



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

A Night with the Owls *By Diane Russell*

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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**



On February 7th our Chapter members went to Edith Moore Sanctuary to learn more about owls from Mary Anne Weber, Education Director for Houston Audubon Society.

We began our study in the 1932 Edith Moore log cabin education center with Mary Anne's interesting strigine presentation – how many birders know that word? She touched on many topics and referred to many types of owls – snowy, elf, great gray, boreal, barn. Interesting facts, such as how owl ear anatomy helps them locate prey, how they can twist their heads almost 270 degrees due to extra cervical vertebrae, and wonderful owl videos, made this a fascinating evening.

Then she brought out her rescue owls to continue the discussion, and these included a great horned owl, a barred owl and a tiny Eastern screech owl. What fascinated me in particular was that 24 years with the great horned owl did not make his cold owlish heart fonder for her, and in fact this owl has remained a dangerous predator at all times that requires great vigilance in handling. This is apparently true of all owls, as opposed to the cuddlier parakeets and parrots some of us grew up with.

To wrap it up, we headed out into the woods with a call to attract the local screech owls, and were immediately rewarded right by the parking lot with a large female who flew nearby from tree to tree and allowed us to observe her very clearly with our flashlights as she posed quietly and stared at us with her huge yellow eyes. Being female, she was considerably larger than the little rescue male we saw earlier. What a great evening!

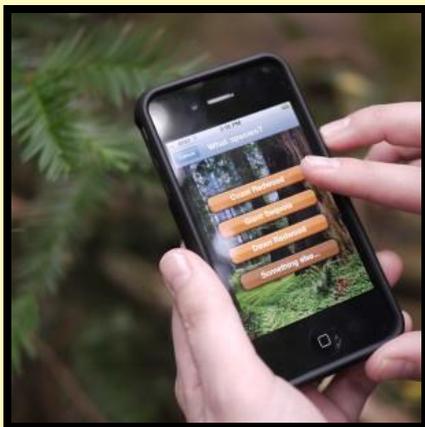
Thanks again to Mary Anne, Houston Audubon and Edith Moore Sanctuary for their fine work and hosting our group.

Chapter Program on Nature Photography

Our March Program is going to be a Nature Photography Workshop by John Donaho and Amber Leung on March 2nd, 6:30-8:30pm at the Civic Center. "An introduction to nature photography techniques. Attendees encouraged to bring their preferred camera for a hands-on exploration of focal length, shutter speed, and depth of field. DSLR not required, but helpful. Remember; the best camera is the one you have with you!" We hope to see you there!



Join the iNaturalist Challenge



Below is the notice that was sent out to let people know about an iNaturalist Challenge coming up. The CPCTMN Board agreed that this would be a fun event for us to take part in. We hope to be participating in this by taking some field trips and using our iNaturalist app. It's also a great way to learn how to use iNaturalist. To get started go to <http://www.inaturalist.org/> to learn about the app. Further communication is forthcoming.

"Join Texas Parks & Wildlife, the Audubon Society, and many others in a fun challenge to see which city can document the most species during April 14 - 18. It is easy to participate by joining an event, or making observations on your own using the iNaturalist app. With the iNaturalist app, you just take a picture of a plant or animal, and the community will help identify which species it is. Any observation in the greater metropolitan area of each city will count during the five day challenge. You can participate by exploring the life in your backyard, in your local park, or on a field trip with your local naturalist group. Not only is this a competition between Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, and Houston, cities across the nation are participating, let's show them what we got!"

Memorials for Bill Godley

By Wayne Poorman

Vicki and I were very saddened to learn of the passing of our beloved Fribbish. He was such a kind and gentle man, and a wonderful, patient teacher.

Bill took us "under his wing" as we began to record the bird species at Seabourne Creek Park. He was always there for us, to answer our questions, to teach us, to inspire us. We will miss him very much.

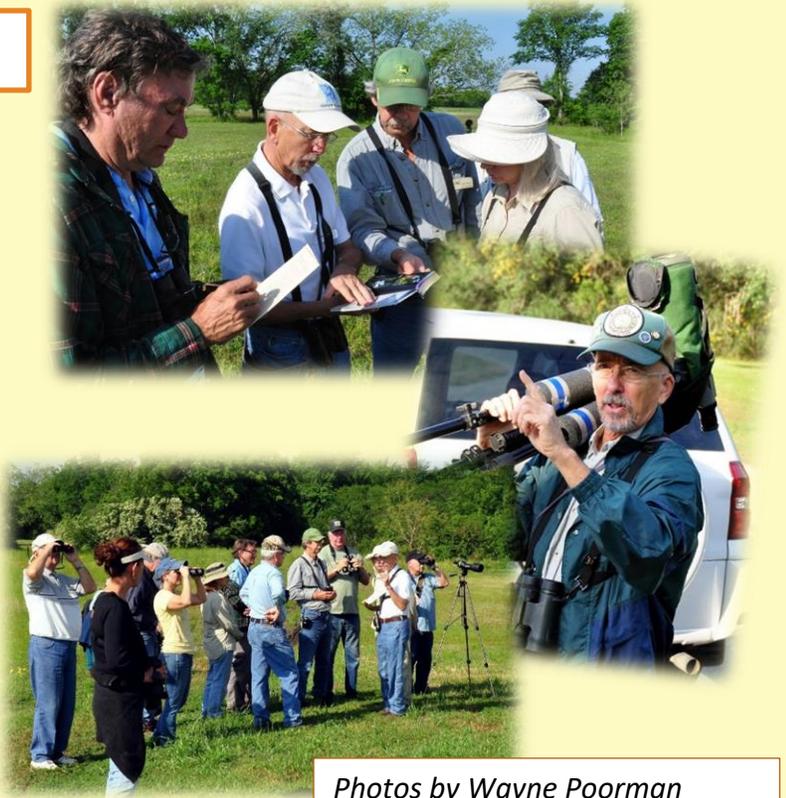
Here are some photos of Bill in his element, doing what he loved to do...

By Susan Walther

Bill and I worked at the same company but I didn't actually know him until after he retired. In Spring of 2000, I was recovering from depression caused by job stress and was taking a few weeks off work. I don't remember who gave me Bill's contact information, but I did get in touch with him and it changed my life. He introduced me to birding and the wonderful biodiversity of our part of Texas, including trips to Brazos Bend, High Island, Bolivar, and Galveston. As so many of you know, he was a wonderful teacher. His enthusiasm for each species of bird we saw was highly contagious, and hooked me immediately. From him I learned to call yellow-rumped warblers "butter butts" and any unidentified sparrow an LBJ (Little Brown Job). He also shared his opinions that the dictionary definition of the color yellow should be a photograph of a prothonotary warbler, and that it is OK to pronounce the name of the popular large woodpecker as either "pill-eated" or "pile-eated". I was always delighted when Bill would announce, loudly and with a huge smile, that he was "often wrong but never in doubt!" about his identification of a briefly-glimpsed bird.

I took my new love of birding and joined the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteers, enjoying my part in that fine organization for over five years until my husband and I doubled-down on my love of nature by buying our own property an hour west of here in Columbus. We love our little slice of nature and spend most weekends there. In recent years, I've joined the Texas Master Naturalists - Coastal Prairie Chapter, and am very much enjoying this wonderful group of like-minded nature enthusiasts.

Bill showed me that there is so, so much more to life than work in an office, and that a person's years in retirement - a phase I hope to enter soon - can be intensely busy, meaningful and fulfilling. I hope to follow in his footsteps and use the many years ahead to share a love of the natural world with the next generation. And whenever I see one of the dozens of bird species he first helped me identify, I'll think of him and smile.



Photos by Wayne Poorman

VSP Everywhere!

Tree Planting Competition in Missouri City (Facebook)

Kristi Johnson headed up our group in the 2017 Regional Tree Planting Competition with the Houston Area Urban Forestry Council. Teams were invited to participate in the 10th Annual tree planting competition for the Greater Houston Region. Our group teamed up with our sister group, FB Master Gardeners and Robin Winfree headed up the Master Gardeners. The competition was free and donations towards future HAUFC tree plantings welcomed. Food was provided by Center Point Energy.

Among the chapter members who participated were Jim Butcher, Margo and Bill Johnson, Cynthia McConathy, Mac McDowell, and Michelle Sullivan. Way to go, Naturalists!



New Martin House at Seabourne Lake *By Jade Hems (Facebook)*

Purple Martins who return to our area this month, will find this nice new Purple Martin Gourd Rack ready for occupation! CPCTMNs Johnny Fife and Rick Adams installed the new rack with twelve gourds by the fishing lake at Seabourne Creek Nature Park.

Purple Martins hunt for insects on the wing, and can be seen swooping over the fishing lake.

Take a look next time you visit and let us know if you see any Purple Martins showing an interest in the new accommodations!

Thank you, Johnny and Rick, for all your hard work on this project.



Prairie Plantings Continue at Seabourne *By Lynn Trenta*



Photo by Mark Morgenstern

February 1st, the LDS Volunteers came out and planted around 192 prairie plants in the prairie. Several chapter members were on hand to supervise. Among them, from left to right in the photo, were Bill Johnson, Roger Hathorn, Karl Baumgartner, Lynn Trenta, Jim Butcher, Donna Pisani, and Amber Leung. Linda Lourim, Mark Morgenstern, and Margo Johnson (not in the photo) were there helping as well. Thanks to both groups of volunteers.

We are also propagating and bumping up plants, as well as preparing the demo garden for spring plantings. Since January, we have bumped up an impressive 709 plants. Come out enjoy the good weather and good company!

Chapter Members Help at Prescribed Burn *By Jade Hems (Facebook)*



CPCTMN President Amber Leung and Past-President Diane Russell, were hard at work assisting with a Prescribed Burn on a prairie restoration in Fulshear on February 11th . Fire is important in maintaining a healthy prairie ecosystem. A Prescribed Burn, as part of a prairie restoration, is a way to safely achieve the benefits of fire in a controlled way. Fire removes woody plants that would otherwise take over, and shallow rooted invasives. Deep rooted prairie plants survive the fire and return in the soil enriched by the burn. Woody plants and invasives have been removed. Deep rooted prairie plants have survived the burn and will return in the newly enriched soil. Great work CPCTMNs!

Chapter Members Volunteer at Fishtastics

Chapter members were on hand at Fishtastics on February 18th to help the kids who came out to fish at this time-honored fund event and competition at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Many thanks to Cynthia McConathy, Lea Hyman and Bill Johnson, who were among the chapter volunteers.



Sea Turtle Saturday *Text by Carol Schwartz, Photos by Bob Schwartz and Debby Wendt*

**February 11, 2017 NOAA Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary
Galveston, TX**

Five members of the Coastal Prairie Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist attended this event recently and received AT credit. Attendance is limited to 100 people and is hosted each year by the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council. Speakers included Brian Higgins and Lindsey Howell from NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Adm.), Dr. Joe Flanagan, Sr. Veterinarian at the Houston Zoo and a Turtle Island Restoration Network speaker.

Participants received current and historical information on the status of all seven sea turtle species, with an emphasis on the five found in the Gulf of Mexico. Those five are: Kemp's Ridley, Hawksbill, Loggerhead, Green and Leatherback. Of these five, Kemp's Ridley is the most endangered and smallest but is also the Texas State Turtle.

The life cycle of sea turtles was reviewed, detailing egg laying locations, timeline, incubation, and temperature as it relates to sex determination. The severe decline in all sea turtle populations since 1947 is attributed to multiple factors including poor fishing and shrimping practices, loss of nesting habitat, illegal slaughter & egg capture, oil spills and discarded fishing gear and plastics. An up close and personal encounter with a TED (Turtle Excluder Device), now required on fishing and shrimping vessels, was experienced as well. The TED allows captured turtles to escape fish & shrimp nets, thus preventing their unintentional drowning. Currently loggerhead turtles are being raised at the Galveston NOAA facility to facilitate TED testing of design improvements. Following the speakers' presentations, a short walk led to the building where approximately 200 loggerhead turtles, at various stages, are being raised. Facilitators were most gracious in answering our every question and allowed us to take many photos.

Debbie Wendt, Program Chair, is in contact with the staff at Padre Island National Seashore in hopes of arranging a field trip for chapter members later this summer. At that time egg-laying, incubation and hatching will have all been accomplished and hopefully we will be able to witness the release of this year's hatchlings. So, stay tuned!

Debby, Carol, Gloria, Bob and Linda



Gloria Scheel added that balloons can harm the turtles, as they eat anything in the water and that the patrols harvest the newly-laid eggs carefully, after seeing the tracks in the sand.

In Our Own Backyards

The American Gold finch is Back *By Diane Eismont*

These winter migrants are only here for a short time. This winter I first saw small flocks on patches of Giant Ragweed on December 27th eating the seed on the stalks.

A month later on January 28th, with perhaps most of the weed seeds gone, they came to the platform feeders. Like last year, just in time for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Watch for them - they are delightful small songbirds!

At feeders, they're known to prefer black oil sunflowers & thistle seeds (think thistle socks!).

I believe the birds pictured are all females (plus one chipping sparrow).



Bob Schwartz captured a Loggerhead Shrike's prey



Amber Leung with Gulf Coast Ribbon Snake and Bobcat



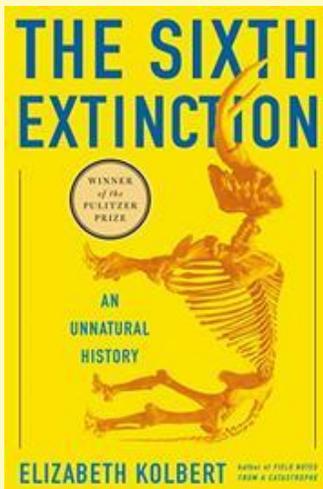
Eagle Scout Needs Pollinator Plants for Project-Rick Adams

Rick Adams is working with an Eagle Scout candidate (Ethan Sicking, Troop 1000) who is planning a pollinator garden for Brazos Park, in North Rosenberg. He has a local business sponsoring him, and he just received final approval from the Rosenberg City Council. He is in pretty good shape for layout design and plants, but he needs some help finding native milkweed plants and possibly other native pollinator plants.

People can contact Rick at jra4242@yahoo.com or 713-410-5428. Ethan will build the garden over the next 4 weeks.



Book Corner

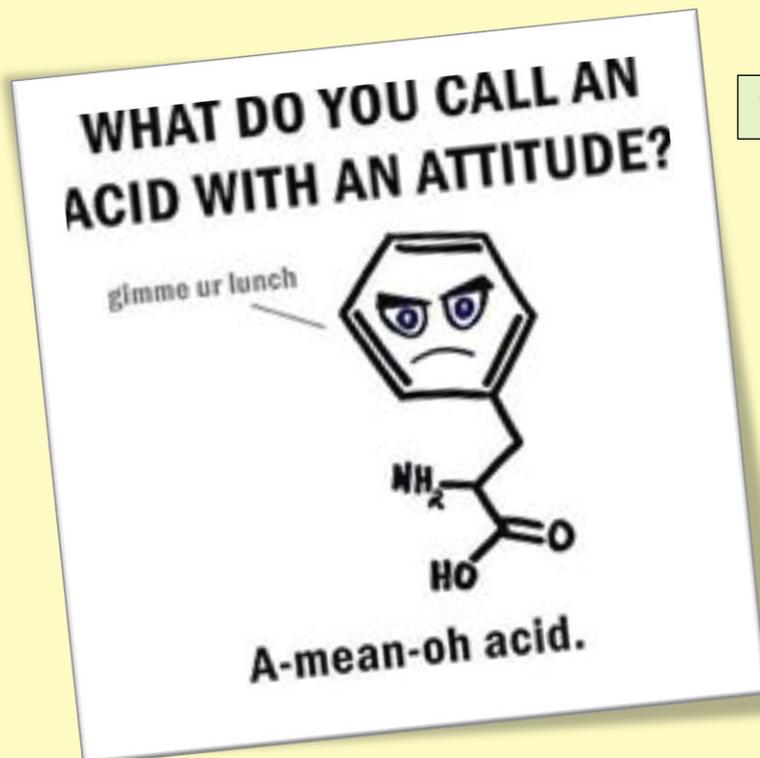
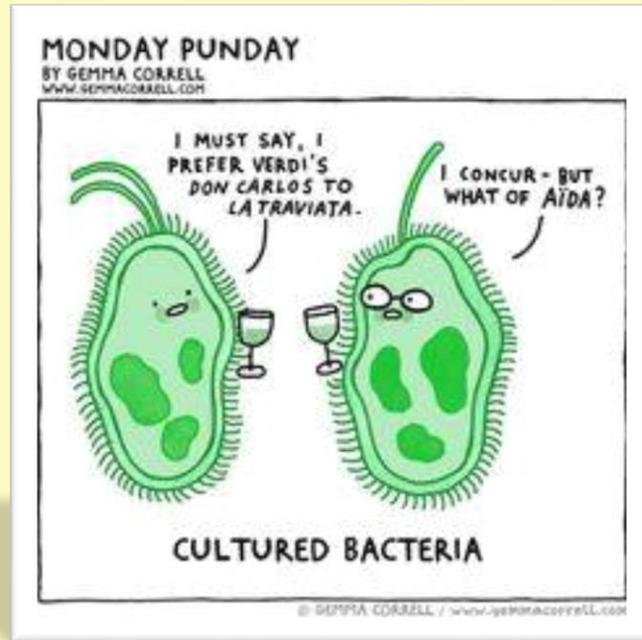


New Yorker staff writer Kolbert (Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change, 2006, etc.) returns with a deft examination of the startling losses of the sixth mass extinction occurring at this moment and the sobering, underlying cause: humans.

Although “background extinction” continuously occurs in varying slow rates among species, five major mass extinctions mark the past. Scientists theorize that all of these—from the extinction of the Ordovician period, which was caused by glaciation, to the end of the Cretaceous, caused by the impact of a celestial body on the Earth’s surface—were the results of natural phenomena. Today, however, countless species are being wiped out due to human impact. Global warming, ocean acidification and the introduction of invasive species to new continents are only a few ways that we are perpetrating harsh new realities for those organisms unable to withstand radical change. Kolbert documents her travels across the globe, tracing the endangerment or demise of such species as the Panamanian golden frog, the Sumatran rhino and many more. The author skillfully highlights the historical figures key to the understanding of the planet’s past and present turmoil, including Charles Darwin and Georges Cuvier, the first to theorize extinction as a concept. Throughout her extensive and passionately collected research, Kolbert offers a highly readable, enlightening report on the global and historical impact of humans, “one weedy species” that may offer valiant efforts to save endangered species but who are continually causing vast, severe change. Kolbert also weaves a relatable element into the at-times heavily scientific discussion, bringing the sites of past and present extinctions vividly to life with fascinating information that will linger with readers long after they close the book.

A highly significant eye-opener rich in facts and enjoyment.

The Lighter Side



Thanks to John Donaho (from Facebook)

CPTMN 2017
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 Vice President [Debby Wendt](#)
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- Communication [Lynn Trenta](#)
- Volunteer Service Projects [Margo "Mac" McDowell](#) (interim)
- Membership [Michelle Sullivan](#)
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- Advanced Training [Margo Johnson](#)
- Publicity [Teresa Bailey](#)
- New Class Representative--Open

- State Representative [Carol Schwartz](#)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://txmn.org/coastal>

Plant Classes and Walks Begin Again!



Beginning Saturday, February 11th, Susie Doe resumed leading Plant Walks at Seabourne Creek Park. The Plant Study Group will meet for walks on the SECOND Saturday of each month, usually at Seabourne, but there will also be walks scheduled at other locations.

Beginning on Tuesday, March 7th, the Plant Study Group will also meet for monthly classroom sessions. Susie plans to begin more in depth studies of various plant families (e.g. Fabaceae [Pea F.], Euphorbiaceae [Euphorbia F.], Lamiaceae [Mint F.], etc.). We will meet either at the AgCenter or at the Rosenberg Community Center from 7pm to no later than 9 pm. All members of the Coastal Prairie Chapter are invited to participate. You do not need to have participated previously to join us.

If you are new joining us this year, please e-mail Susie Doe at [Susie Doe](#) (just to get a rough idea of the 'class' size).

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

To post photos and information,
 email

[John Donaho](#) or [Lynn Trenta](#)

Also, share our chapter Facebook entries with your friends on your Facebook Page

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