



Special Interest Articles:

- Irene Stern Dedication
- Butterfly Count
- Pollinator Powwow

Individual Highlights:

Chapter Program	1
Irene Stern	2
Prairie Heritage	3
BBSP Butterfly Ct	4
Ag'tivity Barn	5
Wayne's World	6
Prairie Restoration	7
Nash Prairie	8
Pollinator Powwow	9
Monarch Migration	10
TMN Contests	11
Butterfly Garden	12
Beetle Pollinators	13

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

Diana Foss Talks about Urban Animal Habitats



Photo by Ron Spahr



Photo by Johnny Fife

At our chapter program this month, Diana Foss, TPWD Urban Biologist, got us to thinking about the importance of trees and other vegetation in our yards and parks in terms of the survival of so many wildlife species. She began by talking about how animals use the different levels of the forest canopy for shelter and food, especially the lower two-thirds. Manicured lawns may look great to us, but can reduce wildlife habitat. Leaf litter in your yard or garden, for example, provides a place for lightning bugs to lay their eggs.

Native vegetation like wax myrtles and yaupon provide wildlife food and shelter. Bunch grasses house moths, lizards, butterflies, beetles over the winter, and nesting sites in the spring. Brush piles are useful sites for many animals, although they may attract snakes or rats in the city and cause HOA problems.

She also suggested leaving snags (dead trees) whenever possible as many species of wildlife use them for food and shelter. Raccoons, flying squirrels, black bellied whistling ducks, Eastern blue birds, owls and bats nest in them. Woodpeckers, important to tree pest control, are attracted to insects living in the snags. Although in the past Purple martins and chimney swifts used snags, they have adapted well to manmade chimneys and towers.

She ended her talk by describing how to build houses for a variety of animals, including Eastern bluebirds, purple martins, chimney swifts, owls and bats. We thank Diana for this informative talk.

Volunteer Management System

Following Diana Foss's program, Reene Spahr presented a PowerPoint about the Volunteer Management System that we will be using to record our chapter volunteer and advanced training hours.

This system will be online and accessed through the chapter website. For more information, go to the VMS tab at the top on the website homepage. <http://txmn.org/coastal/>

Thanks, Reene! Thanks also to Michelle Sullivan for entering in the AT/VSP categories to the system. Photo by Diane Russell



Irene Stern Butterfly Garden is Officially Dedicated

The Irene Stern Butterfly Garden was officially dedicated on Saturday, October 10th. Master Naturalists Diane Russell, Reene Spahr, Nancy Huffman, Pat Mollere (Parks Commissioner), and Ramona Ridge (Fulshear Councilwoman) were on hand to help with the festivities and show the visitors live Monarch Butterflies, with their chrysalises and caterpillars. Councilwoman Tajana Mesic, instrumental in getting the garden established, was there also.

Mayor Tommy Kuykendall emceed the event. He said "The pollinator garden will serve to enhance the charm and character of Fulshear and complement this 1.34-acre, multigenerational community park."

Several Monarch Butterflies were released as part of the festivities. Many Monarchs have begun their migration down to Mexico. Photographer Unknown.



Prairie Heritage Festival 2015 and Prairie Month

As part of Prairie Month, our chapter is hosting Prairie Heritage Festival! Jim Butcher, Chapter Past President, is heading up this wonderful event with Sharon Smith in charge of exhibits and speakers. Activities include children's crafts, horse-drawn wagon rides, face-painting, and more. We are very excited and happy to be able to bring this fun festival to the public. For more information and photos go to the chapter website at:

<http://txmn.org/coastal/signature/prairie-heritage-festival/>

Other Prairie Month Activities are:

- *Oct. 31 – The Not-So-Scary Prairie Trick-or-Treating event on the Katy Prairie is perfect for families.*
- *Nov. 12-14 – The Southern Plains & Prairies Conference at the Houston Zoo and locations throughout Greater Houston welcomes landowners, scientists, educators, and other from Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Florida, and beyond.*
- *Nov. 14 – Prairie Plant-a-Thon at Sheldon Lake State Park and Environmental Learning Center is one of the largest restoration days on the Gulf Coast.*
- *Nov. 14 – Putting Down Roots on the Flat Out Wonderful Katy Prairie is a huge volunteer-led planting on a newly restored 55-acre prairie just northwest of Katy.*

The ten Houston-area organizations supporting 2015 Prairie Month are Armand Bayou Nature Center, Coastal Prairie Partnership, Katy Prairie Conservancy, the Native Prairies Association of Texas – Houston Chapter, Nature Conservancy of Texas, Texas Master Naturalists (three chapters), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Wildlife Habitat Federation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Houston Zoo. Go to prairiepartner.org for more information or to register for any and all events.



Jim Butcher, PHF Coordinator, w/previous mayor unknown photographer



Girl with snake at PHF-Photo by Carol Schwartz

Brazos Bend Butterfly Count Sets Records

October 4th, several chapter members participated in the 2015 BBSP Butterfly Count. Among them were: Karl Baumgartner, Jade Hems, Kathy and Gary Moore, Wayne and Vicki Poorman, Diane Russell, Bob Schwartz, and Lynn Trenta. Below is an account of the day by compiler Richard Jespersen. Photo to right by Lynn Trenta



“A sunny day with mild temperatures in a park bursting with nectar-rich wildflowers resulted in a record-setting butterfly count. The first record fell even before we began, when 65 enthusiastic observers arrived. The previous record of 46 observers was set just last year, beating the old record of 33. There were Brazos Bend Volunteers, Master Naturalists, Girl Scouts, families with children and other enthusiasts. About 25 were newcomers.

The flooding of 60 percent of the Park in June did not seem to diminish butterfly numbers, but 6 weeks of drought in July and August may be the cause of small numbers in the prairies that were not reached by the flood.

We divided into 7 parties and searched varied habitats within the park. By lunch time 38 species had been recorded. Most remarkable was the first-ever sighting at Brazos Bend of Eastern Tailed-Blue, which becomes the 101st species on the Park Checklist. It was seen in 3 different locations. Several observers scouted other areas in the afternoon, finding 4 additional species. A remarkable 317 Phaon Crescents far exceeded its previous high of 28 on our 10 fall counts. Two similar eruptions of Phaon Crescents were recorded in earlier June counts. Other species seen in record numbers for fall counts were Pearl Crescent, Tropical Checkered-Skipper and Little Glassywing, which has been seen only in the fall. Notable for its absence was the White-striped Longtail, which was missed for just the second time since its first appearance in 1999.”

Richard Jespersen, BBSP 2015 Butterfly Count Compiler



Photos Below by Wayne Poorman. Fiery Skipper (Left) and Phaon Crescent(right)

Master Naturalists help out at the Ag'tivity Barn

This fall the Master Naturalists were again at the Ag'tivity Barn with the skins and skulls exhibit. Several members and new class members were on hand to tell kids and parents alike about the animals represented in our exhibit. The pelts were the favorite item on our tables, with the kids and parents having to touch and feel. The scat was joked about and the skulls peered at. All in all, visitors seem to enjoy learning about the predators and their prey.

Below volunteering at the fair are Lea Hyman, Debbie Wendt, Margo Johnson, in disguise and new class member Jade Hems. Great job, Master Naturalists!

Photos from L to R: John Donaho, Diane Russell, Debbie Wendt



Wayne's World

Wayne Poorman has been a lot of places this month and as always took many great photographs. Below is a sampling of his photos.

Thanks for sharing with us, Wayne!



Seabourne Prairie Restoration Project

This month, Karl Baumgartner and the Prairie Team have been working on the Prairie Restoration Project at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. As part of this project, a new fence is going up to highlight the “Prairie by the Path” portion of the restoration project.

Recently, Karl, Sal Cardenas, Linda Lourim, and Lynn Trenta went out to Karl’s Edna property to obtain two tall cedar posts to be used as part of an entryway to the prairie path. Getting the post was no small feat! With chainsaws in hand, Karl and Sal cut down the cedar snags, Linda and Lynn in supervisory and documentation roles. Then the logs were dragged through a portion of woods back to the cabin area and onto a large trailer and back to Seabourne.

Another project undertaken by this small prairie team was a survey of the Brazos Bend State Park Prairie. This prairie area seems to be one of the “best kept secrets”, although NPAT has the prairie listed as “significant public grassland”. It describes the BBSP Prairie as “400 acres of fairly good Indiangrass-little bluestem tall grass coastal prairie managed through periodic prescribed burning and mowing. It is the best example of coastal prairie on department lands, and is an important aspect of the park interpretive program.”

CPCTMN Bob Schwartz led the tour, driving Karl, Linda and Lynn in the “gator” for our tour. We enjoyed the variety of plants in this beautiful prairie and recommend a visit out there!

The prairie team is working on documenting the prairie plants for the different seasons to make the “Prairie by the Path” look good year around. Plans are to plant around 500 plants already in pots at SCNP, bump up seedlings when ready for pots, and obtain more plants by propagation or plant purchase. Photos by Lynn Trenta



Nash Prairie After the Burn

Several Master Naturalists traveled out to Nash Prairie recently in response to Mark Morgenstern's email about how beautiful the prairie was after a burn that happened 10 weeks ago. Nancy Huffman (below with Mark Morgenstern), Bill and Margo Johnson, and Lynn and Jerry Trenta were treated to the splendor that you see below.

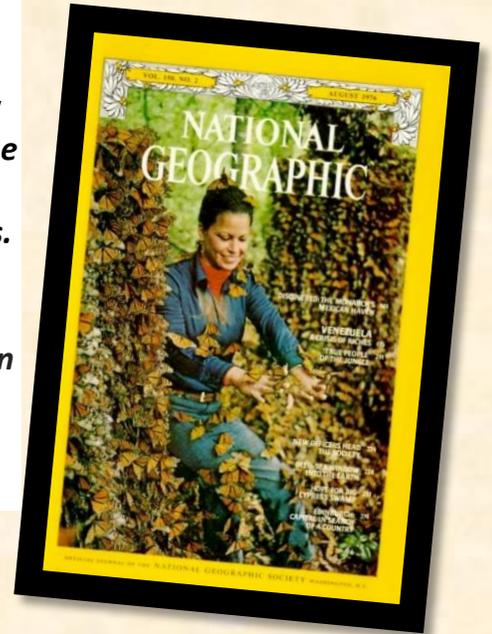
We were well-rewarded! The most spectacular show of prairie flowers and grasses awaited us and we could only say "Wow!!" Photos by Lynn and Jerry Trenta.





Catalina Aguado-Trail Comes to 2015 Pollinator PowWow

In 1973, a young Catalina Aguado-Trail and her husband answered an unusual ad in the paper asking for help to solve a mystery. The ad was placed by Professor Fred Urquhart in Canada, who had puzzled for many years as to where the Monarch butterflies went after leaving Texas in the winter and before reappearing in the spring. He developed a system of tagging which is still in use today to monitor the routes of the butterflies. After much searching, often by motorcycle, Catalina finally located the first known wintering refuge on a mountaintop in [Michoacán, Mexico](#), more than 4,000 kilometers from their starting point of their migration in Canada. The story of her pivotal role in unraveling the mystery of Monarch migration was published in 1976 by National Geographic magazine.



Diane and Catalina (Photographer unknown)

Today Catalina lives in the Austin area and attended this year's Pollinator PowWow in Kerrville. Several of us from the Chapter were thrilled to hear her talk about those early days. One of the interesting stories she told was how, in the oyamel fir forests, there were so many millions of butterflies that were often on the ground on very cold mornings that she could scoop them up by the armfuls! When asked about her first thoughts upon seeing their winter sanctuary, she replied, "I don't have the words really to describe the feeling of seeing so many butterflies." Later she said she would not be going back because it would be difficult to see their numbers so reduced from her first exposure.

Diane Russell, CPCTMN President

Monarch Butterfly Migration and What We Can Do

Please help us raise public awareness of the monarch migration through Texas, happening now.

Monarchs and other important pollinators are in serious decline. TPWD is joining a national effort to increase pollinator habitat. The TPWD website is:

http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/monarch/

Here's how you can help:

- *Post pictures, video and status updates of monarchs as they migrate through your area. Tag your posts with #SaveTheMonarch*
- *Ask your fans if they are seeing monarchs. Encourage them to post their own pictures to your page.*
- *Share information about native plants and habitat that help pollinators.*
- *Alert me to any posts you think may be good to share on the main TPWD accounts.*

You can track the monarch migration in real time at <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/index.html>.

Find information on pollinator habitat at <http://monarchjointventure.org/get-involved/create-habitat-for-monarchs> and <http://www.xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/>.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Whitney Bishop

Texas Parks and Wildlife

(o) 512-389-4531

(c) 512-799-7318



Photo from web



Photo by Jade Hems

Volunteers Get Butterfly Garden Ready for Prairie Heritage Festival

Toward the end of August Diane Russell and Linda Rippert met at the Butterfly Garden to discuss what needed to be done there before PHF. They discussed what needed to be removed from the garden, what plants they might use to fill in the empty spots, etc. Below is a log of that work.

Linda, Diane, Gary & Kathy Moore, Lea Hyman, Sharon Smith, Cyd Johnson, Jade Hems, Linda Rude, Jimmy Brannon, Amber Leung, Lynn Trenta and Jim Butcher all came together over a period of 2 months to make the garden a beautiful sanctuary for the butterflies. Everyone pulled out undesirable plants, weeded and Lea and Gary hauled the unwanted plants and clippings to the brush pile. Karl Baumgartner sent one of his employees to weed, get rid of the nut sedge, and water.

Linda visited the HMNS Cockrell Butterfly Center twice and the Houston Arboretum as well to purchase plants to put in the butterfly garden plants.

Jim and Lea did the whopping job of spreading crushed granite over the walkway that goes down the center of the garden. Jim and friends had obtained 20 bags of mulch, brought it to Seabourne, and spread a lot of it over a large section of ground.

All together 13+ volunteers worked around +/- 22 hours preparing the garden for butterflies and human visitors.

Linda Rippert said "It is a privilege to work with these dedicated folks, and it is so satisfying to leave the Park and know that you have accomplished a great deal in the time spent there on work days. Thanks to all of you!"

*Coming up November 4th --Final Work Day before Prairie Heritage Festival
Volunteers are welcome to join in the fun and be a part of this wonderful butterfly garden!*



Linda Rippert Works Her Magic! Photo by Diane Russell



Chapter Members Compete at TMN Annual Meeting

Several Master Naturalists are competing in different categories this year at the Texas Master Naturalist State Annual Meeting.

Below are the photos that Bob Schwartz is entering in the photo competition. Nice photos, Bob!

Chapter President Diane Russell and Lynn Trenta will have entries in the painting competition.

Communications Chair Lynn Trenta is also entering our chapter newsletter for best newsletter.

Good luck, CPCTMN Members!



"Nature's Intricate Beauty".



"Waste Not; Want Not!"



Lynn's Painting

Beetle Pollinators



Check out this website about pollinator beetle. There are 52 native plant species pollinated by beetles—who knew?

http://texasento.net/TX_Pollinators.html

Also another group of beetles are at:

<http://texasento.net/TXMeloidae.html>

Please send in nature-related articles, photos, and items of interest to the chapter by November 15th to [Lynn](#). Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome.

Thanks.

Lynn Trenta, Courier Editor



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We're on the Web!

See us at:

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

Check out our Facebook Page at

[TXMN Coastal Prairie Chapter Facebook](#)

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