



Coastal Prairie Chapter Courier

December 2022 Volume 10 Issue 12



Inside This Issue

Bert Stipelcovich Clocks 4,000th Volunteer Hour Milestone
TMNCP Takes on Empowering Urban Volunteer Project
Helping Long Point Scouts on Merit Badge Day



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



President's Message

By Terri Hurley, TMNCPC President

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Hello fellow TMNCPC members!

What a busy year we have had! 2022 must be written down in our record books as a banner year. Naming all the great projects and events we were involved in would take forever but let me just name a few. We:

- Implemented a new weekend outreach program at the Houston Museum of Natural Science at Sugar Land
- Changed our monthly meetings from Zoom to in-person at the museum
- Offered two great training classes in 2022
- At the Seabourne Creek Nature Park, added a bird roosting rack and are implementing the Great Texas Birding Classic grant we won to improve the bird sanctuary and completed two Apache Tree Planting Days, added new signage, new brochures, new trails, transplanted large mature live oaks from the prairie to the promenade, organized girl scout tree and bat house projects
- For the City of Rosenberg, helped to write and get out the vote for Seabourne's winning entry in the Niagara Perk Your Park grant
- Helped with outreach at these events and more: Activity Barn, George Ranch Texian Market Days, Missouri City's Edible Garden Fest, numerous school and scout programs, numerous garden club and church group presentations, Houston Rodeo, Brazos Bend State Park Expo, Fort Bend Museum Tourism Day, Galveston's Exploration Green, GCBO Spring Fling, Fishtastics, Wildscape Workshop, KPC
- Reorganized the TMN office and created an accurate inventory of the items there
- Ordered green polo shirts for each and every certified member of our chapter
- Gave out new Initial Certification certificates for each member, signed by the actual president who was in office at that time
- Organized 4 field trips for the annual meeting and provided the room and tech hosts
- Added many new pocket prairies and bird sanctuaries: Cullinan Park, Buffalo Run, Afghan Rescue Mission, Weston Lakes
- Added to or upgraded our WOWs: Skins & Skulls, Bird-watching and Soils
- Completed the Advanced Interpretation Skills Class at BBSP
- Volunteered our service at many parks and public areas: Seabourne, Brazos Bend, CPC (Katy Prairie), Buffalo Run, Daily Park, Cullinan Park, HMNS, Willow Waterhole Greenway, Deer Park Prairie, Willow Fork
- Organized chapter field trips to Fenwick Nature Center and Karl Baumgartner's property, plus a weekend pelagic bird trip out of Port Aransas
- Helped on many citizen science projects: Texas Butterfly Monitoring Network, iNaturalist City Nature Challenge, Bioblitz, Christmas and other bird counts for eBird, CocoRaHs, BirdAbility project at Cullinan Park, Urban Wildlife Network Project
- Etc., etc., etc.

I don't know if this can be topped in 2023, but we will certainly try! Thank you all for helping to ensure the continued success of our spectacular chapter.

Continued on the next page---

Cover

Coastal Prairie Chapter volunteers pitched in to help the James B. Harrison Long Point Scouts on Merit Badge Day by sharing knowledge about prairie habitats and using binoculars, scopes, and field guides. Photo by Robbin Mallett.

Please send articles and photos by the 28th of the month to the Courier Editor. Thanks!

Happy Holidays, Everyone!!



President's Message *Continued*



Holiday Potluck Party on Dec 15! In place of a regular December program and meeting, we are planning an exciting Holiday Party to be held in the Rosenberg Civic Center. All members, including Fall and Spring 2022 trainees, are invited to attend this entertaining event. Also, your spouse, significant other or plus-one is invited to join you as well. Our planning committee has been making fantastic arrangements for the evening and it will be jam-packed with fun. Wear your best and brightest ugly holiday sweater! **Keep an eye out for the SignUp Genius invitation** where you can sign up to attend and indicate which food item you want to bring.

Board and Committee Members needed for 2023 to help keep that big wheel turnin'! We are looking for people to help on the board or sub-committees next year. We need members to help on the Seabourne Nature Fest committee and the Niagara grant implementation committee.

We are also looking for additional help for our new 2023 Program Director. Our programs are part of what makes our chapter great and now that we are meeting in person, volunteers on the programs committee would be very helpful indeed.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or even gripes about anything related to our chapter, please feel free to contact me by email at terri@coastalprairie.org



Membership Minute *By Jan and Kevin Kolk, Membership Directors*



 **Congratulations** to our certification and milestone achievers:

Initial Certification

- Douglas Stewart 2022 Spring
- Cindy Wainikainen 2021 Spring
- Dawn Homan 2022 Spring
- Randolph Watson 2022 Fall
- Shree Nath 2022 Fall
- Lynne Woods 2022 Fall

2022 Recertification (84 members recertified)

- Mary Warwick 2020 Fall
- Kelly Vaughan 2022 Spring
- Randolph Watson 2022 Fall
- Esmeralda Fisher 2022 Spring
- Margo Margot 2018

1000 Hour Milestone

- C.J. McDaniel 2015
- Kevin Kolk 2020

4000 Hour Milestone

- Bert Stipelcovich 2018

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Membership Minute *Continued*

Chapter update: CPC members are an incredible group of dedicated, focused individuals!

As of Nov. 25th, our members have provided **18,608** volunteer hours this year.

Just for fun - Guess how many hours of volunteering the Coastal Prairie Chapter has given to nature and our community since the chapter's inception:

- A. 98,972 hours
- B. 123,781 hours
- C. 131,771 hours

Answer on page 14

Bert Stipelcovich hits his 4000 hour Milestone

Shannon Westveer, TMNCPC Vice-President

*I called the TMNCPC office in the summer of 2019 and Bert Stipelcovich answered the phone. I had a question about *Thalia* sp.; he selflessly dropped whatever he was doing to find the answer for me.*

Once a freshly certified Master Naturalist™ myself, Bert was assigned my chapter mentor. Our friendship grew with each meeting: the rescue of an injured egret at Seabourne; a prairie burning in Cat Springs; sipping wine underneath his purple martin colony. When it came time for me to serve the chapter, accepting his request was the easy part. Integrity and honor of Bert's caliber are rare. "I've always got your back," he'd smile with that reassuring glint of light and hope in his eyes. Three years looking back, he always did.



Bert reached 4,000 hours last month. He served as Membership Director followed with two years as President, one more year advising as Past President, mentoring new people with each class. He led our chapter – and the State Program – through unforeseeable obstacles and challenges brought on by a worldwide pandemic. "Recruit, Retain, Reinvigorate" propelled us to new heights while many other chapter leaders chose to wait it out. We grew the chapter ... equally, together.

Bert didn't just return things better than when he found them, he polished the exterior and filled up the tank! His leadership and vision will drive this non-profit effectively and long into the future.

Bert – I look forward to your next milestone pin, and with the past predicting the future, that may happen soon. Thank you for all you do for Nature, for our chapter, for the State. Congratulations!

New Class Member Emily Essa's New Job Taken from the TWRC Newsletter

A lifelong Houston resident, Emily has always known she wanted to work with animals since she was young. After graduating from Texas A&M University in College Station with a Bachelor of Science in Zoology, she continued volunteering on campus at the Winnie Carter Wildlife Center while interning at Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary. While Emily has the most experience working with carnivores, she loves all animals and enjoys spending her time learning interesting new facts to teach others. After moving back to Houston, Emily began volunteering at TWRC for roughly a year before becoming a member of the Education department as the Wildlife Educator.

When not at the Center, Emily enjoys spending time outdoors hiking, birding, swimming, kayaking, and volunteering with the Texas Master Naturalists. An avid pop culture fan, Emily also enjoys watching films, playing video games, and reading fantasy novels.

As a developing conservation biologist, Emily is extremely excited to apply her dedication and knowledge to the TWRC team!



Volunteer Service Projects Highlights By Johanna DeYoung, Membership Director



11/29/2022

With the Winter Holidays fast approaching, there remain VSP opportunities!

COVID CURRENT STATUS/GUIDANCE

Since 2021, the TMN and the State of Texas guidance has not changed:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/welcome/covid-19-response/> and <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/>

9/22/2022: Fort Bend County is at a Green/Low COVID Risk Level. Aligning with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Fort Bend County has the following guidance: "Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. Get tested if you have symptoms; People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. If you are immunocompromised, learn more about how to protect yourself. Find out more about the COVID-19 situation in Fort Bend County, Texas with COVID-19 Data Tracker."

VSP OPPORTUNITIES

Please check the website calendar, SignUp Genius, and the Weekly Bulletin for multiple upcoming VSP Opportunities.

Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP) Workdays: Wednesdays, and 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under: "SCNP-7 Habitats Public Access: TMN Report Hours"]

December Bird Survey at James B. Harrison (JBH) Burr Property: Saturday, 12/3/2022, 7:30 – 11:30 AM
[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS: "James B. Harrison Foundation Properties: TMN Report Hours"]

Coastal Prairie Conservancy: Stewardship Saturday at Williams Prairie: Saturday, 12/10/2022
[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under: "Coastal Prairie Conservancy: TMN Report Hours"]

Brazos Bend Christmas Bird Count at JBH Long Point Ranch: Saturday, 12/17/2022, 6:30 AM – 1:00 PM
[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS: "James B. Harrison Foundation Properties: TMN Report Hours"]

2022 Wharton Peach Creek Christmas Bird Count at JBH Burr Property: Wednesday, 12/21/2022, 6:30 AM – 2:00 PM
[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS: "James B. Harrison Foundation Properties: TMN Report Hours"]

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Volunteer Service Projects Highlights *Continued*

Reminder: When conducting outreaches, take two forms with you to complete and submit: "Public Outreach Form" and "Interested in learning more...". Both forms, complete with instructions, can be found in the Forms Channel in Slack.

*For further VSP opportunities, check the website. The VSP Committee includes Joanie Havlick, Terri Hurley, Charris Powers, Lynn Trenta, and Johanna DeYoung. If you are aware of VSP opportunities, have questions about VSP opportunities, or unsure how to record an VSP opportunity, please contact Johanna DeYoung. (johanna@coastalprairie.com). **Happy Holidays from the VSP Committee!***

Seabourne and Pizza January 10

By Jerry Trenta, TMNCPC Seabourne Director and Project Manager



Come learn about our Signature Project, Seabourne Creek Nature Park, at an in-person meeting at the Rosenberg Civic Center, January 10, from 6:30 to 8:30pm! Look for the SignUp Genius coming in December.

Share some pizza and hear about our chapter's experiences, accomplishments, and our current plans for the park. Jerry Trenta will present a PowerPoint view of what we have been doing the last few years and what we would like to do in 2023, which with the Niagara Grant Project and the return of SNF is going to be an exciting one. This will provide a starting point for a discussion on how we want to proceed into the next few years and who will lead this activity.

The park continues to provide great opportunities for chapter members to learn and be a part of creating a nature experience for ourselves and the community at large. We can learn about prairies by helping with a prairie restoration project or our two demonstration gardens. The variety of opportunities at Seabourne is almost endless, from outreach to native plant propagation to a bird observation platform construction project. Your help is needed for continuing leadership roles to leading 'once and done' tasks.

This is your opportunity to provide your input in how the chapter manages its Signature Project at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. This is also your opportunity to see Jerry weaseling out of (aka: retire from) his project management role at SCNP.

*******Plus, there will be a drawing for door prizes (12 copies of the 2023 edition of the our Native Plant Identification Aid flip card set)*****See below**



OUTREACH and SERVICE In November

A Little Stitch in the Big Weave

Curbside Planting Project in Houston Gulfton Refugee District

By Shanyn Zink and Lynn Trenta, Courier Editor

Photos by Angela LeDoux

Every week last school year, Shanyn Zink walked past brown, dry, dead ligustrums in the narrow 50' landscape strips on her way to the front office door of Prestige Learning Institute to volunteer in their after-school program with Afghan refugee children. The Prestige Learning Institute (PLI) is a charitable institution that helps equip and empower refugee and immigrant families in the Gulfton area of Houston through ESL classes, job networking, and family specific-need support. Most of PLI's clients are from war-torn areas, fleeing from violence, and currently most are from Afghanistan. PLI is in a building shared by Etoile Charter School, a free, high-quality school that educates the underserved community.

As a Texas Master Naturalist, Shanyn began envisioning what native plants could replace those dead ligustrum. After hanging hummingbird and sunflower seed feeders from the oak tree island in PLI's parking lot and seeing no birds or city squirrels come to the area all year, Shanyn was disheartened and began to consider what she could do to increase the biodiversity.

Then one day last summer she read the PLI children a story about adventuring through "The Tall, Tall Grass" and encountering butterflies, bees and fireflies, etc. After seeing their eyes light up at the bluestem and Indian grass she brought in, she realized they had no easy public access to see any of this wildlife, as they lived across the street from PLI in the depleted ecosystem she had observed. They had either limited or no transportation to city parks or natural areas. At that point, the nature ambassador/concierge in Shanyn could stand it no longer. She decided it was time to launch a real effort to bring nature to the refugees. It would be a win-win for both nature and people.

She approached PLI about simply replacing the ligustrums with native prairie grasses, and from there plans developed, waxed, waned, and took different shapes over the next year. The landlord graciously gave approval to try natives but was unable to fix the water faucet nearest the two beds, so a decision was made to just plant one bed. The landlord also expressed interest in a formal native plant garden that he could replicate for his other properties. When it became apparent that the Etoile Charter School was delighted to maintain the garden and educate their students using the garden, plans changed to establish a semi-formal native garden with grasses, shrubs and forbs in the 50' strip of land between the curb and sidewalk.

To ensure maintenance for the area, Shanyn solicited weekly watering help from the PLI staff and she plans to continue making weekly trips to oversee growth and care. Next spring, PLI will move a short walking distance down the street into a different building, and Etoile Charter School will move into the space now occupied by PLI. The school has happily agreed to adopt the garden and fully maintain it and is eager to educate their K-6 students with it!

Shanyn obtained plants mostly from Mark Morgenstern and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. On October 29, chapter members Johanna DeYoung and Angela LeDoux, along with Shanyn's Dad, Jim Hunt, helped Shanyn put down soil and mulch and got 17+ pollinator friendly plants into the 50' landscape bed.

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Shanyn Zink's Urban Garden Project *Continued*

It has been a joy to see the garden bringing bees, butterflies and smiles to the refugee families and PLI staff alike. Shanyn is excited that the small 2 1/2' x 50' planting might have the honor of being a little stitch in the big weave of nature for human health, equity and biodiversity to ALL people in ALL of Houston, as Jaime Gonzalez recently talked about at the Texas Children in Nature event.

Shanyn Zink thanks Angela LeDoux for snapping these pics and helping with the last-minute layout and design decisions needed!! She also thanks Johanna DeYoung, whose encouragement was vital. If the landlord takes and replicates any of these plants in his other Gulfton buildings as he proposed, Johanna's encouragement and help will have made a MUCH needed refreshing ripple in this part of Houston - both ecologically and educationally. Also, Shanyn thanks Shannon Westveer for her "They're a community!!" encouragement to plant the native grasses and plants in bunches. She thanks Terry Hurley for her plant list and advice and encouragement! Glenn Olsen's Go Native Landscaping also donated a free plant selection and placement "brainstorming" consult. It was their idea to try the Turk's Cap and Salvia Coccinea in the oak tree base islands in the PLI parking lot. Turk's Cap worked well and brought in the hummers this Fall. Also, every Thursday evening, the Afghan men gather around the oaks in the parking lot to grill, connect and support each other in finding jobs and hope in this new country. Shanyn wanted to give them some living beauty to remind them of their walled gardens back in Afghanistan, where the men are typically the gardeners.



James B. Harrison Long Point Boy Scout Merit Badge Day

By Robbin Mallett, Cullinan Board President via Facebook



Several Coastal Prairie chapter members helped lead the Scouts at Long Point Ranch for Boy Scout Merit Badge Day. The day started with rain which caused the schedule to be completely revamped, so thanks to all for being flexible. The Scouts really seemed to enjoy learning about birds and wildlife from knowledgeable leaders.



Erik scouted out some Goldenrod and other natives for the boys



Making plaster casts of wildlife tracks.



Teaching the Scouts about birds, binoculars, scopes and using a field guide.



Identifying plants with Erik.



TMNs sharing some Bird expertise with the Scouts.

Found a Western Ribbon Snake.



A New species for the Long Point bird list: Ruddy Ducks.

Weston Lakes Bird Sanctuary Project *Text/ photos by Joyce Tipton, unless noted*

TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter volunteers got busy again at the Weston Lakes Neighborhood Bird Sanctuary. With an eye for attracting the birds, volunteers planted native plants around the new water feature. Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*), Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), Chile Pequin (*Capsicum annuum*), Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), and more will provide food and cover for the birds.

The volunteers dug holes and installed posts, along with a rope barrier. This will serve as a reminder to the Homo sapiens visitors to give some space and quiet to our avian friends. Two bird feeder pole systems, provided by Katy Wild Birds Unlimited, were installed with a variety of food to attract both seed and insect eaters. A Bluebird nest box was added that quickly caught the attention of several pairs of Eastern Bluebirds.

Finally, gravel left over from the building of the water feature found a new use to create a path passing in front of a comfortable viewing bench. Everything was set and waiting for the birds. Our feathered friends wasted no time finding their new amenities!

This project of Keep Weston Lakes Beautiful and Texas Master Naturalists provides a great outreach opportunity to share the beauty and the plight of our birds, the importance of native plants, the value of insects, and what we can do to help protect and preserve our world.



Group photo at Weston Lakes Project



Group photo by Shannon Westveer



Savitha Rao

Jan and Kevin Kolk

Dorothy Tran

Dominic Dottavio and Randolph Watson



The Bird Sanctuary and Blind

Photos and text by Bill Johnson, Bird Blind and Sanctuary Coordinator



Just before the park tour by Annual Meeting participants from all over the state, Scott Tufts and helper Jerry built and installed new benches in our Seabourne Creek Bird Blind. This improvement is part of our ongoing expenditures of the grant provided by the Great Texas Birding Classic which we participated in as The Big Sit portion here at Seabourne Creek Nature Center. Thanks for a job well done and in time to "show off" our Coastal Prairie projects at the Texas Master Naturalist State Convention.



The Blue doughnut Strikes Again

Text and Photos by Lynn Trenta,

One Wednesday this month, Jim Butcher arrived with doughnuts and his award-giving blue doughnuts in hand. The recipients of this prestigious award for November were Monique Smith and Jan Kolk, two very deserving chapter members. We thank Jim for being there to encourage and reward our volunteers. There will be many more blue doughnuts awarded in the coming years! Stay tuned.



In Our Own Backyard and Other Places

Racoons

Caption and Photos by Diane Eismont

A raccoon family on the move -heading up our front walk - probably toward one of our bird feeders for an evening snack!



The Lighter Side

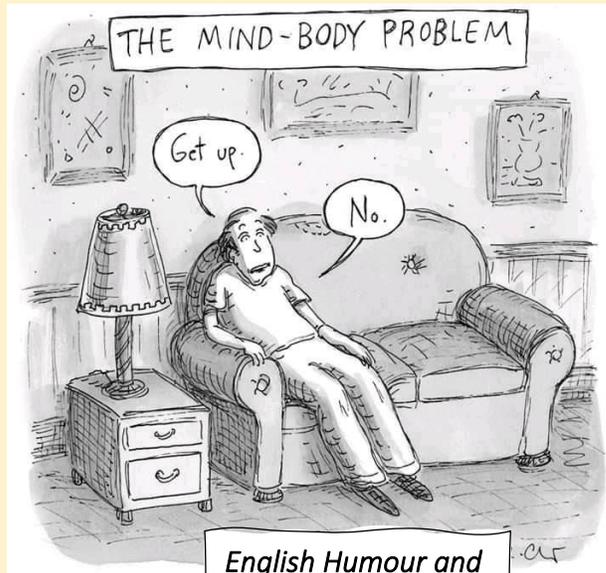


"Fascinating. He ran on it the first few days, but now he's just using it to hang his clothes."



Joe Lennon 12.3.20 facebook.com/joePETELennon
WELL, THIS IS AWKWARD...

The Far Side Facebook



English Humour and Images

Facebook Lennon Cartoons

My teacher told me not to worry about spelling because in the future there will be autocorrect and for that I am eternally grapefruit.



TMNCPC 2022 Board Members

2022 Officers

President [Terri Hurley](#)
 Vice President [Shannon Westveer](#)
 Secretary [Susan Walther](#)
 Treasurer [Pam Jones](#)

2022 Committee Directors

Immediate Past-President [Bert Stipelcovich](#)
 Membership [Jan and Kevin Kolk](#)
 Programs Gary Moore
 Communication [Judi Harrington](#) and
[Megan Cromeens](#)
 Volunteer Service Projects [Johanna DeYoung](#)
 Advanced Training Ramona Ridge and
[Katie Sallean](#)
 New Class [Joyce Tipton](#) and [Lauren DeShazo](#)
 New Class Representative Rebecca Aguilar
 State Representative Hoiman Low
 Seabourne Jerry Trenta

Advisor

MN Program Coordinator [Brandy Rader](#)
 TPWD Wildlife Biologist [Jon McLeod](#)
 Fort Bend County AgriLife [John Few](#)
 Wharton County AgriLife [Corrie Bowen](#)
 Waller County AgriLife [Candace Moeller](#)

We are on the Web!

See us at:

www.coastalprairie.org

COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS

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VSP OPPORTUNITY: *Do you have a passion for creating an engaging, fun newsletter? Do you have an eye for a good story?*

Do you want a FANTASTIC way to help your chapter AND earn hours? Consider joining the Comms team as our newest Courier publishers! Our monthly Courier is an important piece of chapter history and is a ton of fun to put together; you learn so much about who we are and what we do while earning hours towards that sweet, sweet certification pin!

This is also something you can do in the comfort of your home and fit into your schedule!

For more information email judith@coastalprairie.org

Answer to Membership Multiple Choice is C. 131,771 hours

Our Chapter Facebook Page is at

[TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter Facebook](#)

To post photos and information, email

[Megan Cromeens](#) or [Judi Harrington](#)

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

We also have a Chapter-Only Facebook Page that allows chapter members to post items. You can join by going to the website below and clicking on "Join." The administrator will allow you access. This is for chapter members only.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1882734648662315/?ref=bookmarks>

Check out & subscribe to our Chapter's new YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfBuS0aMAOiFuiDHaiuNqTQ?view_as=subscriber