus a natural setting, I will always pick the natural setting. My favorite childhood memories are visiting my father's family in East Texas even though they only had outhouses and well water.

One of my goals after I retired from teaching elementary school was taking the Master Naturalist Course and volunteering at Brazos Bend State Park. The 2 things fit together, shall we say, naturally! The great thing about both of these is there is still so much to learn. On the personal side, I am a native Houstonian. I have been married 30 plus years with 2 children and now 5 grandchildren. I love sharing the natural world with those grandkids!

**Karen Showalter**... After all these years, back to the things I loved as a Girl Scout. I have always had an interest in the outdoors. Shells, native plants, birds and animals are all a wonder to me and speak to me of a creative God. I also am interested in things we can do to recycle and do a better job of taking care of our world. Moving "out in the country" has renewed my interest in the environment and with the kids grown I have time to use in pursuing education and place of service. I am also taking up my art and painting again and wonder if these two may intertwine for me.

## ***Kids know a lot about ‘the Environment’ – but are they being educated --***

### ***-- or terrified?***

*a personal essay by Tricia Bradbury*



**Ask any elementary school kid** about the environment and they can tell you about the Amazon rainforest, the effects on indigenous forest people caused by logging and oil exploration and the role this all plays in global warming. They know that between morning recess and the beginning of lunch more than ten thousand acres of rainforest will be cut down. The kids can tell you about melting polar ice caps and all about dinosaurs and why they died. They know that they can help save the planet by recycling. You would think they are growing up to be environmentally responsible citizens. That may not be the case.

What do knowledge of the rainforest, melting polar ice caps, and dinosaurs have in common? Two major things—it's not happening HERE and it's a doomsday message making kids feel that nature is a lost cause. They associate nature with fear instead of joy, wonder, and curiosity. Our school kids are bombarded with examples of environmental abuse. Psychologists tell us that in response to physical and sexual abuse, children learn distancing techniques, ways to cut themselves off from the pain. David Sobel, director of teacher-certification programs at Antioch University New England, in Keene, New Hampshire, says his fear is that "our environmentally correct curriculum will end up distancing children from, rather than connecting them with, the natural world. The natural world is being abused, and they just don't want to have to deal with it".

Children are developing what Sobel calls ecophobia – a fear of ecological problems and the natural world. Fear of oil spills, rainforest destruction, whale hunting, acid rain, the ozone hole, and Lyme disease. Fear of just being outside. There is a danger in all this learning, all this thinking on a global scale. If we prematurely ask children to deal with problems beyond their understanding and control, we may cut them off from the possible sources of their strength —nature right here at home.

Sobel goes on to say that children are connected with endangered animals and ecosystems around the globe but disconnected from the world just beyond their own front doors. He tells a story of a young activist who made a poster to be displayed at her local store — SAVE THE ELEPHANTS — DON'T BUY IVORY SOAP. While a little confused about the details of ivory from elephant tusks and the name of a popular bath soap, her mind is ripe for education about her local environment. Why not SAVE OYSTER CREEK — DON'T WASH YOUR CAR IN THE DRIVEWAY?

How can we calm our children's ecophobia? Entire books have been written about ways our school system can change, including not teaching global environmental issues at the elementary school level, incorporating outdoor classrooms into the curriculum, and what Sobel calls place-based education. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, recently said he would like to see our nation's policy on teaching changed to "No child left inside". Teach children about the environment right in their own backyard. That is where we, as Master Naturalists, come in.

As Texas Master Naturalists, we are part of a statewide corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within our communities for the State of Texas. Basically, our purpose is to learn as much as we can then *share that knowledge with others*. Jump at the chance to take part in educational activities. We are uniquely qualified to help connect kids with the world right outside their own door.

We can be the key to showing a child that nature is not something to be feared, but something filled with wonder, hope, and even fun. We can fight ecophobia by sharing our love of nature.

*If we want children to flourish, we need to give them time to connect with nature and love the Earth before we ask them to save it.*

#### Bibliography:

1. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005).
2. *Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education* by David Sobel (Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society, 1996)





*From John Cotterell, CPC Treasurer:  
The challenge ahead  
**CPC Proposes a Water Education Project**  
Committee to form soon to discuss feasibility*

The Coastal Prairie Chapter of TMN is considering the development of a community outreach program which deals with various aspects of water. This precious commodity must be conserved, kept clean, and used in a thoughtful manner because, as we all know as naturalists, they aren't making any more of it (reference the hydrogeological cycle for this). The water education units could include discussion of the hydrogeological cycle, ground water flow, surface water accumulation, rural septic system operation, contamination pathways, water conservation, and rainwater harvesting. We've identified recommended tabletop models for ground water flow and rural septic system operation that we could purchase to provide some of the "hands-on" demonstration of the principals to be discussed. At this time we are forming an exploratory committee to determine the program objectives and to formulate a plan that could be used in the preparation of a grant application or justification to a partner to obtain funds to set up and operate this program. If the program is determined to be feasible, then we will need volunteers to help with the script, and to store and maintain the models, and of course make the presentations to our target audience (which will be determined in our plan). If you want to hear more about this potential important community educational effort or want to volunteer to make it a reality, please attend the November 1 CPTMN meeting and let us know of your interest; or contact me at 281 341 1010 or [john@johncotterell.com](mailto:john@johncotterell.com).  
– John Cotterell, CPC Treasurer

*Coastal  
Prairie  
Reporter*



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Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists

**Brazos Bend State Park**  
<http://www.brazosbend.org/home.htm>

**City of Sugar Land**  
<http://www.sugarlandtx.gov/>

**Fort Bend County Extension**  
<http://fortbend-tx.tamu.edu/>

**Waller County Extension**  
<http://waller-tx.tamu.edu/>

**George Ranch Historical Park**  
<http://www.georgeranch.org/>

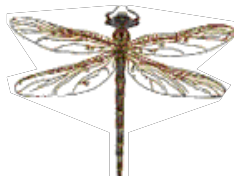
**Gulf Coast Bird Observatory**  
<http://www.gcbo.org/>

**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/)



## Interested in Becoming a Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist?

Our annual classes will begin in September, 2008.  
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.  
provide your name, home address, home phone number  
and email address. We'll contact you promptly.

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Natural Resource Specialist IV



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