


# Coastal Prairie Chapter **Courier**

April 2023 — Volume 11 Issue 4



"An understanding of the natural world and what's in it is a source of not only a great curiosity but great fulfillment."

*David Attenborough*

## **Inside This Issue**

Chapter Program: Native Texas Snakes

Seabourne March Recap

Prescribed Burns

Outreach, Outreach & More Outreach



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.

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### ON THE COVER

*Castilleja indivisa* and *Lupinus texensis* in Fort Bend County

(Photo by Robin Wainikainen)

### EDITOR TEAM

—Cindy Wainikainen, April Co-Editor, [Cindy@CoastalPrairie.org](mailto:Cindy@CoastalPrairie.org)

Have a great story for next month's issue? Submit by **APRIL 25th**.

—Shannon Westveer, May Co-Editor, [Shannon@CoastalPrairie.org](mailto:Shannon@CoastalPrairie.org)

## President's Message

by Terri Hurley, TMNCPC President



The month of April has to be the busiest month in the year of a Master Naturalist! Here are just a few of the activities we have going on.

**Earth Day:** April 22 is Earth Day, a day dedicated to celebrating our planet and taking action to protect Texas nature for future generations. You can join in the Earth Day celebrations at the Houston Arboretum, George Memorial Library, Cross Creek Ranch and others. Why not host a TMNCPC booth at one of these events?

**Springtime Wildflowers:** April is a great time to observe our amazing Texas wildflowers. Bluebonnets and evening primroses are already beginning to bloom in our area and are a welcome harbinger of spring. Take a drive out to the country to revel in even more of this beauty.

**Bird Migration:** Spring is a glorious time to be birding! April is the peak month for bird migration in our area. Be sure to attend the April 5 bird hike at Seabourne to see all the action. Last year we had at least 56 species, including an anhinga, pileated woodpecker, prothonotary warbler, boat-tailed grackle, and four species of sandpipers.



**National Volunteer Month:** April is volunteer month! It's a time to honor the contributions of our chapter's volunteers and to inspire us all to get more involved in making a positive difference in the world. To celebrate all the many volunteers at our signature project at Seabourne, we will host a hot dog & potato chip lunch on April 15. Keep an eye out for the invitation!



### iNaturalist City Nature Challenge on April

**28 – May 1:** This is a multi-day competition when we all go outdoors to document the wild plants and animals in our area via the iNaturalist app. You just take photos of

plants, animals, and other organisms, and upload them to the iNaturalist app. You can hear all about this at our April 6 program. Help the Houston area to beat Dallas!

**#TMN Tuesday:** On April 11, the riveting Wizzie Brown will be the presenter. Her topic will be "Conservation of Insects." You don't want to miss this one!



## April Chapter Program: Thursday, April 6, 7 PM “Native Texas Snakes – Presented by Amber Leung”

*By Jan Peterson, TMNCPC Programs Director*



With the spring season comes our native reptiles emerging out of brumation! Whether you love them or fear them, our native snakes are on the job of pest control in our communities.

Amber Leung will bust myths about the native snake species of the Gulf Coast region and share rarely-seen up-close portraits of these beneficial creatures. Join us for proven snake identification tips, must-know information on envenomations from medical experts, stories of field research, and venomous snake relocations, plus LIVE SNAKES in a safe and supportive environment for all levels of comfort.



Photo source: TMNCPC [website](#)

Amber Leung is currently an Environmental Educator and Staff Naturalist for Houston Audubon, where she teaches all ages how to make their homes part of a Bird-Friendly Community and is also a co-coordinator for Team Houston-Galveston of the 2023 City Nature Challenge. She’s mom to two budding young naturalists (ages 2 and 9). In her spare time, she has shared the virtues of coexistence with our native ecosystem with the community as a Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter since 2015. She also serves her neighborhood community as “that crazy snake lady” with education and volunteer venomous snake relocations.

Coastal Prairie Chapter **programs are free** and open to the **public**. April’s is being held at the [Rosenberg Civic Center](#). Please plan to **arrive at 6:30 PM** for refreshments and social time; the **1-hour program begins at 7:00 PM**.

The [Texas Master Naturalist](#) program is sponsored by [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) and [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#).

[TMNCPC members in attendance should record their Advanced Training (AT) hours under “AT: Chapter Meeting-Coastal Prairie” and the VSP hours for the business meeting under “Chapter Business: Chapter Meeting.”]



## Membership Minute

By Jan and Kevin Kolk, TMNCPC Membership Co-Directors



**Congratulations!** to our numerous certification and milestone achievers. Way to go!

### Initial Certification

Tierra Ortiz-Rodriguez  
(Fall 2022)

Joe Garcia (Spring 2022)



### 250 Hour Milestone

Kerry Padilla (Spring 2022)

Susan Fortenberry (Fall 2020)



### 2023 Recertification

**\*\*22 members recertified\*\***

Margo Johnson (2015)

Shree Nath (Fall 2022)

Lynn Trenta (2011)

Susan Fortenberry (Fall 2020)

Garrett Engelhardt (2017)

Susan Walther (2011)

Wen Sherrill (2019)

Izzy Retiz (2019)

Esmeralda Fisher

(Spring 2022)

Joyce Tipton (Spring 2021)

Aida Pita Baston (Fall 2020)

Angela Montoya Hilton

(Fall 2022)



### 500 Hour Milestone

Randolph Watson (Fall 2022)



### 2500 Hour Milestone

Susie Doe (2008)



## JOIN US!

*The public is always welcome to serve alongside us in our communities. Get out and meet TMNCPC members in the field!*

## YouTube

Be sure to follow our channel:

[YOUTUBE @TMNCoastalPrairie](#)

Check out our latest video [Birth of a Pocket Prairie](#)



## Remote VSP/AT Opportunity Spotlight



*Looking for volunteer hours that you can do on your own schedule? Is there something exciting you did that you want to share with the chapter? Do you want to highlight another member's project? Did you read an interesting book or listen to an informational podcast? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then consider writing an article for the Courier! Articles can be emailed to either Co-Editor (see page [2](#))*



## Volunteer Service — April Highlights

By Johanna DeYoung, TMNCPC Volunteer Director



### **Signature Project. Seabourne Creek Nature Park**

**(SCNP), Rosenberg:** 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Wednesdays and 1st and 3rd Saturdays which fall on 4/1, 4/5, 4/12, 4/15, 4/19, 4/26

### **Signature Project. Monthly Bird Hike at SCNP,**

**Rosenberg:** 8:00 AM – 10:30 AM 1st

Wednesday of the month (October through May, OFF Summers) which falls on 4/5

### **Ongoing Project. Houston Museum of Natural**

**Science in Sugar Land:** 10:30 AM — 3:00 PM

2nd and 4th Saturdays which fall on 4/8 and 4/22

### **Ongoing Project. Coastal Prairie Conservancy**

**Indiangrass Preserve, Katy:** 9:00 AM – 1:00

PM Tuesdays, Fridays, and 2nd Saturdays of each month which fall on 4/4, 4/7, 4/8, 4/11, 4/14, 4/18, 4/21, 4/25, 4/28

### **Ongoing Project. Houston Audubon's Bird Survey @**

**Archbishop Joseph A: Fiorenza Park,**

**Houston:** 7:30 AM – 12:00 PM 4th Monday which falls on 4/24

### **Ongoing Project. Lawther-Deer Park Prairie, Deer**

**Park:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM 4th Saturday of

each month which falls on 4/22

### **Multi-day Event. iNaturalist City Nature Challenge:**

April 28 – May 1

### **\*New & Notable this Month\***

Deer Park Prairie – Volunteers needed for K-4th

Grade Field Trip: 4/6, 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Spring Bird Count at Harrison-Long Point Property:

4/15, 7:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Spring Bird Count at James B. Harrison-Burr Property:

4/29, 7:30 AM - 12:00 PM







April Nature and Bird Walk at James B. Harrison-Long

Point Property: 4/28, 8:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Insect Hike at Seabourne Creek Nature Park: 4th

Thursdays of the Month which falls on 4/27

### APRIL 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6 	7 	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15 
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 	28 	29 
30						

### **\*Date Change\***



Seabourne Nature Fest has been moved from April 15th to November 4th

*You know what they say about April showers....  
Be sure to check our [website calendar](#) for last minute  
changes, cancelations, or other information before  
departing to serve.*



**SignUpGenius®**

To register for any of these opportunities, please check the SignUp and Weekly Bulletin

*As you become aware of new volunteer opportunities,  
have questions, or are unsure how to record service  
hours, please message **#help-vsp** channel or  
**@Johanna** on Slack or [email](#).*

*THANK YOU to the VSP Committee members Joanie  
Havlick, Terri Hurley, Charris Powers, Shannon  
Westveer, and Lynn Trenta.*

## March 2023 at Seabourne Nature Park

By Lynn Trenta, TMNCPC Seabourne Creek Nature Park



Seabourne was again a hive of activity this month. We had 3 nature hikes in the park, including the bird hike on March 1, the plant walk on March 11 and the insect hike on March 23. The City of Rosenberg planted trees in the Niagara Arboretum area and chapter members staked and mulched these. The bird viewing platform was completed with the addition of cedar posts. There was bumping up in the nursery area and invasive plant control along the wetlands. The gardens were well cared for with a good group of volunteers in both gardens. To figure out what the small wildflowers are when emerging, Susie Doe started an ID project in the native plant garden.



Bob and Carol Schwartz's bird hike. Photo by Hoiman Low

The bird hike, led by Bob and Carol Schwartz, took place on March 1 and was well-attended as usual. Birds seen included a roseate spoonbill, loggerhead shrike, cedar waxwings, and a pied-bill grebe.



John Few and TMNCPC members viewing insects. Photo by Susan Walther

The March insect hike took place on March 23 with John Few, our AgriLife agent leading it. We were down on hands and knees peering into water that John had scooped up. We had a good group there and we saw quite a few dragonfly nymphs, water beetles and other aquatic insects, along with a diamond-backed water snake, crawdad and bullfrog.

The gardens are growing quickly and we have a good group in both gardens, working to reduce our unwanted plants and putting in some more desirable plants.

Susie Doe began her plant walks again and helped to identify quite a few

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## March 2023 at Seabourne Nature Park cont'd

By Lynn Trenta, TMNCPC Seabourne Creek Nature Park



(Continued from page 6)

wildflowers sprouting up at Seabourne. She also began a plant ID study in the native plant garden with several members tagging unknown plants in the garden and digging up and potting unknown plants in the pathways. She will be keeping track of these plants as they grow in order to be able to ID them at a later date. Among the members participating in this project were Dorothy Tran, Kerry Padilla, Angela Hilton, Nancy Jones, Mary Seville and Lynn Trenta.



Susie Doe identifying wildflower. Photo by Hoiman Low



Insect Hike Group. Photo by Frank Hunter (Frank Hunter Photography)

The Niagara Grant Project moved forward with the introduction of several very large trees, planted by the City of Rosenberg Parks and Recreation personnel. Chapter members Randolph and Jean Watson, Fran Wilcox, Shree Nath, Rodney Walther and Seabourne Director Jerry Trenta, were out there staking, watering and mulching, making sure that the trees are getting a good start in the park.



Pam Jones with TMNCPC Spring 2023 class. Photo by Susan Walther



Left: Grand Poobah, Right: Greg Hurley.  
Photo by Esmeralda Fisher

The bird viewing platform reached completion this month with the addition of cedar posts on the roof cover. Bumping up in the nursery area was going full steam as well. Greg Hurley was awarded the coveted "blue doughnut" by the Grand Poobah himself for his volunteer service.

And last, but certainly not least, the new class came to Seabourne to learn about land stewardship and ecosystems concepts management as well as volunteer opportunities that abound there. Seen here is Pam Jones talking to the new class at the native plant demo garden.



## Adventure to Hased House of Wharton

By Charris Powers, TMNCPC



Oh the places we can go...to spread the TMNCPC's passion and mission! Shannon Westveer and I jumped at the outreach opportunity to do just that. We were invited to Hased House of Wharton which is walking distance from the shore's edge of the Colorado River for their February EarthLab session. Shannon presented her local knowledge on creating and sustaining a butterfly habitat while using personal photos and videos from her backyard habitat.

Prior to the presentation, Shannon and I were able to visit and introduce ourselves to about 25 members of the Wharton community. While meeting with our guests and later, we were



Charris, Shannon and Wharton community members.

Photo by Charris Powers



Wharton community members listening to Shannon Westveer's presentation. Photo by Charris Powers

impressed to hear personal stories of how they have created and sustained their own pocket prairies. It appeared that some guests needed confirmation of heading in the right direction or a gentle nudge to encourage them to continue doing what they are doing.

Shannon's presentation was on point, well received and brought about several questions as staff members of the Hased House have visions of transforming their former garden into a wildlife turf. Our outreach included promoting the Coastal Prairie Chapter and encouraging the conservation and management of Fort Bend, Waller and Wharton counties' natural resources and a tour of the Hased House campus.

The campus' future is bright, as houses are being built for technology, art and learning programs for the communities' use. The Hased House staff took Shannon and I on a tour of the campus showing the capacity and possibilities of this Wharton gem.

*Want to learn more about Hased House of Wharton? Check out their [website](#) for more information on their mission and on-going projects!*



## Niagara Perk Your Park Project Begins!

By Cindy Wainikainen, TMNCPC Co-Editor



On February 23rd, 2023, the ground breaking ceremony for the Niagara Perk Your Park project was held at Seabourne Creek Park. The TMNCPC grant writing team first started working on the submission for this grant over a year ago. Now after all this time, it is exciting to see the project start coming to life.



Trees delivered to SCNP Arboretum site. Photo by Jan Kolk

The trees that will make up the new Seabourne Creek Arboretum have started to come in. While the digging to plant the trees will not be as easy as the ground breaking, Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter is no stranger to hard work. Between Niagara, the City of Rosenberg and TMNCPC, I have no doubt that the Arboretum will be a success!



TMNCPC members breaking ground. Photo by Terri Hurley



TMNCPC members watering the new trees.

Photo by Randolph Watson



### SLACK TIP — *Better than Facebook*

MEMBERS ONLY. Want to help with the Arboretum? Check out [#team-scnp-arboretum](#). You can adjust the notification settings to be notified of every post or just @mentions.





## Prescription for Burn

By Shannon Westveer, TMNCPC



“Prescribed range burning follows guidelines that establish the conditions and manner under which fire will be applied on a specific area to accomplish specific management and ecological objectives.” That is the official definition of land management with fire, [a prescription for burning](#) according to AgriLife Extension Service.

Members may remember the Bastrop Fire of 2011, to-date the most destructive wildfire in our state’s history. Keeping the flammable vegetative detritus to a minimum by conducting more and smaller prescribed burns can certainly help prevent fires burning out of control. Fire has evolved with plants – mainly with grass “forests” – along coastal prairie millions of years before people even knew how to rub two flints together. Working *with* rather than against nature can be a good prescription for all.

Benefits of burning prairie are suppression of competing brush species, improvement of herbaceous condition, recycling of the many soil nutrients locked up in plant detritus, and the un-shading of the soil to allow for germination of succession annuals.



Burning in progress. Photo by Shannon Westveer



Shannon Westveer, John Rouane, Jr., Jim Butcher, Shari Lewis. Photo by Shannon Westveer

Some species of plants like the state flower of Texas, the bluebonnet have evolved right alongside fire, their seeds responding to the high heat which encourages young seedlings to push forth from naturally tough seed coats. Texans [wanting a higher germination rate](#) of the Texas bluebonnet without applying plasma have learned “nicking” and hot-water-soaking tricks to mimic the process and maximize blossom show for the expense and trouble. City people are not allowed to burn the landscape.

While suburbanites might be discouraged from lighting a backyard pocket prairie, a few in

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## Prescription for Burn cont'd

By Shannon Westveer, TMNCPC



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the Coastal Prairie Chapter live in the county where they can work down their checklist before ignition. Among them:

- wind and humidity conditions are favorable.
- sufficient vegetative growth to ignite and fuel the burn.
- ensure effective non-flammable, green perimeter stretch (like St. Augustine turf or disc the soil).
- notify neighbors.
- notify fire department.

Early March, volunteers John Roane, Jr., Shari Lewis, and Shannon Westveer arrived at Jim's property in the Richmond area to assist. Being an historian, Jim extolled the Karankawa tribes who used fire to mutual benefit – theirs *and* the land. It is well understood



After burn. Photo by Shannon Westveer

that humans have done this for thousands of years, and modern-day landowners are now returning to the prescription for beneficial land and wildlife management. Jim asked if we knew that the Karankawa also used RPS to determine who in the tribe would get to light the fire. (Punchline: RPS = rock, paper, scissors.)

As a team, we all decided it would be Shari to light the backfire, the end opposite the direction of the wind beginning the process. This was her first time unlike the rest of us, and the day's conditions were perfect. The burn was all but finished in about 15 minutes. "Nothing to this," you can hear Jim say as the headfire makes it way to the backfire. Less work than chop-and-drop, and cheaper than a cow, this prescription is an easy pill to pop.



Certified Wildlife Habitat Marker.

Photo by Shannon Westveer

To learn more about prescribed burns and the benefit they have, check out the links below:



TAMU Library | Scarifying *Lupinus* to Achieve High Germination Rate

<https://vivo.library.tamu.edu/vivo/display/n186779SE>

TPWD | Prescribed Range Burning in Texas (16-page PDF)

[https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd\\_bk\\_w7000\\_0196.pdf](https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_bk_w7000_0196.pdf)

Houston Arboretum | Prescribed Fire

<https://houstonarboretum.org/prescribed-fire/>



## TMNCPC Members March Madness

By Cindy Wainikainen, TMNCPC Co-Editor



### Week 1

Chapter Advisor John Few, Terri Hurley and Lynn Trenta attended the African American Memorial Park press conference at the invitation of Darren McCarthy, Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation Director. \$4 million dollars are being initially invested into this project to preserve two historic black cemeteries and redevelop Bates Allen Park.



Photo by Terri Hurley



Photo by Monique Smith

TMNCPC members volunteered with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to share their Skins & Skulls exhibit.

### Week 2

Spring break began for the schools in Fort Bend County and so did TMNCPC outreach at the Houston Museum of Natural Science at Sugar Land. Chevvy Tang, Susan Walther, Jamie Fairchild, Cyndi Scott (photo right) and Cindy Wainikainen shared the Pond Life WOW with museum visitors.



Photo by Katie Sallean

### Week 3

TMNCPC members Jan Poscovsky, Angela Hilton, Shree Nath, Esmeralda Fisher and Cindy Wainikainen all headed down to Surfside for the NestFest SplashTX beach cleanup. Conditions were quite windy, but they got some assistance from some Laughing Gulls.



Photo by Esmeralda Fisher

Rain did not stop the TMNCPC volunteers at J.B. Harrison from helping 18 scouts get their merit badges. Congrats Scouts!



Hannah Muegge and several scouts.  
Photo by Shannon Westveer



John Vindekilde, René Cannavo, Bill Johnson, Johanna DeYoung, Susie Doe, Kerry Padilla, Jeff Mueller, John Rouane, Jr., Lynne Woods, and Linda Mueller. Photo by Shannon Westveer

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## TMNCPC Members March Madness cont'd

By Cindy Wainikainen, TMNCPC Co-Editor



(Continued from page 12)



Shannon Westveer, Susie Doe and Randy Twaddle.  
Photo by Shannon Westveer

Susie Doe and Shannon Westveer trekked out to Waller County for the John Fairey Garden's "Budding Out Festival 2023." Despite the chilly weather, they had a steady stream of people with whom to share the Soil and Enviroscape Workshop on Wheels with. Big thank you to Randy Twaddle, Executive Director of the John Fairey Gardens, for inviting TMNCPC out to the event.



**FISH-tastic!!!** There was a huge turn out for the annual event. **Stay tuned**—full article in May Courier.

### Week 4



Amado Aguilar, John Rouane and Rebecca Aguilar.  
Photo by Susan Walther

### Week 5



Photo by Jan Kolk

Improvements to the bird drip at Seabourne were completed by Bill Johnson, John Rouane, Shree Nath, Fran Wilcox, Courtney Kilgard, Bob Naeger and Jan Kolk. This project was partially funded by the Big Sit grant that TMNCPC was awarded.

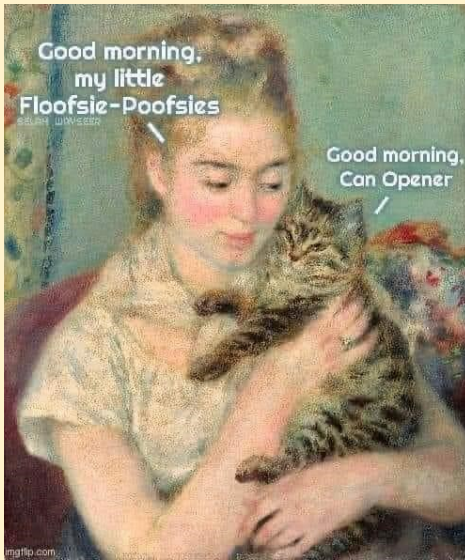
*More exciting outreach opportunities are happening this month. Don't miss the Earth Day Fest at Kitty Hollow Park on 4/22.*

*Get it on your mind... the 2023 Great Texas Birding Classic is coming up on May 7th. Be sure to register—there will be shirts!*



## The Lighter Side

By Lynn Trenta, TMNCPC Class of 2011



Facebook—The Cat House on the Kings.com



Facebook—Science Humor



Facebook—Science Humor



Facebook—Science Humor



Facebook—Star Trek Memes



## Elected Officers

President	<a href="#">Terri Hurley</a>
Vice President	<a href="#">Susan Walther</a>
Secretary	<a href="#">Joyce Tipton</a>
Treasurer	<a href="#">Pam Jones</a>

## Board of Directors

Past-President	<a href="#">Bert Stipelcovich</a>
Membership	<a href="#">Jan</a> and <a href="#">Kevin Kolk</a>
Programs	<a href="#">Jan Peterson</a>
Communications	<a href="#">Megan Cromeens</a>
Volunteers	<a href="#">Johanna DeYoung</a>
Adv. Training	<a href="#">Kerry Padilla</a>
New Class Spring	<a href="#">Lauren DeShazo</a>
New Class Rep.	<a href="#">Rebecca Aguilar</a>
Info. Tech.	<a href="#">Bert Stipelcovich</a>
State Rep	<a href="#">Hoiman Low</a>
Seabourne Creek	<a href="#">Jerry Trenta</a>

## TPWD / AgriLife Chapter Advisors

Prgm. Coordinator	<a href="#">Brandy Rader</a>
TPWD Fort Bend	<a href="#">Jon McLeod</a>
Fort Bend Ag Agent	<a href="#">John Few</a>
Wharton Ag Agent	<a href="#">Corrie Bowen</a>
Waller Ag Agent	<a href="#">Candace Moeller</a>

## SPRING TRAINING — *In-progress*

### Fall Training — Stay tuned!

If you are wanting to join our corps of volunteers, please visit the [Chapter Training Class Information page](#). Registration for the Fall Training normally opens in the summer. Check out the TMNCPC [website](#) for the latest information. You can become a Master Naturalist™. [JOIN US. RECONNECT!](#)

## FACEBOOK—Like us!

[Follow us](#) for timely and seasonally relevant content. Learn about Coastal Prairie and engage with your volunteer organization.

**MEMBERS ONLY** To join the [private Facebook Group](#), send a request and wait for TMNCPC Admin to respond.



Check out our  
Instagram and Flickr  
for AMAZING photos!



[TMNCPC Instagram page](#): @tmn\_coastal\_prairie\_chapter  
[Coastal Prairie Flickr](#): <https://www.flickr.com/photos/coastalprairie/>

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## TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST™ COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER

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