February 2007

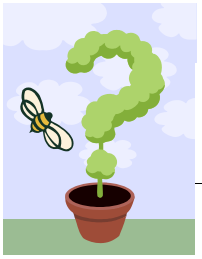
COASTAL PRAIRIE
MASTER NATURALISTS
NEWSLETTER

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

Volume 1, Issue 1

The Answer is YOU

Inaugurating the Newsletter



You're looking at a first: the inaugural edition of the CPC newsletter. Nameless as yet (see 'What's in a Name?', page 3) it isn't without an identity. It speaks for the members of the Coastal Prairie Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists and no one else.

But aren't newsletters becoming kind of quaint in a world of instant media, especially one that appears only once a quarter? Three months is an eternity in a world of blogs and YouTube. And besides, newsletters of all sorts come your way monthly, from realtors, your insurance company, your city, homeowners association, church, your other volunteer organizations, and maybe your employer. What distinguishes this newsletter from any other, and why should you read it, let alone contribute to it? What does it offer that the chapter website does not? Good questions. Here's how we'd answer them.

Though we're a small chapter we have a lot of experience and training between us, a wide diversity of knowledge in natural history and life. But it's of little use to us unless we know how to tap it, and that means getting to know one another better. Who's our most expert birder? Herpetologist? Entomologist? Who knows our native plants? Who understands the machinery of the county government, the state legislature? Who's the best source of information about ecology, wetlands, prairie restoration? Who has a special talent for interacting with kids?

That's why this newsletter exists, as a source of information about your most valuable sources of information: your fellow chapter members, which is why you'll see so many profiles in this issue. Think of it as an ongoing conversation: casual, wide-ranging, welcoming — and please join in. **- Staci Hobbet**

Inside This Issue:

Duhacsek Park stands poised to become a CPC showcase project. See the story on Page 6.

Don and Penny Johnson had a unique holiday visitor. Check out "The Brief Pelican" on Page 10.

Hundreds of people stopped by the CPC booth at the Katy Home & Garden Show. See Page 4.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Ron Morrison

Ron Morrison's middle name might be 'Sure.' It's the answer you'll always get from him if you ask him for help, and he helps a lot.

Trained in the 2006 CPC class, he certified in time for our chapter's Christmas meeting, which raised a halooing din of applause for him from his classmates that evening, none of whom equaled his accomplishment.

If you're one of his friends – and if you're not, it won't be long – you'll have already heard about his trail-trimming group at Brazos Bend State Park (BBSP), where he does most of his volunteer work. The park's nearly 5,000 acres includes 35 miles of hiking, biking and horseback trails, all of which must be regularly inspected and cleared of debris for the park's load of visitors. Ron's taken on the task of building a core of volunteers to do the job, drawing on CPC members and hoping for more. Current plans are to meet every Friday at the park, deferring to the weather when need be; training is on-the-job. It's work, says Ron, but it's also companionable, it's good exercise, the park is beautiful – and the time counts as CPC service hours.

Ron's an instructor at BBSP as well. He teaches orienteering to park visitors, and he instructs members of the park's volunteer-training course in trail-trimming, which doesn't necessarily funnel its graduates into his Friday group. But Ron's always hoping to inspire volunteers to help him on the trails. He's thoroughly attached to the park and wants to see it kept in prime condition for both wildlife and people.

Ron Morrison

> *It's work, but it's also companionable, good exercise, and the park is beautiful.*

After going through BBSP's volunteer training program in the Fall of 2005, he has worked at the park twice weekly, doing a variety of maintenance work, including one task he says he came to fully appreciate only after taking the CPC course last fall: fire ant control. Though he'd known that the ants were destructive, he hadn't realized how dangerous they're thought to be by wildlife biologists, or that they may be largely to blame for the rarity or near disappearance of many species, vertebrate and invertebrate.

If you'd consider giving Ron's trail trimming team a try, contact him at: rcmorri@alltel.net. Alternately, he'll organize an orienteering class at BBSP anytime he has a handful of interested people. This four-hour course teaches navigation with map and compass, selection of safe routes, and point to point hiking techniques, says Ron, skills every naturalist should have, and especially useful in wowing your hiking pals after you've taken them off-trail and they think they're hopelessly lost. The Orienteering class is approved for 4 AT hours. **- SH**

President's Message

To my colleagues at CPC,

First of all, let me say thank you to the Chapter's out-going officers for their energetic, dedicated service in 2006. They expanded and deepened the Chapter's role in our lives and our community, and deserve our sincere gratitude. Our chapter would not be where it is today without them.

This is my first time as president of anything, and when I took office, the prospect of heading up this group of talented, dynamic people felt a little intimidating. I have a son in second grade and it's challenging enough to keep up with him – how could I hope to lead a vital, growing organization of volunteer naturalists as well?

The answer has dawned on me these last couple of weeks. A president presides. In the dictionary 'preside' is defined as 'to administer and advise, to carry on, chair, and oversee,' which sounds more comforting. We're a group, and I have a lot of great people to help me do all that advising and chairing and overseeing. We'll do our work together, as a team.


Cheryl Sedivec presides at the first Board of Directors meeting of 2007.

This touches on my main objective as President of the Coastal Prairie Chapter: to build an even stronger sense of cohesion among our members. This gets tougher as we grow and change, and we need to stay on top of it. As part of that effort, we're doing two important things: launching this newsletter, and revamping our website. These publications will take some time to develop and tailor to meet our needs, but I'm excited about them and feel that they'll both work to keep us in better touch with one another and ongoing activities, as well as our frequent, notable achievements.

As a result of knowing one another better, we'll also develop a clearer identity as a chapter, and that will help us discover what our true, core projects are, the activities that inspire and unify us, the work that makes us unique.

Success breeds success. If we have a strong identity as a group and a high profile in our community, the community is going to know about us, and the public will start showing up at our monthly meetings. That's another of my goals: I want our monthly speakers to look out over a full room.

We can do it. I know we can, and I look forward to reaching these goals with you, together. So let's do some carrying on.

- Cheryl

Blinded by the Light

Can less wattage really mean more illumination? Dr. Phil Inderwiesen, a volunteer at the George Observatory, proved that the answer is yes in a talk at the chapter's January meeting. The glaring security light you have out in your backyard can actually blind you to an intruder standing just beyond your patio. Bright light destroys your night vision. But replace that fixture with a lower-lumen, hooded light that focuses the beam more narrowly and your night vision remains intact: You see more.

> ***"We're losing a valuable resource — darkness."***

This example symbolizes a much larger problem, one that Dr. Inderwiesen has spent the last years trying to understand and remedy: light pollution. Look at any night-time satellite photograph of the United States: Houston blazes like part of the East Coast, and with the pace of development quickening, it can only get worse. For astronomers at George Observatory, this assault is personal: Our outdoor lighting blinds them to the stars.

Dr. Inderwiesen's concerns have gone deeper as he's studied the problem for the Observatory, however, helping put in place an ordinance to oversee the design of public lighting in new developments in Ft. Bend and Brazoria Counties. He now asks questions about how that night-time glare (think of all those Wal-Marts, car dealerships, gas stations and lighted freeways) affect wildlife. "We're losing a natural resource – darkness," he said. This field of study, called *scotobiology* ('scoto' means darkness) is in its infancy, he said, but its best-documented findings leave no doubt that migrating birds, for instance, are readily and disastrously confused by bright lights.

Showing an exuberant enthusiasm for his topic, Dr. Inderwiesen nevertheless feels some impatience with our culture's love affair with bright lights, big city, especially since the human eye sees with great subtlety at low lumens. "Once you let your eyes adjust," he said, extending a palm out at arm's length, "You can see your hand by starlight." **- SH**

Still in the dark about light pollution? Try these resources:

Ft. Bend/Brazoria County Outdoor Lighting Ordinance Resource:
www.tovinder.net/lighting/light_ord.htm

International Dark-Sky Association:
www.darksky.org

Citizens for Responsible Lighting:
www.crlaction.org

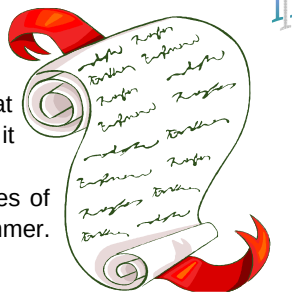
National Park Service:
www2.nature.nps.gov/air/lightscapes/

George Observatory:
(281) 242-3055

What's In A Name?

Naming Your Newsletter

This is an appeal: Name your newsletter and win an hour of volunteer service. Our current moniker is "the CPC Newsletter." As names go, it's . . . well, it's good for inducing yawns. We need something else in time for our second issue, a name with character and panache that symbolizes our chapter in particular, one that evokes the coastal prairie and our place in it as outreach naturalists.



Cast your mind back through your training and experience and see what snags in the net, something common in our area, plant or animal. Then run it through your mind as a potential newsletter name. The Warty Spurge? The Bull Nettle? The Duckweed Docket? Okay, no. But how about a species of dragonfly, since it's the symbol of the Texas Master Naturalists? The Skimmer. Not a bad choice for a newsletter that will appear only quarterly at first. Or perhaps a more traditional newspaper-like name would appeal. The Argus. The Sentinel. The Coastal Prairie Chronicle.

Send us your suggestions and we'll vote as a chapter via email on the name. *Deadline: February 28th.* **-SH**

NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINES

Native Tree Give-away Links Two CPC Events

The lure of free native tree seedlings has netted CPC a total of $398 in donations at two recent events. The first, on January 19th, organized by Cody Dennison, Chapter Advisor and Waller Co. Extension Agent, "went really well," according to Cody.

About 175 people showed up at the Waller Co. Extension Office, he said, and of the 1250 trees available for adoption, "We gave out all but 50 or so Cypress and 50 or so Bur Oak." He was able to find homes for these as well soon after the event, however. "So we gave them all away," he said.

Volunteers from our chapter who pitched in: Mary Beth McCaughey, Cheryl Sedivec, Bill Petty, and A. B. Gartman.

Another 1250 trees were given away at the Katy Home and Garden Show on the last weekend of January, with donations totaling $184. CPC had a triple impact at the Show: A white tent and big CPC banner at the front door of the Merrell Center marked the tree give-away, while inside the convention hall, volunteers manned two other booths. One was an information booth for our chapter; the other, worked in tandem with Ft. Bend Master Gardeners, offered landscaping and gardening advice.

Visitors came in such a steady flow from the time the doors opened on Saturday morning that traffic jams sometimes blocked the hallway indoors. Outdoors, volunteers had long stretches of intense activity, answering questions about the trees and wrapping the adopted seedlings for visitors.

Cheryl Sedivec, who organized the event, reported after the Show that every calendar from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department disappeared into the hands of the crowd, as well as many brochures. Information about invasive plants was particularly popular.

A number of visitors to the Chapter information booth wanted to know more about CPC's training program. "We have about two full pages of names (of people) who are interested in classes for the fall," Cheryl said, "plus a possible transfer from the Galveston Bay MN."

Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists worked together at the event, showing the large overlap of interests between the two groups. But this support went beyond the informational.

"I'd like to thank the Master Gardeners who helped me on Saturday morning," Cheryl said, recalling that she needed help in moving a heavy table and other bulky items. "They were really kind and helpful."

Volunteers at the two-day event included Virginia Broman, Amy Burt, Terri Ficker (Gulf Coast TMN), Val Fogal, Margaret and David Gieblhaus, Staci Hobbet, Peter Janak, Tom Kanak, Lisa Krotzer, Carolyn and Carl Mazzo, Nancy Schaaf, Gloria Scheel, Cheryl Sedivec, and Lan Shen (Gulf Coast TMN). Cody Dennison and Mark Countryman, two of our Chapter Advisors, also helped out. **-SH**

More "News" on Page 5

About 175 people turned out for free trees at the Waller County Extension office on January 19th. About 1,200 bare-rooted hardwood trees, provided by the Lower Colorado River Authority, were given away.

Carl Mazzo (center), husband of CPC's Secretary, Carolyn (left), helped with the Chapter's tree give-away at the Katy Home & Garden Show.

◀ *Amy Burt (left) talks about native trees with a visitor to CPC's tree give-away tent.*

Terri Ficker (center, in red) and Cheryl Sedivec (right) discuss native plants with a mother and daughter at the CPC booth.

Rocking Horse "Environment Club": Nature-Friendly Kids

The Rocking Horse daycare center, 7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, in Fulshear, includes an after-school program for the local elementary school. Every month the kids enjoy an ongoing CPC volunteer service project, the "Environment Club," which was begun by TMN Donna Oppenheim in 2005, to foster a love of science and help the kids to appreciate the natural world right in their own back yards. It seems to be working. 'Is today Environment Club day?' they ask eagerly.

Using Project Wild curriculum and resources from wildlife organizations, first- through fifth-graders are led through hands-on activities. Reaching up to 50 kids, the program includes activities like "Animal Charades" to contrast and compare domesticated and wild animals. In "First Impressions," the kids voted with their feet to indicate how they felt about creatures found in our area, including oft-maligned friends like the garden spider and opossum – and some common myths were dispelled of in the process.

At Halloween, we uncovered some bat myths, made a Halloween card, and especially enjoyed hearing bat sounds like echolocation, chattering, and flying. In November, we took a nature walk and re-visited the Butterfly Garden at the nearby elementary school. For our December activity, we recycled tin cans into festive Christmas holders for candy, pencils, or other uses. The Fort Bend County Recycling Center provided the cans, and some of the product creations are on display there, to share recycling ideas with other like-minded groups.

Rocking Horse proprietor Jill Hudson-Kerr operates her facility using environmentally-friendly practices like recycling plastics, aluminum cans, and vegetable and fruit matter. She also has a butterfly garden on-site, and encourages the children in her care to be responsible for the environment.

Rocking Horse Environment Club bags litter along Rogers Road. This photo, taken in December, includes (left to right): John Duncan, Donna and Sarah Oppenheim, Jill Hudson-Kerr, Nic Kristiansson, Duncan Oppenheim, Kaitlin and Lars Kristiansson. Not pictured: Amy Burt.

In addition, the Rocking Horse Environment Club, through a Fort Bend County program, has adopted Rogers Road and picks up trash there on a regular basis.

If you would like to help with the program in any way, please contact Joyce Kristiansson at jak@kristianssonllc.com.

- Joyce Kristiansson

Little Recyclers at work at the Rocking Horse Environment Club.

"Before"

"After"

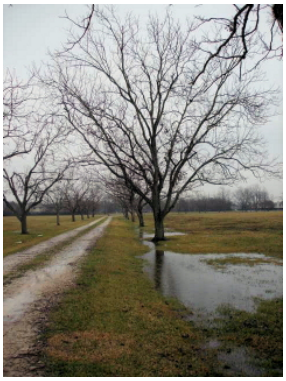
Can "Undisturbed Acreage" and "Sugar Land" Exist Together?

In Duhacsek Park, the Answer is Yes

The place seems friendlier the moment you know how to pronounce its name: du-HAAS-ik; and if you've had a chance to tour this recently-designated 54 acre park just beyond the reach of Sugar Land's city limits, then you know that 'friendly' only hints at the generosity shown by the late Virginia Duhacsek when she donated the land to the city in 2000 for use as an educational park.

Looking around the property today, through the pecan, oak and hackberry trees laid bare by winter, you see large, modern homes pressing close to all the fence lines. Mrs. Duhacsek could have sold this land to make room for more, netting a fortune for her estate. But she said no, and the land now waits to make its full transition from family homestead to city park. Keep it natural, Mrs. Duhacsek said, and use it to educate people, especially kids.

Mary Beth McCaughey, our chapter's immediate past-president, believes that this special-use mandate offers our chapter a vital opportunity to develop an important core project, one she's ready to help organize and inspire. A dense swath of woodland along the land's southern extremity has lain virtually untouched for decades, perhaps as much as 70 years. In quick surveys of the land, Mary Beth has seen what she believes to be Post oaks among the trees. "Are there Post oaks left anywhere else in Houston?" she asks wonderingly.



View from gate looking toward house. Pecan trees planted by the Duhacseks line the drive.

What else lies out there undiscovered in the soggy January cold? Mary Beth's curiosity is apparent as she looks out over the land and talks about ideas for CPC involvement. As a practical matter, the park's location outside Sugar Land proper and the fact that only well water is available on-site, would limit its use as a multi-purpose city park even if Mrs. Duhacsek hadn't required that it be kept natural. There will be no ball fields here. No tennis courts, no playgrounds, no picnic shelters, no "sculpting," Mary Beth says, resulting in both opportunity and a dilemma. "What makes sense for this property?" she asks.

The perfectly-preserved family house, a brick single-story ranch house that's a flash-back to the Dick Van Dyke Show, will be kept for the foreseeable future. A pavilion may be added to accommodate Boy Scout or church retreats; or, suggests Mary Beth, something like a "Nature Day Camp" sponsored in part by our chapter. It's possible that the City would also build a pond or wetlands area adjacent to the woodland, where she envisions a walking trail and hikes led by Master Naturalists.

A 75" pecan tree at the rear of the house.

"We can be a resource for the City," she says, "a programming option for them," if we position the chapter early, while it's still considering potential uses for the land. We need to act soon, she says.

Getting started in earnest will take organization and much advance planning. The Park is kept locked and is made available to groups through arrangement with the City of Sugar Land. With the help of CPC, Mary Beth hopes to schedule a day in late March when chapter members can meet there. She sees the day as a package of activities: a tour of the time-capsule house, discovery and inventory of the land's flora and fauna, a quick clean-up of the littered fence lines, and a brain-storming session for the future.

She remembers a day last spring when she visited the park and saw a "lavender haze" across the open fields. "It was Herbertia," she says, a native wildflower. She'd rarely seen it anywhere so dense, let alone in Sugar Land, where new construction abounds. "This place is like a fresh, new journal," she says, "and nothing's written in it yet." **-SH**

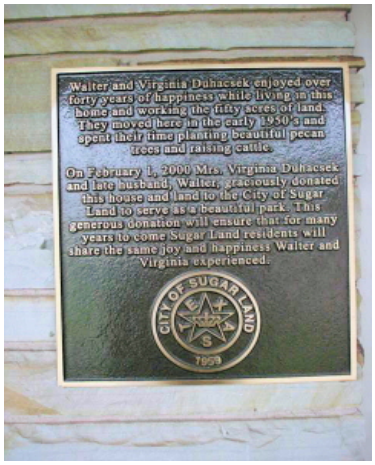
Watch for updates about Duhacsek Park, and the Coastal Prairie Chapter's involvement in planning its use, in upcoming issues.

How did the Post oak earn its name?

The durable wood, resistant to rot and insect damage, has been widely used for fence posts. An alternative name for the tree is 'iron oak.' *Quercus stellata* is a medium-sized, slow-growing tree. It grows in prairie transition zones, thrives in varying soils, and is drought resistant. There are several varieties.

Post oak woodland

Photo courtesy TPWD



A plaque on the front porch memorializes the lives of Walter and Virginia Duhacsek. The home and land were donated to the City of Sugar Land in 2000.

Another view from the entry gate. In the background, the wooded area which has remained untouched for half a century.

The Vital, Virtual Naturalist

Spinning Our Web

Over the last couple of weeks, I've begun working on an update of our chapter website. The work might take awhile, but there are some threads that need no reweaving. The definition of a Master Naturalist, for instance, can't be improved. It's given me a much better answer to the friends, family and neighbors who ask me just what, exactly, a "Master Naturalist" is, and more importantly, what one does. Our work is so all-encompassing that I'd always found myself floundering for a succinct but interesting answer that didn't threaten to become a novel. I think it's worth reiterating here:

"The Texas Master Naturalist program trains volunteers to help children and adults learn about Texas' natural resources - inspiring them to a new appreciation of their environment and ensuring that others will be able to enjoy the natural Texas for years to come.

"In the Texas Master Naturalist program volunteers enhance their love of nature with research-based, scientific knowledge. Classes and field work provide training in wildlife and natural resource management focused on the ecosystems of the area. In return, these trained volunteers provide education and outreach in the community — helping people appreciate the natural environment around their homes."

In other words, we're part of an integral social web. Our website should be part of that weave. As naturalists, the mention of a 'web' usually conjures up images of giant, gossamer orbs spanning the hiking trail, perhaps large golden spider perched in the threads. The web I'd like for our virtual chapter, however, is a friendly, welcoming spot where members can feel connected. It conveys information and hopefully provides some entertainment, too. You won't find a big hairy spider perched here, nor will there be sticky tendrils of silk to get caught up in. And you don't have to worry about becoming lunch.

I'll keep you updated on my progress in rebuilding our website. Currently in the works: An interactive form for you to fill in with VSP and AT hours, that can be submitted directly to Linda Rippert with the push of a button. And a forum for you to post questions, answers, ideas and experiences for your fellow chapter members to view. I'm interested in your input about content. I want it to be a great resource not only for ourselves, but also for the general public and all those interested friends, family, and neighbors.

Help spin our CPC web. No spider costume necessary. If you have ideas or suggestions, please contact me at jmantei@earthlink.net. **-Jenn Mantei**

Past President Mary Beth McCaughey: A Masterful Legacy

You'd think that Mary Beth McCaughey, who served as our chapter president for two eventful years, might be enjoying some leisure time now that Cheryl Sedivec has taken over the highest office. Asked about this, Mary Beth, who helped found CPC, smiles enigmatically. "I'm President of the Ft. Bend Master Gardeners," she says. Leisure doesn't seem to be a concept Mary Beth knows intimately. Last year, she was President of both Fort Bend Master Gardeners and CPC.

Mary Beth McCaughey

So: a dual Master. A president of Masters. Does she revel in power? Absolutely: she wants to see both organizations become rich sources of information and outreach for the public, and what has more potential for power than truly effective education?

A native of Iowa and a resident of Texas since 1981, Mary Beth worked for twenty years in Information Technology, specializing in financial and management software. She spent a lot of her childhood "tromping around in the woods," she says. "I'd much rather be outside than doing almost anything else." But she's been doing a lot of the 'anything else' in recent years. Her dedication to volunteer work led her to another dual presidency in the recent past when she served concurrently with Keep Sugar Land Beautiful and the Sugar Land Garden Club.

Not many volunteers would give themselves over to their causes to this extent. But the benefits continue to accrue, for her and for CPC. Her productive networking, including long associations with city and county government officials, make her a core mentor for chapter members. "The (Sugar Land) city officials, especially," she says, at a loss to describe their helpfulness. "Well, we live in a special place." **-SH**

PROFILES: 2007 Chapter Officers

The Chapter's December elections brought four chapter members into office for 2007, only one of whom was an office-holder in 2006. Here's a glimpse.

PRESIDENT

Cheryl Sedivec

Cheryl graduated from CPC's first class in 2004 and served as vice-president during 2006. A geophysicist by profession, she opted to give motherhood priority when her son, Kenny, was born seven years ago. A native of New York state, Cheryl dates her love of natural history to her early childhood. "I was just always outdoors," she says. She began collecting rocks as soon as she was old enough to toddle around on her own. Her parents gave her a paper bag and let her loose, "and there were rocks around everywhere." Recently, after her grandfather's death, she made a discovery among his stored boxes: A little paper sack filled with rocks.

Cheryl is also a Master Gardener. "My grandmother was a big gardener," she says.

In anticipation of her year as president, she says she expects it to be challenging. "I've never done anything like this before."

VICE-PRESIDENT

Tom Kanak

Amarillo-born, Tom moved to the Houston area "years and years" ago, but spent most of his time outside the dense urban zone, growing up in Newgulf (in Wharton County), "the last company town in Texas," he says. His family has owned property in the Needville area for nearly 50 years, and it's there that he and his fiancée, Candice, make their home—in the old bank building downtown, which they've completely refurbished. After bailing out of the oil industry, where he worked as a petroleum engineer, Tom trained as a lawyer and passed the Texas Bar in 1988. He considers real estate "one of my specialties, but I'm a country lawyer."

In addition to his work for CPC, he's a fully-accredited volunteer at Brazos Bend State park, where he often works with fellow chapter member Ron Morrison on trail maintenance. Tom has plans there: He'd like to help design and build a trail that makes the Brazos River accessible in the park, and then build an observation tower there like the one at 40-Acre Lake. "There's a point where Big Creek enters the Brazos. It's a perfect place."

SECRETARY

Carolyn Mazzo

Like Cheryl, Carolyn is a lifelong rock hound who became an Earth Scientist. Though she hasn't worked professionally since her sons were born – they're now 21 and 17 – she remains a geologist at heart. "I come from a long line of geologists," she says, "two uncles, and my grandfather taught Geology at the University of Oklahoma." The result was a childhood surrounded by rocks, she says, and the influence didn't stop at the threshold of the family's Arkansas home. "My mother used rocks in all her decorating," she says. Her own home has its share of geological ornaments too, she says, including her husband Carl, who is… another geologist.

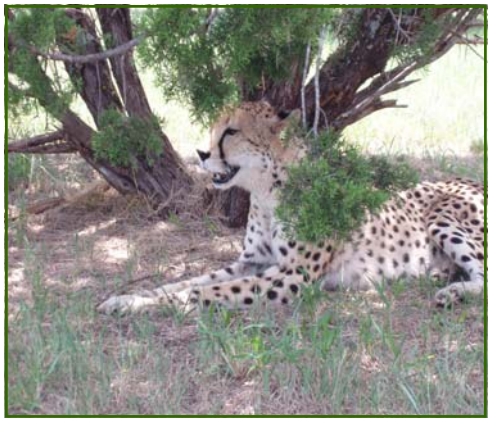
Did her geological forebears inspire her interest in natural history? "We were always outside as kids," she answers. "Of course that's because my mother used to lock us out of the house."

Her election as Secretary of CPC has inspired her to refresh her computer skills after a number of years away from the work-force. She's getting "tech-ready," she says, "so I can re-enter the world of adults."

Continued on Page 9

Cody Dennison, the man-of-all-seasons who goes by the title of Waller County Extension Agent, snapped this photo on a 2004 tour of the Fossil Rim Wildlife Refuge near Glen Rose, Texas. You'd think it might be big news to see a cheetah close-up and at rest beside a Texas juniper; and it should be big news that an African species is so endangered that Texans are breeding them on their wildlife refuges. This female is on the other side of a twelve-foot fence**.** But our society takes this kind of extreme for granted now. Endangered species are common – which sounds like a paradox. What will it take to make them rare? **- SH**

For an education on the threatened and endangered species in Texas (there are 140) visit this Texas Parks and Wildlife website:
http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/?c=endangered



Not hungry just now, thanks.

PROFILES

Continued from Page 5

TREASURER

John Cotterell

John Cotterell

John is a Houston native who moved to Richmond three years ago and found himself looking with fresh curiosity at the plants and animals on his two-acre site. At about the same time, he was working at a Waller county Superfund site as an environmental-remediation consultant. Faced with building a waterfowl habitat on the property, he turned to another Aggie, Cody Dennison, Waller County's Extension Agent and one of CPC's main mentors, for advice about what plant species to establish and how to find them.

"It was Cody who told me about this group," John says, "and I looked through the curriculum and said, 'This is just what I need to know.'" Wasting no time, he joined the CPC class of 2005.

John stays busy. He's also President of his local Rotary group and is a board member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

TRAINING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Peggy d'Hemecourt

A few years ago, when she was working as a vice-president of human resources for a large company, Peggy d'Hemecourt found herself going out for lunch alone, a rare occurrence, and began to wonder what she'd do with her life if she weren't a vice-president of human resources for a large company. Feeling a little conspicuous as she sat waiting for her order, surrounded by young couples and people talking," she says, she got out a notebook to jot down some thoughts. "And I made myself a to-do list!" she laughs. On that list, though, were some things she certainly wasn't doing as an HR VP. "Wake naturally," was one. "Savor the sunrise or sunsetfrom somewhere other than behind the steering wheel," was another. As a woman who is "happiest when I'm outdoors," she began to plan for Life After HR.

Peggy d'Hemecourt

She speaks with a poetic grace about her childhood in New Orleans. "My earliest memory is of our backyard," she says. "There was no air-conditioning. I remember meals on the picnic table. Sleeping with the windows open. Frogs in the dark. Fireflies." Her father was her first mentor. "He wasn't a naturalist," she says, "but he could point things out to us. He appreciated nature."

Her family moved to Texas when she was in ninth grade, and she met her future husband that same year. Don and his family further inspired her interest in natural history. "They were campers," she says, fondly remembering the area around Dripping Springs, near Austin, where they spent much of their time.

Peggy is also a Master Gardener, and it was through the Ft. Bend group that she got swept up with the Master Naturalists. "It probably would have contented me," to remain a Master Gardener, she says, but so many people were involved in establishing the new TMN chapter that, "I got taken in."

"Training came naturally to me," she says of her ongoing role as CPC's Training Committee Chair. She likes the job and says it isn't as daunting as it looks to incoming students whose first experience of her efforts is a five-inch-thick training manual. The Class of 2006, if polled, probably wouldn't believe that the job doesn't require true organizational bravura. All eight classes went off without a visible hitch, despite the many speakers and venues, and contained so much riveting information that not a single student missed a single hour of class. Easy? **-SH**

Deep Ramblings

with Carolyn Mazzo

I'm a new member of the Master Naturalist fold. In fact, I can't technically refer to myself as a member yet, since I'm not fully certified, but the hours I spent struggling over this little essay will move me significantly in that direction.

One of the hardest tasks I've had as a new Master Naturalist is to explain to friends, family, and acquaintances just exactly what it is that a Master Naturalist does. It hasn't helped that I'm not exactly sure myself, but my hope is that things will become clearer as I move through the program. Hopefully.

I've encountered several categories of people willing to listen to me talk about my new passion, but I've had to come up with user-friendly explanations for each. My family members all tend to be science nerds, so they pretend to understand anything that pertains remotely to science. Their initial interest in my many fascinating factoids was great, but lately, I've occasionally observed the slightest clouding of gaze from the more polite clan members. The rude ones just say, "Enough!" or "I knew that."

I perceptively take the hint. Time to talk about dinner.

With friends it's a little trickier, as they're a diverse group. For the sporting friends, talk of habitat health is always a winner. I can hold them rapt with talk of deer populations and ideal water quality for fish.

The stylish types are snagged by the news that Master Naturalists get to wear really comfortable yet attractive outfits while stalking the elusive bluestem. And there's this: Walking really improves the look of the legs.

People I know only slightly are the toughest. Sometimes they'll say with a look of horror, "You aren't an environmentalist are you?" I quickly assure them

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The Brief Pelican

A white pelican splashes down on the pond near Don & Penny Johnson's Quail Valley home.

Penny and I live in the Missouri City neighborhood of Quail Valley. A field behind our house, once used as a par-3 golf course, has a small three-acre pond where, just before Christmas, a flock of a dozen white pelicans (*Elecanus erythrorhynchos*) took up temporary residence.

We regularly see spoonbills, heron, egrets and ibis there, but this was the first time anything with a nine-foot wingspan had visited our neighborhood.

This white bird with black wing tips and a pouch connected to the bottom bill is one of the largest birds in the world, weighing over 25 pounds. During the mating season it develops a bony plate on the upper bill.

Pelicans are at home in lakes, wetlands and estuaries. Nesting takes place in western Canada and the U.S. northwest, and they winter along the Gulf coast and down into Mexico. White pelicans build their nest on the ground, but may abandon it if the area is disturbed. Reduction of wetlands and drought may also chase them off. Chicks hatch around June, which gives them little time to mature before migration.

While the brown pelican plunges from the air for its food, white pelicans cooperate in groups to herd fish. Then they dip their heads underwater to scoop up a meal of salamanders, fish, frogs and aquatic invertebrates.

The white pelican was a threatened species until 1987; it's still considered endangered in Canada. As with other species, such as the Bald eagle and Peregrine falcon, pesticide use in the 1960s and 1970s was responsible for the thinning of eggshells, causing a decrease in pelican populations.

Many neighbors came out to watch the pelicans patrol the pond, glide overhead, and land gracefully in the water. What a great Christmas present! **- Don Johnson**

Those Little "Light-Bulb" Moments

The scene: Two months ago, December, at the roadside clean-up for Huggins Elementary School's Rocking Horse Environment Club, one of CPTMN's ongoing volunteer opportunities. I was supervising some kids along Rogers Road as we picked up trash — not the most riveting activity for ten-year-olds. Still, all went well for the first two hours. Then I saw one boy's focus slacken. He was used to much more lively entertainment, I imagined. Game Boy. Xbox. He probably had his own TV and DVD player in his bedroom.

I saw him pick up a Styrofoam cup as if it weighed a couple of pounds. He hesitated, as if he might not bother to throw it into the trash bag, and I knew that it was now or never: I had to speak up.

"Did you know," I said, "that if you leave that cup on the ground and it gets buried, your great, great, great grandchildren could dig it up and it would still look just like it does now?" To my relief, his reaction was slow amazement. "Reeeally?" he said. The cup went into the trash bag. **- Amy Burt**

We hope you'll share your own anecdote of an intellectual dawning — your own, or one you've inspired.

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that I have no plans to torch their SUV or break into their house and free their pets. Once they calm down they're open to all kinds of suggestions, such as how reducing light pollution can save money. It's all in knowing your audience.

To all my listeners I try to make clear that the Master Naturalist Program is very inclusive and good for all. Anything with 'master' in the title tends to have a Kung Fu kind of feel, so letting people know from the get-go that a sensei is not part of the training demystifies things considerably.

I'm learning that being a Master Naturalist is about talking to all different kinds of people, mixed nuts as it were, and I love an assortment. The world needs all kinds, in nature as well as society. Talking to all these people about nature and how we relate to it can be daunting but doable. In trying to make things clear to others I'm finding that the newbie fog is slowly dissolving.

So for now I think I'll put on those knee-length khaki shorts and head for the prairie. If anyone asks, just tell them the shorts are Armani.

Reaching Kids with Rhyme

HOO GOES THERE?
By Sharon Hanzik

Softly feathered for silent flight
Moving about in the calm moonlight.

We cannot hear them unless they call:
"Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?"

A soft call is carried away by the wind
Hoo, hoo-hoo, over and over again.

A flash of white swoops low overhead
Shh – shh, enough said!

Night-time hunters that see well in the dark
Almost never miss their mark.

Hearing is even better than sight
They hunt by sound on the darkest night.

With powerful talons to catch their prey
Rarely a rodent gets away.

In daylight, hidden, blending in well
An owl or a limb, it's hard to tell.

Meadow, forest, farm or town
Owls are great to have around.

They come in all sizes, live anywhere
Some species are common, some are rare.

Wherever they live, they add to the place
A sense of mystery and natural grace.

Sharon Hanzik *is a Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Naturalist & Wildlife Interpreter at Brazos Bend State Park. One of the highlights of her varied job is interacting with kids at the park. She writes poetry as one way to engage them in learning about the natural world.*

CPC History: In the Beginning . . .

Jeff McMullan is a founder of the Coastal Prairie Chapter.

The Coastal Prairie Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists can trace its beginnings to June, 2002. Wayne Rhoden, President of the Fort Bend Master Gardeners, had arranged a Master Gardener monthly program by Cecilia Riley, Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO). I was one of the attendees. During her visit, Cecilia asked us if the Master Gardeners would be interested in developing a Hummingbird Sanctuary as a volunteer project. The Wimmer family had recently donated a 22 acre tract of land on the San Bernard River in Ft. Bend County to GCBO. We said yes, and Wayne began to work on a proposal.

He presented it at the Ft. Bend Master Gardener Board of Directors meeting in June, 2002, noting that this would be an excellent Master Naturalist project…if only there were a Master Naturalist chapter in Fort Bend County. Wayne was a member of the Gulf Coast Chapter TMN and also a member of the Native Plant Society. He had sown the seeds for the Coastal Prairie Chapter.

Within only a few weeks, the "Wimmer Hummingbird Trail Task Force" began building steam, enlisting support from Texas Cooperative Extension, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Fort Bend County, the Brazos River Authority and, of course, GCBO. I was a member of the task force, and along with other volunteers explored the deep bottomland forest of the property, mapping a trail from the roadside and clearing a small area for parking. Several canoeing adventures showed promise for a San Bernard River canoe destination from the County's nearby Bates Allen Park. We approached neighboring landowners to seek an easement for a trail along the river linking the two properties. Ideas and dreams were abundant.

As sometimes happens though, paths don't lead to your expected destination. The "Wimmer Hummingbird Trail" never came to be. We realized that because the area is damp all but a few weeks of the year, we'd have to build an elevated walkway to make the site accessible, and that would be too costly. GCBO eventually donated the property to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service San Bernard Wildlife Refuge system. It remains undeveloped and is preserved as a rest stop for hummingbirds and other neotropical migrants.

The task force, meantime, had done a lot of work linking volunteers with government agencies, private companies, and other organizations, and soon focused on another goal. Along the way, the vision of a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter was never far from anyone's mind. On February 25, 2004 an organizational meeting convened in Rosenberg. Within a few short weeks, a charter application was submitted to the state TMN organization and plans were made for the first training class to begin August 12, 2004.

"We needed a name that was distinctive and descriptive… that reflected a natural characteristic or feature… a place, plant or animal."

Probably the most mundane of needs presented the biggest challenge to those of us in the new chapter. What would we name it? Most TMN chapter names are geographic, and some are better than others. Some have special meaning, a person or a unique or historical feature of the area. What should a TMN chapter name "say" anyway?

We began to understand why corporations invest huge amounts of energy into coming up with a name. It's a very important step toward establishing the group's identity and serves as a trademark or symbol. We needed a name that was distinctive and descriptive of, even unique to, the Waller-Fort Bend area and that reflected a natural characteristic or feature, our geographic area, honored an appropriate person or group, or a particular place, plant or animal.

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The Rippert Report

Linda Rippert

Linda Rippert, Membership Chair, has just finished tallying up the Coastal Prairie Chapter's volunteer hours for 2006. She reports in each issue on our accomplishments.

Every January, we compile some statistics to look at our chapter's performance the previous year. I find the numbers astounding to read, especially considering that we've been a chapter for only three years. Here's a quick summary of 2006:

Since our Chapter was established in 2004, we've logged a total of 1,264 hours of Advanced Training and 4,171 hours of Volunteer Service activities, with 950 hours of associated travel time.

Two members (Mary Beth McCaughey and Wendy Talkington) have completed more than 250 hours of Volunteer Service; one member (Cheryl Sedivec) has completed over 500 hours of Volunteer Service.

We've reached 6,660 people via direct and indirect outreach activities. Actually, we've done better than this, but I can't tell you how much better because many members have not yet sent in outreach counts for their activities. I'd like to see a big improvement in accurate outreach counts for 2007!

In case you're not clear on the distinction between "direct" and "indirect" outreach activities, let me explain: Direct outreach and education means actual hands-on classroom instruction for adults and/or children. Indirect outreach and education includes adults and children we reach via displays at events sponsored around the region by, for instance, Brazos Bend State Park and Katy Prairie Conservancy.

In the realm of training and certification, here's how things look on a class-by-class basis:

Class of 2004: Of its 21 members, 20 certified in the required twelve-month period, and 12 re-certified in 2006.

Class of 2005: In a class of 22 members, 16 have certified.

Class of 2006: Two of its 11 members have certified.

This totals 54 people who have been trained by our chapter as Texas Master Naturalists. Imagine what our numbers will be at five years, or ten years or more!

We're an awesome group, and we will grow and keep on astounding ourselves every year as we work together.

As Mary Beth would say: Onward!

CHAPTER DUES: If you haven't already done so, please remember to make your $20 chapter membership dues payment now. Checks should be made payable to CPTMN and sent to the attention of John Cotterell, Treasurer.

Member Accomplishments for 2006

Cheryl Sedivec *has earned a 500 hour milestone pin.*

These members have earned a 250 hour milestone pin:

Mary Beth McCaughey
Linda Rippert
Wendy Talkington

These members have recertified for a dragonfly pin, and earned a cactus pin:

David Giebelhaus (80+ Hours)
Margaret Giebelhaus (80+ Hours)
Wanda Hampton (110+ Hours)
Joyce Kristiansson (95+ Hours)
Donna Oppenheim (90+ Hours)
Bill Petty (80+ Hours)
Linda Rippert (220+ Hours)
Nancy Sparrow (85+ Hours)
Margaret Thuesen (100+ Hours)

These members have recertified for a cactus pin:

Tricia Bradbury (90+ Hours)
Peggy d'Hemecourt (140+ Hours)
Valerie Fogal (90+ Hours)
A.B. Gartman (40+ Hours)
Don Johnson (90+ Hours)
Penny Johnson (70+ Hours)
Mary Beth McCaughey (135+ Hours)
Margo McDowell (65+ Hours)
Jeff McMullan (70+ Hours)
Ed Plant (40+ Hours)
Cheryl Sedivec (280+ Hours)

These members have certified and earned a dragonfly pin:

Jim Brannon (40+ Hours)
Virginia Broman (40+ Hours)
John Cotterell (40+ Hours)
Kent Hampton (65+ Hours)
Tom Kanak (40+ Hours)
Ron Morrison (70+ Hours)
Nancy Schaaf (55+ Hours)
Gloria Scheel (60+ Hours)
Terri Schwab (40+ Hours)

Member Accomplishments for 2007, so far:

These members have completed their initial certification and earned a dragonfly pin:

Staci Hobbet
Jenn Mantei

Linda Rippert *has earned a 250 hour milestone pin*

Join Our Storyboard — Earn Volunteer Hours!

You may not know your own powers. But the first time you take an assignment as a volunteer staff member of this newsletter, you're going to discover that they're deeper and stronger than you suspected. It's a matter of focus, whether with the camera or the word. And all you really need is a good idea. Here are just a few of the assignments up for grabs for upcoming issues:

Photographs. We need photos taken by our own chapter members of coastal prairie species, our coastal prairie environment, and our chapter members at work in their volunteer and training roles. The clearer and closer the photos, the better, of course — so we can discern details, whatever the species.

A-day-in-the-life profiles of our chapter advisors and other movers and shakers in the TMN program and our community. How about Barron Rector? Or follow Cody Dennison around for a day, that man of many hats. There's Marissa Sipocz, who's one of our training class speakers and an energetic force in wetlands rehab, or Margo McDowell, who keeps the chapter running from Rosenberg. Or how about a profile of Bob Roenigk, that noble guy in Needville who founded Ft. Bend County's only farmers' market? He's a passionate advocate for local food, fighting against enormous odds to keep his tiny, weekly market rolling.

Book reviews. Did you just read E. O. Wilson's *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*? Or maybe Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*? If the book you're reading is related to natural history, we'd like to hear about it, pro or con.

In each issue we'll profile one species of **plant or animal** that lives in the coastal prairie. So write us a guide to Basic Alligator Facts. Or a close-up look at one of the native salvias. Tell us about the rapidly-expanding range of the Black-bellied Whistling Duck.

Newsletter contributions earn volunteer service hours. So let your imagination and curiosity lead you. If you're interested, we're interested! **-SH**

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I think that our chapter name fulfills these needs. It's a description of the most fundamental natural resource of our area, the area we serve with our education, outreach, and service. In addition, "Coastal Prairie Chapter" makes a fitting companion for the Texas Master Naturalist dragonfly, which is an amazingly powerful visual symbol.

We adopted the statement below as a message to convey what "Coastal Prairie Chapter" means, and how our chapter name is linked to the natural resources of our area. I hope it invokes thoughtful consideration of their beneficial management:

"The relatively flat uplands of Fort Bend and Waller Counties were once a poorly drained coastal prairie. The wide flat expanse of tall grass was dotted by pothole wetlands and laced by the forested corridors of the Brazos and San Bernard Rivers and their tributaries. Waller and Fort Bend County lie within the site carefully chosen for colonization by empresario Stephen F. Austin. European settlement left very little of the coastal prairie undisturbed by the plow or grazing livestock."

-Jeff McMullan

Randall Hobbet

An Ibis enjoys a sunbath at Brazos Bend State Park

Coming In Our May Issue . . .

. . . Get to know chapter advisors **Cody Dennison**, **Mark Countryman**, **David Lobpries**, & **Joe Mask**.

. . . Hear from **Tricia Bradbury**, TMN, TMG, about how to effectively address questions from the public such as, "How can I get rid of those creepy geckos in my garden? My dog can't catch them all."

. . . Focus on a single species of native plant endemic to the coastal prairie with **Mary Beth McCaughey**, TMN, TMG.

. . . Get to know another chapter member in "***The Spotlight***." It could be you!

. . . We'll feature your comments on the newsletter, and your suggestions for future issues in our mailbag feature, "***Postcards from the Hedge***".

. . . Get word from our VP Tom Kanak on the **speakers** he's nabbed for our upcoming chapter meetings.

. . . Enter into the world of wildlife rehabilitation with **Shannon Beliew**, TMN and Director of Rehab for the Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Coalition. She'll follow an injured animal from check-in to release.

. . .Learn about upcoming events and chapter projects, new and ongoing.

Deadline to submit articles for the May 1st issue is April 27th.

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS, ADVANCED TRAINING & VOLUNTEER SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

FEBRUARY

2nd: **Owl Prowl**, 7pm
Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary, 440 Wilchester Blvd., Houston; Reservations required (713) 464-4900 (2 AT)

3rd: **CHAPTER MEETING**
Field Trip to George Observatory, Brazos Bend State Park
6:00 p.m.

We'll take a field trip to the George Observatory in Brazos Bend State Park. The Observatory is part of the Houston Museum of Science and is an important educational facility for both children and adults in the region. It houses the Challenger Learning Center for Space Science Education, featuring simulated space missions, a mission control center, and a spacecraft simulator. Its three telescopes include one of the largest in the nation, the 36-inch Gueymard Research Telescope. Used for vital research as well as education, the telescopes are accessible to amateur and professional astronomers alike. If the weather cooperates, we may see Saturn's rings, the cloud belts on Jupiter, and a close-up of an almost-full moon. ***Note***: Unless you have an annual pass, you must pay $4 to enter Brazos Bend State Park, and the Observatory charges $5/person for this tour. Reservations for the tour must be made in advance by NOON on Friday, Feb. 2nd; through Tom Kanak (tkanak@hotmail.com), phone: (979) 793-6321. Tom will purchase all tickets and will meet chapter members outside the Observatory between 5-6 pm. For directions to the Observatory and other general information, see www.hmns.org and click on 'George Observatory,' then 'About George Observatory,' then 'Directions and Admission.' Alternately, see http://www.richardb.us/GeorgeObservatory/ or call the Observatory: 281-242-3055. Dress appropriately. Part of the tour will be outdoors. (1.5 AT)

Ft. Bend County Recycling Center, 8am—4pm (VSP)

Photo Walk, 3pm
Bird Photography. Brazos Bend State Park; meet at the Nature Center.

4th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP. Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

9th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP. Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

13th: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

26th: **Pest Management for Wildlife,** 9am-3:30pm (5 AT)
Bear Creek Ext. Auditorium, 3033 Bear Creek Dr., Houston

27th: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

MARCH

1st: **CHAPTER MEETING**
6:30 pm social; 7:00pm meeting & speaker
Bud O'Shieles Community Center, Rosenberg

Quick: What's the one bird that can fly backward? Hummingbirds, of course! Mark Klym has a passion for them, and he's coming in March to share it in a talk entitled **Hummingbirds & Native Plants: Making a Connection**." Mark is a co-author of *Hummingbirds of Texas*, a Texas A&M Press Nature Guide, a book that reviewers called 'spectacular' and 'stunning' when it was published in 2005. He's also an organizer of *The Hummingbird Roundup*, a citizen-science project run by the TPWD which has inspired people state-wide to feed hummingbirds and carefully note their behavior and activities. (1 AT)

Buff-bellied Hummingbird
Photo by Mark Klym, TPWD

3rd: **Ft. Bend County Recycling Center,** 8am—4pm (VSP)

Photo Walk, 5pm
Landscape Photography. Brazos Bend State Park; meet at the Nature Center.

Mass Tree Planting at Goat Island, 8am — ? (VSP)
Meet at Battleship Texas. Additional info on the website.

9th: **Owl Prowl,** 7pm
Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary, 440 Wilchester Blvd., Houston; Reservations required (713) 464-4900 (2 AT)

11th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP. Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

13th: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

16th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP. Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

27th: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

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Be sure to check the CPC Website for the most up-to-date Volunteer Projects and Advanced Training event information!

www.coastalprairie.org

Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in any Extension activities are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office for assistance 8 days prior to activity.

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APRIL

6th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP.
Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

7th: **CHAPTER MEETING**
Field Trip — TBA

Ft. Bend County Recycling Center, 8am—4pm (VSP)

Photo Walk, 5pm
Plant Photography. Brazos Bend State Park; meet at the Nature Center.

10th: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

14th: **Earth Day Celebration**, Brazos Bend State Park

15th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP.
Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

18th: **Gulf Coast Chapter Bug Collection Event** (VSP)
Please check the website calendar for updated information.

24th: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

Shannon Beliew snapped this gorgeous shot of the San Bernard River during an outdoor 2006 TMN training class.

MAY

3rd: **CHAPTER MEETING**
6:30 pm social; 7:00pm meeting & speaker
Waller County Fairgrounds, FM 359 1 mile south of Business Hwy 290, Hempstead, TX. Barbara Carpenter Building (on the right as you go in)
Native Plants as Food with Cody Dennison, CPC Advisor & Waller County Extension Agent
Alfalfa tea, anyone? Or maybe you'd prefer a delicate glass of hackberry wine with a little hors d'oeuvre of steamed purslane? The menu will sound better when Cody describes it. He'll talk about how native Americans and early settlers depended on native species for their survival, and how we don't – because we've lost our cultural knowledge of their uses. Here's a primer to correct that. (1 AT)

4th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP.
Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

5th: **Ft. Bend County Recycling Center,** 8am—4pm (VSP)

Photo Walk, 5pm
Bird Photography. Brazos Bend State Park; meet at the Nature Center.

6th: **Guided Birding Hike**, 8am-10am
Join Park Naturalists David Heinicke & Bill Godley at BBSP.
Meet @ 40 Acre Lake restrooms.

8th: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

22nd: **Rocking Horse Environment Club,** 4-5:30pm (VSP)
7310 Katy-Fulshear Road, Fulshear

Meet the Editors

Staci Hobbet, a member of the 2006 TMN class, is a writer and former journalist. She has worked as a volunteer naturalist in California and Oklahoma, and was a raptor rehabber in the San Francisco Bay area. Staci came to Texas with her husband, an exploration geologist, in 2004.

Jenn Mantei has been a nature lover since childhood. A student of conservation biology and field ecology, she's also a birder, master gardener and musician. A member of the 2006 TMN class, Jenn is eager to contribute her experience in desktop publishing to produce the first Coastal Prairie Chapter newsletter, and will be maintaining the chapter website.

Contributing Writers & Photographers:

Shannon Beliew, Amy Burt, Joyce Kristiansson, Sharon Hanzik, Randall Hobbet, Don Johnson, Mark Klym, Carolyn Mazzo, Jeff McMullan, Linda Rippert, Cheryl Sedivec

2007 Publication Dates:

February, May, August, November

Interested in Becoming a Coastal Prairie Master Naturalist?

Classes are planned for September, 2007. To add your name to the "interest" list, please send an e-mail to:

classes@coastalprairie.org

or call the Chapter office at (281) 633-7042.
Provide your name, home address, home telephone number and email address.

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

David S. Lobpries
Wildlife Division
Natural Resource Specialist IV

Texas Cooperative EXTENSION
The Texas A&M University System

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

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.

Partners of the Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists

Brazos Bend State Park
http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/brazos_bend/

City of Sugar Land http://www.sugarlandtx.gov/

Fort Bend County Extension Center
http://fortbend-tx.tamu.edu/

Waller County Extension Center
http://waller-tx.tamu.edu/

George Ranch Historical Park
http://www.georgeranch.org/

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
http://www.gcbo.org/

Katie Prairie Conservancy
http://www.katyprairie.org/home.html

Keep Sugar Land Beautiful www.kslb.org

Texas Master Naturalists
http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu/

Texas Parks & Wildlife www.tpwd.state.tx.us/

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