



We are a group of trained volunteers who share our appreciation and knowledge of nature with the community through outreach, education

Master Naturalists take on Rockport!

By Margo Johnson, AT Committee

Some of the CPCTMN “early birds” to Rockport paid their respects to the 1,000 year-old Big Tree at Goose Island State Park and were treated to good views of several species of birds as well. A nearby whooping crane family, plus many sandhill cranes and other wading birds, including roseate spoonbills, were there enjoying the sun.

On Saturday morning, after a hearty breakfast at the Lighthouse Inn, four couples met at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge for a self-guided tour which started with a merlin perched over the marsh at the Visitor Center. Lead by Wayne and Vickie Poorman, with Bob Schwartz and his trusty scope, the group spent several hours along the auto tour, stopping frequently to walk out. A Ranger at the Visitor Center stated that the latest count, this year, of returning whooping cranes there was slightly in excess of 300!

One early highlight was a little blue heron with two white juvenile herons on the shore and turning around, a male pyrrhuloxia posed at length for good viewing, a life bird for some. At Jones Lake, we saw all three teal species, the sole cinnamon fairly gleaming in the sun, plus a number of other dabblers and waders. All total, 41 species were sighted at the refuge. [continued on the next page]

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Chapter events and nature-related articles, photos, and items of interest to the chapter need to be sent to [Lynn](#) by the 15th of the month. Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome. Thanks.

**Lynn Trenta, Courier
Editor**



Rockport (continued)

In the afternoon, several folks toured the beautifully restored Fulton Mansion (walking distance from the Inn) and others found a pottery show by Rockport's local artists. A good dinner at Charlotte Plummer's was enhanced by special margarita glasses as brightly colored as the days' birds.

Intrepid naturalists were up early (or stayed up late) for views of the aligned five planets bright in the night sky. When Sunday morning finally dawned, it was clear, bright and CALM!

The group gathered at the Wharf Cat which we had all to ourselves. Captain Ed took us for a four-hour trip to see nearly all the whooping crane families wintering at Aransas. Our guide, Ray Kirkwood from the local TMN chapter, pointed out and named the whoopers, gave histories of the previous long-lived birds, like "Old Man Lobstick" who had sired a number of the current flock over his 30+ year life span.

We saw a "teenage gang" of three whooper poachers who took flight when the resident family returned to one of the small barrier islands. We were amazed to see six whooping cranes in the air at once, barely the length of the boat away! Other treats were large numbers of reddish egrets and great blue (and other) herons in breeding plumage. We sited 42 whoopers, more than 10% of the population there.

Photos courtesy of Wayne Poorman. To see more of Wayne's photos of the trip you can go to this link: <https://goo.gl/photos/zsXhjrbitNbiGbhx8>



42 Chapter Members Re-certify for 2015

The members who certified for 2015 are listed below. Congratulations!

The total number of hours for this group was 6112.75 hours VSP and 835.5 hours of AT.

The average number of hours per member was 145.542 VSP hours and 19.893 AT hours.

Many thanks to Jade Hems, Membership Director, for compiling these figures.

Rick Adams
Jim Butcher
Than Colvin
John Cotterell
Rick Davison
Stella Davison
Susie Doe
Diane Eismont
Jamie Fairchild
Kim Farou
Johnny Fife
Jade Hems
Nancy Huffman
Lea Hyman
Don Johnson
Margo Johnson
Penny Johnson
Linda Lourim
Leon Macha
Gary Moore
Kathy Moore
Mark Morgenstern
Amy Norvell
Chad Norvell
Vicki Poorman
Wayne Poorman

Linda Rippert
David Risch
Sandra Rushworth
Diane Russell
Gloria Scheel
Jane Schnell
Carol Schwartz
Robert Schwartz
Sharon Smith
Reene Spahr
Ron Spahr
Nancy Sparrow
Michelle Sullivan
Lynn Trenta
Susan Walther
Jeffrey Wellman



Mary Anne Weber and Friends Highlight the Importance of Bird Friendly Communities

By Jade Hems, CPCTMN Membership Director



Members were treated to a wonderful presentation by Houston Audubon Society Education Director, Mary Anne Weber, at Bob Lutts Simonton/ Fulshear Library. Mary Anne talked about the importance of creating bird friendly habitats in our backyards and community spaces. Habitat destruction is the leading cause of declining bird populations, and the greatest losses are in our coastal prairies and their grassland bird communities. While conservation on a large scale is vital, there is much we can do to help in our own backyards and community spaces, no matter how small. A park, small backyard, patio or even a balcony, can make a difference for migratory and resident bird species if we offer appropriate food, water and shelter, and use native plant species.

The highlight of the evening came when Mary Anne introduced her three educational birds, whom she brought along for us to meet! Skeeter, a Mississippi Kite and Luna, a Swallow-tailed Kite, were both found injured during migration and rehabilitated. These birds highlight the importance of migratory connectivity- what happens on the wintering grounds in Argentina, at stop-over points along the migratory path, and at the breeding grounds, all combine to impact populations of these species. Kites are grasshopper specialists and they eat on the wing- yes they eat and fly at the same time! Mary Anne likened this behavior to texting while driving, as it has a similar result- Skeeter collided with power lines, at four months of age, during his first migration. Swallow-tailed Kites migrate through our area. We can help these and other insect eating birds, such as Purple Martins, by promoting healthy insect populations, growing native plants and not using insecticides. Resident species benefit too. We may see our Chickadee as a seed eater at our backyard feeder, but they feed their babies caterpillars- 6,000 to 9,000 to raise just one brood!

Percy; a very fluffy Eastern Screech Owl, who despite his diminutive size, consumes two whole mice a day, was found shot in Bear Creek Park, at just one month old. Smaller than a Northern Cardinal, and perfectly camouflaged, this is not a species you may easily to see, though you might hear its trilling or whinnying call. Screech Owls readily take to nest boxes, such as those installed at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. We can help owls and other raptors, by avoiding using rodenticides. These pass up the food chain and kill the birds who consume the rodents. Those with adequate habitat on their land were advised to encourage owls to nest, by providing boxes, platforms etc. as they make natural rodent control. To see owls, Mary Anne suggested we attend one of Houston Audubon Society's Owl Prowls. Check HAS website for details.



Take a Close Look at the Common Grackle!

By Diane and Jack Eismont

In breeding season, the male sports iridescent plumage & in this area, we can see two variations - Purple (the Eastern Form found in the Southeast to New England) and Bronze (northwest of here to the Rocky Mountains). These photos were taken by a wildlife camera on 1/8/16 & 1/9/16 in the same location in Waller County.



Are Your Nest Boxes Ready for Spring?

You never know what creature will call your nest box home!

This Green Tree Frog moved in after the birds moved out & stayed until cold weather.

Diane & Jack Eismont, CPCTMN



Chapter Volunteers Shine at the Holy Rosary's Texas Cultural Heritage Day

By Jim Butcher

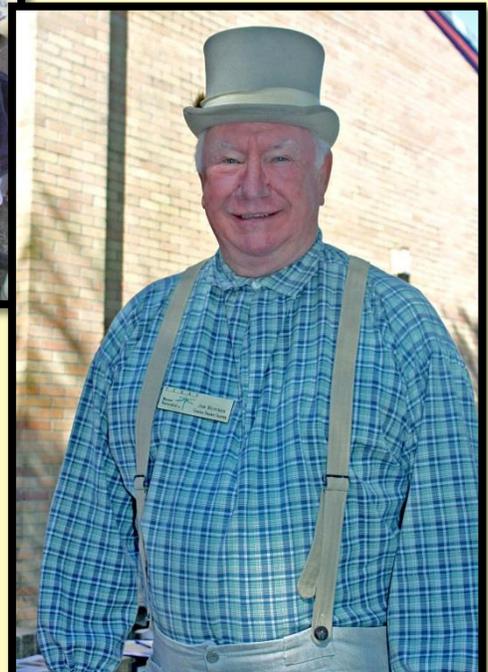
At this year's Texas Cultural Heritage Day at the Holy Rosary Catholic School, chapter volunteers conducted 20 minute presentations to various grade levels. We discussed Texas history and Fort Bend heritage, skulls, skins and scat of various wild animals residing in the county, as well as monarch butterfly life cycles. In the morning the presenters were Carol Schwartz, Diane Russell, Doug Simons and Michelle Sullivan. Michelle, Natalia Crawford and I [Jim] took on the afternoon presentations. Jeff Mc Mullen, a CPCTMN Member was also there teaching about bees. This was a day well-spent and many thanks go to our participating chapter volunteers. Photos below are courtesy of Natalya Crawford and Diane Russell.



Carol and Doug teach Holy Rosary students about critters.



Carol shows children Monarch chrysalises.



Jim in Texas Heritage Attire (photo-Diane Russell)

Holy Rosary's Texas Cultural Heritage (continued)



"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin" William Shakespeare

Diane Russell Collaborates with KISD Schools on Butterfly Gardens

*Diane Russell has begun collaboration this year between Cinco Ranch High School with teacher Sofia Peruzzi, and Wolman Elementary, with teacher Christina Foley, to create a monarch waystation on the grounds of the elementary school. On Saturday, February 7, 14 high school volunteers met to germinate over 1000 seeds of butterfly-friendly native nectar plants, as well as the Monarch host plant, *Asclepias curassavica*. Hopefully in a month or two there will be many small plants to bump up into 4x4" pots. At the same time, Eagle Scout Ottavio Peruzzi and his scout pack will be putting in a butterfly garden into a large, partially-enclosed, vacant area outside of some the classrooms at the elementary school. It is hoped that before the school year ends, both high school and elementary students can participate together in the planting of the garden. Wolman Elementary PTA is enthusiastic to ensure that the garden is irrigated and maintained over the summers, while the students will be responsible for its maintenance the rest of the year. Ms. Foley's science class will then have a real life laboratory for studies of the caterpillars with her students, and hopefully, opportunities to tag the butterflies as they migrate to Mexico in the fall.*

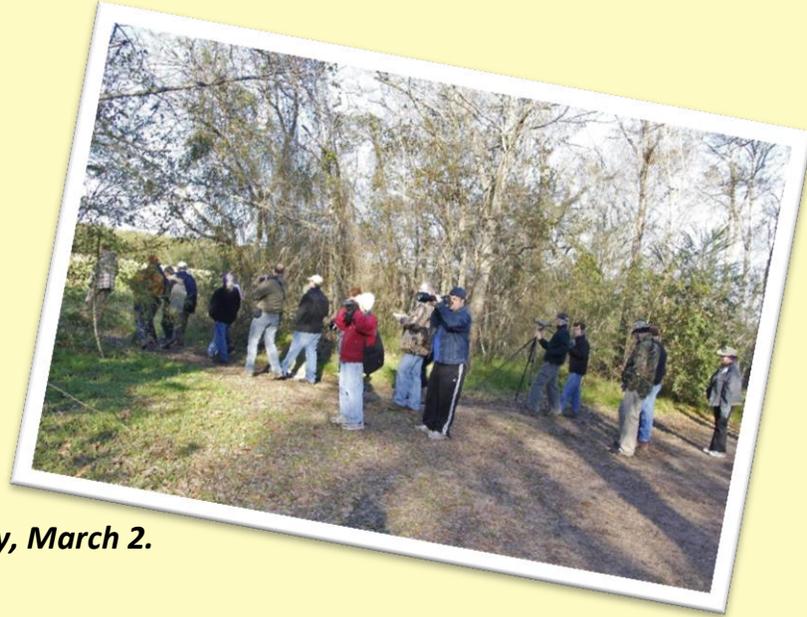


Seabourne Creek Nature Park

FEBRUARY BIRD HIKE

Wayne and Vicki Poorman, CPCTMN
Bird Hike Coordinators

On our February Bird Hike, 11 Chapter members and 13 visitors enjoyed a beautiful morning at Seabourne Creek Nature Park, and helped spot 47 species of birds! Come join us for the next hike, on Texas Independence Day, Wednesday, March 2.



SEABOURNE CREEK HOME TO COOPER'S HAWKS

Wayne Poorman stated on Facebook that "one of my favorite shots from Seabourne Creek Nature Park shows a nesting Cooper's Hawk tending to her young. Marguerite Baumgartner, mother of my friend, Karl Baumgartner, wrote [the following] in her book Oklahoma Bird Life.

"About the Cooper's Hawk...Once in a lifetime one may meet a blue darter eye to eye. Fierce even in repose, the eyes of the old birds are ruby red; those of the young glitter yellow-gold. Whatever the color, they are the eyes of our diminishing wilderness."

Cooper's Hawks rarely nest in Fort Bend County, so this, maybe, was one of those "once in a lifetime" events. Photo below courtesy of Wayne Poorman.





Seabourne Creek Nature Park Projects

By Karl Baumgartner, SCNP Project Manager

- **CITY COUNCIL/RDC PRESENTATION** RDC Director Randall Malik requested a presentation of our recent Seabourne projects and a historical perspective of CPCTMN Grant performance since inception in 2009 was presented as part of the presentation. Attending were Diane Russell, Wayne Poorman, and Karl Baumgartner.
- **THE NEW CHAPTER GREENHOUSE** has been shipped in boxes and will be installed as soon as a 10" tall crushed granite pad is put down. The model, 8' by 20', was selected by Mark Morgenstern last year and Mark, Lynn Trenta and Jim Butcher have inspected a slightly smaller version that Karl had bought for home use based on Mark's recommendation.
- **A 1000' WALKING TRAIL** has been laid out and disked through the Seabourne Prairie and 4 truckloads of crushed granite are coming this week from Johnson City, TX. The Rosenberg City Parks and Recreation and Street Department are going to spread it for us.
- **Trays of FORBS (HERBACEOUS FLOWERING PLANTS THAT ARE NOT GRASSES)** are being planted and bumped up, to create a beautiful colorful prairie, organized and led by Jim Butcher, Linda Lourim, Lynn Trenta, and other volunteers. Also planted in the prairie during the week were approximately 50 mature Eastern Gama grass plants and 50 Little Bluestem transplants.
- **THE EDIBLE AND USEFUL GARDEN** Amber Leung is about to finalize the layout for the garden. The first tree has been planted and she is close to completing the inventory design and starting a layout plan of a drip irrigation system.
- **INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL** The spraying of Round-up on invasives Vasey Grass, KR Bluestem and Deep-rooted sedge is getting closer to providing good control over the non-native invasives that dominated the park when we started in 2009, thereby enabling us to start transplanting native plants along the walking trail and throughout the prairie.
- **NEW BIRD VIEWING SANCTUARY** Bill Johnson, Rick Adams, Bob Schwartz, and Karl Baumgartner met with Eagle Scout candidate Cade Meaux at the site to plan its development.
- **SCNP PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS** received from chapter members will be collated and summarized next month.
- **SCNP 2015 GRANT** ends on March 31, 2016 at which time the funds will be exhausted. In March we will present to the RDC a schedule of proposed improvements and estimated expenditures for 2016.



Seabourne Creek Nature Park Projects (continued)

- **LDS VOLUNTEERS PLANT TREES** *February 11, Thursday, 10 Latter Day Saint's volunteers teamed up with our chapter's volunteers to plant trees at Seabourne. Karl Baumgartner, Clayton Brand, Jim Butcher, Sal Cardenas, Bill and Margo Johnson and Amber Leung guided the young volunteers in planting replacement trees and others in the prairie, around the walking path and near the woodlands.*
- **PLANT STUDY GROUP EXPLORES** *Susie Doe led the chapter plant study group on a wonderful plant walk, exploring the native and non-native plant life at Seabourne. Karl Baumgartner, Jim Butcher, Margo and Bill Johnson, Wayne and Vicki Poorman, and Lynn Trenta enjoyed the informative walk, which began and ended at the demo garden area after making a large loop around the new prairie path. The weather was gorgeous and the company congenial. Future walks may take place in a variety of locations.*
- **FIELD TRIP TO ARMAND BAYOU NATURE CENTER** *CPCTMN is researching nature centers in order for our representatives, Karl Baumgartner, Wayne Poorman, and Diane Russell, to advise the city of Rosenberg about a new nature center to be built at Seabourne Creek Nature Park.*

February 4th, 8 chapter members set out for Armand Bayou Nature Center to check out their facilities and to learn about their history. Karl Baumgartner, Jimmie Brannon, Jim Butcher, Roger Hathorn, Donna Pisani, Diane Russell, Carol Schwartz, Sharon Smith and Lynn Trenta toured the nature center, stopping to talk to the personnel in the visitor's center, among them a fellow master naturalist. She told us the history of Armand Bayou and how they had developed it over the years.

The Armand Bayou Nature Center encompasses 2500 acres and facilities include an 1800's farm house and historical area, a prairie, a woodland area, plant nursery with greenhouse, nature center, exhibition building, and a visitor's center.



Amber Leung is Finalist in Texas Night Sky Festival's Photography Contest!

Amber Leung's images "Great Orion Nebula", and "Galactic Center", seen below, have been selected by the contest juror for the 2016 Texas Night Sky Festival Photography Contest Exhibition on March 5th. This is part of the Texas Night Sky Festival held in Dripping Springs.

They will have an electronic exhibition of the 25 selected images and also a simple exhibition of prints of the award-winning images at the event. The contest organizers will print and display the award-winning images.

The Festival will be from 3:00 pm - 10:00 pm on March 5th at the Dripping Springs Ranch Park and Event Center, 1042 Event Center Drive, in Dripping Springs. The award winners will be announced at the Festival.

Congratulations, Amber!



Galactic Center



Great Orion Nebula

One of the “Dirty Dozen” Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*)

Contributed by Carol Schwartz, CPCTMN State Representative

Cogongrass was originally introduced from Southeast Asia to Southeastern United States in the early 20th century for soil stabilization. Parts of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi are now heavily infested, with the grass spreading as far west as Texas and as far north as North Carolina. It is ranked as one of the ten worst weeds in the world.

Cogongrass requires full to partial sun, which allows the grass to take over pastures, meadows and even wooded areas quickly. This perennial grass utilizes disturbed ecosystems such as rights of way as well. It spreads via white, scaly rhizomes that create dense circular mats. The stiff leaves grow up to 4 feet in height and an inch wide, have finely serrated margins and an off-centered white midrib (see picture at right), are covered in hairs on the upper surface at the base (see picture at right), and terminate in a sharp point. Silky white flowers form on a panicle that can reach up to 11 inches

Cogongrass produces thousands of tiny tufted seeds that resemble dandelion seeds and are carried by wind. Both rhizomes and seeds can be carried to new sites via contaminated soil and equipment. The dense mats of cogongrass prohibit the growth of other plant species and create a serious fire hazard as they alter the normal fire regime of a landscape. Fires burn hotter and occur more frequently where cogongrass is present, which can destroy native plant species, displacing native animal and insect species by eliminating food sources, shelter and nesting sites.

Because cogongrass infestations pose a serious risk to ecosystems as well as community safety, it is currently on the Federal noxious weed list and is either classified as a noxious weed, quarantined or prohibited in the states of AL, CA, FL, HI, MN, MS, NC, OR, SC and VT. It is also one of the “Dirty Dozen” pest species identified by the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Council. Therefore, it is one of the “Report It!” alert species on the Texasinvasives.org website and reporting app.

If you believe you have found cogongrass, please [report this species](#).

Follow [this link](#) (pdf) for more information on cogongrass.



CPTMN 2016 Board Members

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- Vice President [Sharon Smith](#)
- Secretary [Amber Leung](#)
- Treasurer [Doug Simons](#)

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- Programs [Sharon Smith](#)
- Communication [Lynn Trenta](#)
- Volunteer Service Projects [Michelle Sullivan](#)
- Membership [Jade Hems](#)
- New Class [Wayne Helbert](#)
- Advanced Training- [Jimmy Brannon](#)
- New Class Representative [C.J. McDaniel](#)
- State Representative [Carol Schwartz](#)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://txmn.org/coastal/>

Focus on the Wild Photography Contest from TPWF



FOCUS ON THE WILD
JANUARY'S WINNER:
JIM LIVINGSTON
"Eternal Wheel of Time"



Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation is offering a year-long photography contest with a different theme for each month. To find out more about it go to: http://www.tpwf.org/focusonthewild/?utm_source=Email-TPWF&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=Feb-Photo-Text&utm_campaign=Enews2016

This month's photo contest theme is Rivers and Streams in Texas. To have a chance at winning, be sure your photo fits the theme and is submitted by the 25th of February. Read the [contest rules](#) to find out more.

Good luck – we're looking forward to seeing and sharing our state's beautiful rivers and streams

Check out our Facebook Page at [TXMN Coastal Prairie Chapter Facebook](#)

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