

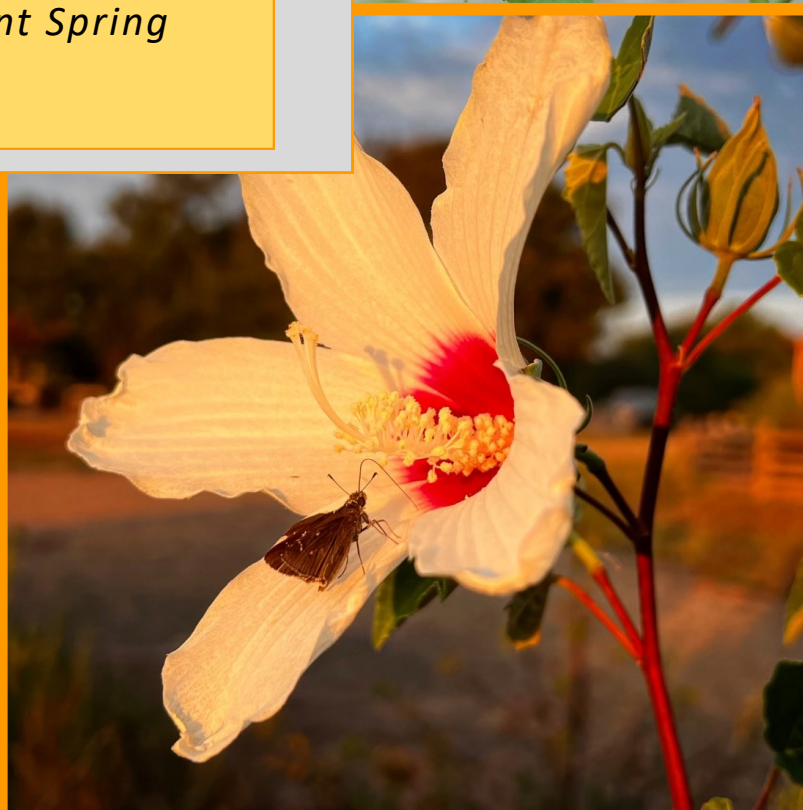
Coastal Prairie Chapter **Courier**

October 2023 — Volume 11 Issue 10



“In nature nothing exists alone.”

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring



Inside This Issue

Rocky Mountain National Park

In Our Backyards: Mysterious Mounds

Book Review of *Lost Words*

Buzz About the Bioblitz



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

Celebrating Pollinators! Members Sari Garfinkle, Caroline Kane, Naomi Brown photographed species, clockwise: Leafcutter bee, ruby-throated hummingbird, a skipper and a western honeybee.

EDITOR TEAM

October's issue was crafted by Editor, **Raji Mahesh**

Have a great story for November's issue? Submit by **October 25th** to:

Shannon Westveer

Shannon@CoastalPrairie.org

Raji Mahesh

Raji@CoastalPrairie.org

President's Message

by Terri Hurley, TMNCPC President



Hello fellow nature enthusiasts! While folks up north are just starting to bundle up and drink pumpkin spice everything, down here in Fort Bend County, October still thinks it's July. We'll have to bring out the tricks up our sleeves to beat the heat and make the most of this sizzling October here on the coastal prairie.

What a successful Nature Day! On behalf of the entire chapter, I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible volunteers who made our first Nature Day at Seabourne a resounding success. Your dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work played a pivotal role in creating a memorable and educational experience for all our visitors. And a huge thank you to Jan Poscovsky, Seabourne Outreach Lead, for her tireless efforts in leading the planning committee and also for directing the entire operation on the event day.

New Communications Director! Let's give a round of applause to Tom Zaal who has volunteered to serve as our new Communications Director. Tom recently transferred to our chapter from the Galveston Bay Area Chapter and has wasted no time getting involved in our projects. With his dynamic energy and great ideas, Tom is already actively engaged in his role. Thanks to Tom's passion for all things natural, our chapter's online presence will continue to blossom, and we can't wait to see what he has in store for us. We certainly do thank Megan Cromeens for her top-notch service as Comms Co-Director in 2022 and Comms Director in 2023. She also greatly increased our reach into the community through our social media platforms.

Bird hikes start back up on October 4th! We're thrilled to announce that our exciting monthly bird hikes at Seabourne Creek Nature Park are resuming again. Join us for these captivating outdoor adventures, where you'll have the chance to see our feathered friends in their natural habitat.

Whether you're a seasoned birder or just starting to spread your wings, these hikes are a good way to see some of the 235 species of birds that have been recorded at the park. Plus, we have new bird hike leaders! Jan and Kevin Kolk have volunteered to lead us on these avian escapades, bringing their knowledge and passion for birding to our hikes.

October Chapter Field Trip: Thursday, October 5 @ 9:00 AM *"Houston Audubon Raptor Center / Botanic Garden"*

By Jan Peterson, TMNCPC Programs Director



MEMBERS ONLY!

The Coastal Prairie Chapter Programs Committee has organized a delightful field trip for **members only** that will include a visit to the Houston Audubon Raptor and Education Center at Sims Bayou and a tour of the Botanic Garden, both in Houston.

This **FREE** event for members will start at 9:00 AM and will conclude with a picnic lunch (bring your own) at 12:30 PM. At the Audubon Center, themes will include raptors, bird conservation, and migration. At the Garden, the tour will include an overview of the different habitats and the role of a garden with native plant conservation.

Thank you to **Dominic and Lisette Dottavio** and **Donatta Clarke** for



Houston Audubon Society Sims Bayou Raptor Center. Photo credit: Shannon Westveer

organizing this wonderful event on behalf of the committee. More logistics information will be sent out just prior to the Field Trip.

Look for the SignUp Genius linked in the Weekly Bulletin or pinned on the **#at** channel in Slack. There are only a few spots left, so *don't wait* to sign up.

[TMNCPC members in attendance for the field trip

should record their Advanced Training (AT) hours under "AT: Houston Audubon Society" for 3.5 hours. No drive time or VSP hours for this gathering.]

FOR THE PUBLIC!

Our regularly scheduled monthly program resumes **November 2, 2023**. Check our monthly calendar and homepage

for this and other programs that are always **free** and **open to the public**.

CoastalPrairie.org

[TMNCPC Calendar of Events](#)

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



October 10th • 8:30am - 12pm

Come Bioblitz with us!

- Learn how to use iNaturalist from our Coastal Prairie Chapter members!
- Download the iNaturalist app on your phone before arriving
- Discover the pollinators at Seabourne Creek Nature Park!



Sorry to miss an October Program? Come BioBlitz with chapter members instead!

You are invited to join us for a **FREE** BioBlitz outing at Seabourne Creek Nature Park, October 10, 2023 at 8:30 AM.

<https://txmn.org/coastal/event/bioblitz-at-seabourne-creek-nature-park/>

Membership Minute

By Jan and Kevin Kolk, TMNCPC Membership Co-Directors



Congratulations to our certification and milestone achievers:



Initial Certification

Carrie Dolezal 2023 Spring



2023 Recertification

(80 members recertified)

Barry Thompson 2023 Spring



250 Hour Milestone

Jean Watson 2023 Spring

500 Hour Milestone



Kerry Padilla 2022 Spring

John Cooper 2019

Marilyne Malone 2020 Fall

Jan Poscovsky 2022 Fall



MEMBERS: Reminder!

There is an online process for completing impact data — outreach to the public — in both VMS for TPWD and for AgriLife Extension Service. The instructions and online form of the “Public Outreach Report” can be found pinned on **#forms** channel in Slack.

Bird Walks With the Kolks

Mark your calendars for every 1st Wednesday, October through May, at Seabourne Creek Nature Park.

Participation is open to the public — all ages and levels of birders are *welcome!*

[Click here for October 4 details.](#)

Coastal Prairie Chapter: By the Numbers For 2023

Match the category with its number.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Members on the roster | a. 17,261 |
| 2. Total volunteer hours to date | b. 17,925 |
| 3. Total advanced training hours | c. 229 |
| 4. Community members impacted via outreach | d. 2,851 |
| 5. Newly certified master naturalists | e. 22 |

Answers : Go to page [7](#)

Volunteer Service — October Highlights

By Johanna DeYoung, TMNCPC Volunteer Director



Before arriving to serve, check our website calendar for last-minute changes, cancellations, or other information before departing.

<https://txmn.org/coastal/events/month/2023-10/>

Signature Project Monthly Bird Hike at SCNP, Rosenberg: 8:00 – 10:30 AM 1st Wednesday of the month which falls on 10/4

Signature Project Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP), Rosenberg: 8 – 10 AM Wednesdays and 1st and 3rd Saturdays which fall on 10/4, 10/7, 10/11, 10/18, 10/21, 10/25

Public Outreach Houston Museum of Natural Science in Sugar Land, 10:30 AM — 3:30 PM 2nd and 4th Saturdays which fall on 10/14 and 10/28

Public Outreach Texian Market Days at the George Ranch Historical Park, Richmond: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM Saturday 10/21

Public Outreach Skulls and Skins WOW Presentation at the Fort Bend Mission Bend Branch Library, Alief: 2:00 PM Saturday, 10/28; presenter is Jan Peterson

Citizen Science Event October

MEMBERS: Join the Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter (TMNCPC) in its three (3) organized and separate BioBlitz outings during the Texas Pollinator BioBlitz Event, 10/6/2023 - 10/22/2023. There will be three (3) separate outings, locations, and dates/times.

Members must join the project [2023 Texas Pollinator Bioblitz](#) in iNaturalist to be part of the project.

[TMNCPC members should record their VSP hours in VMS under "iNaturalist, eBird and Other Citizen Science: TMN Report Hours"]

Please check **#vsp** channel on Slack for details

DID YOU KNOW?

New VSP Opportunity: "**Seabourne Nature Days**". With the first of many Seabourne Nature Days to follow, please utilize this newest VSP opportunity to account for service hours in planning and preparation prior to the event, the event itself, and/or activities following Seabourne Nature Days.

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under: "Seabourne Nature Days: TMN Report Hours"]

Fort Bend County 4-H Outdoor Skills Day at James B. Harrison-Long Point Ranch, Needville:

8:30 AM – 3:30 PM Saturday, 10/28

October Big Day – Bird and Nature Walk at James B. Harrison-Long Point Ranch, Needville:

8:00 – 10:30 AM Saturday 10/14

Coastal Prairie Conservancy Indiangrass Preserve, Katy: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM Tuesdays, Fridays, and 2nd Saturdays of each month which fall on 10/3, 10/6, 10/10, 10/13, 10/14, 10/17, 10/20, 10/24, 10/27, 10/31

Harris County Precinct 4 Bird Survey @ Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza Park, Houston:

7:30 AM – 12:00 PM, 4th Monday - 10/30

Lawther-Deer Park Prairie, Deer Park:

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM, 4th Saturday of each month which falls on 10/28

Rocky Mountain National Park

By Naomi Brown, TMNCPC Class of Spring 2021



Anything outdoors is wonderful. Travelling to the remote Rocky Mountain National Park in summer is even better! It is a naturalist's dream!

Our group consisted of one geologist, one retired medical doctor, one biologist, and a handy-with-duct-tape spouse. We were all graduates of National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). We had two guides. We trained carrying weighted packs, with bulky but required BearVaults and bottled water, daily for over a year.

We practiced Leave No Trace (LNT) principles, pitching our tents, and lighting stoves. We dehydrated food, read up on Rocky Mountain summer flora and fauna, debated these over the best coffee, and wondered how much faster water would boil at that altitude.

We spent hours creating spreadsheets of our personal, hydration, and gustatory needs, as we did not want anyone carrying even one gram more. I bought a gram scale online and weighed everything; woke up at night often realizing a particular item could be eliminated or that another item was worthy of double use; learned to pack better and set up more swiftly; bought fresh batteries; and learned to identify things. We practiced using our InReach minis, wrote wills, bought insurance, got vaccinated, and informed others.

I ditched my traditional sleeping bag for a lighter quilt and insulated pad, and practiced reading topo maps. As it was, each of us carried in our packs almost forty pounds of gear, water, sleep and food systems; maps, technology, compass, rain gear, extra clothing. I added a thin notebook, pencil, glued-in tiny watercolors in an Altoids tin, paper, tiny sponge, brush. I used iNaturalist and travel binoculars for birds and large mammal identification. Our geologist simply hollered when he found a novel rock. I wore a loupe around my



Rocky Mountain National Park Photo Credit: Naomi Brown

neck for small plant ID and a waist bag. We all had high quality hiking poles. We applied for permits as having the necessary paperwork is now a "thing" and Rangers are extremely happy to issue pricey citations for noncompliance. The altitude was not too friendly for us flatlanders. We huffed and puffed, suffered weird headaches, and leaned heavily on our poles.

Every day we experienced something new. We hiked up to Trail Ridge and saw an elk herd. We admired glacial lakes, made friends with Park Rangers, camped by waters at night, identified many raptors and local flowers. We even witnessed a young man on bended knee in a late afternoon sunbeam proposing to his fiancée by a scenic lake rimmed with snow-capped mountains and perfect weather. (She said "yes", and everyone erupted in cheers).

Although the altitude was evident, we had a terrific time backpacking in the park, seeing moose, elk, ptarmigan, eagles, beaver, and even a black bear. Exploring the High Country on foot was amazing. You do not have to travel exotic places to "discover" wild things.

Step outside!

In Our Backyards: Mysterious Mounds

By Kylee Roberts, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2023



Ever wonder

what little critter is responsible for all those sand piles showing up all over the place? You may be lucky enough to catch a quick glimpse, but they're fast so it's not easy.



Texas pocket gopher hard at work.

Photo: Kylee Roberts

Here they are though! Pocket gophers!

Texas is home to about 11 of the approximately 41 species of pocket gophers and some of them are particularly difficult to tell apart. While their digging can be irritating in some areas and they're known to damage garden crops, their tunneling helps keep the soil healthy and can help the ground absorb water more efficiently.

In the Next Issue:

Nature Day at the Seabourne Creek Park! Look for the FULL STORY in the November Issue



Website Blog

Be sure to email [SUBSCRIBE](#) (Home Page, bottom right) to get timely posts delivered via email.



- [Seabourne Nature Day Kicks Off!](#) | September 29, 2023
- [Migration: Hummingbird, Monarchs, and Autumn Events](#) | September 15, 2023

Answers to TMNCPC Quiz
From page [4](#)

1. c 2. b 3. d 4. a 5. e

A Review of *The Lost Words: A Spell Book* by Robert MacFarlane

By Peyton Belunek, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2021



"Once upon a time, words began to vanish from the language of children. They disappeared so quietly that at first almost no one noticed - fading away like water on stone. The words were those that children used to name the natural world around them: acorn, adder, bluebell, bramble, conker - gone! Fern, heather, kingfisher, otter, raven, willow, wren ... all of them gone! The words were becoming lost: no longer vivid in children's voices, no longer alive in their stories."

Thus begins Robert MacFarlane in his beautiful and highly acclaimed children's book *The Lost Words: A Spell Book*.

In 2007, the Oxford Junior Dictionary removed many nature words and replaced them with "21st century words" like celebrity, database, and blog. The dictionary issued a statement that their job was not to recommend words to children or place value judgments on words but simply to reflect actual usage in society. This greatly alarmed author Robert MacFarlane who rightly stated, "We do not care for what we do not know, and on the whole, we do not know what we cannot name. Do we want an alphabet for children that begins 'A is for Acorn, B is for Buttercup, C is for Conker;' or one that begins

'A is for Attachment, B is for Block-Graph, C is for Chatroom'?"

Partnering with artist Jackie Morris, MacFarlane sought to reclaim the word "spell" - to enchant children and reinvigorate their passion for the natural world by simply helping them intone the very names of the plants and animals all around them ... to "spell" them back into conversation, observation, and conservation. With stunning paintings on every page and naturalist poetry dripping with imagery and detail, kids are drawn in and made curious! The idea is inherently thrilling - is there anything a child loves more than to know they can serve an important role in the world, not later but right now?! MacFarlane does an amazing job conveying the importance and urgency of the matter:

"You hold in your hands a spell book for conjuring back these lost

words. To read it you will need to seek, find, and speak. It deals in things that are missing and things that are hidden, in absences and in appearances. It is told in gold - the gold of the goldfinches that flit through its pages in charms - and it holds not poems but spells of many kinds that might just, by the old, strong magic of being spoken aloud, unfold dreams and songs, and summon lost words back into the mouth and the mind's eye."

Whether you love children, nature, poetry, art, and/or language; this book is a captivating read with stunning artwork. The book itself is oversized and well suited to group story times or one-on-one read-alouds. The artwork and subject matter open many opportunities for springboard nature crafts or artwork.



The Buzz About the Bioblitz

By Sari Garfinkle, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2023



This may sound crazy, but I love Bioblitzes. Why?

- 1) I love being outside.
- 2) I love nature (see #1).
- 3) I learn. Without a specified target, all my attention would be focused on dragonflies and damselflies.

- 4) I contribute to science.

Biology departments have largely pushed aside field research in favor of microbiology and genetics. Bioblitzes are sometimes the only way to obtain a snapshot of what's-living-where at a specific time. Researchers define the parameters and citizen scientists go on the hunt. Conclusions drawn from fact based research rather than anecdotal data (or opinion) may change perceptions and help shape public policy. Information gathering is a powerful tool.

- 5) I exercise. Walking is better than sitting.

- 6) The best of all? I enjoy my friends' company *and* meet new people.

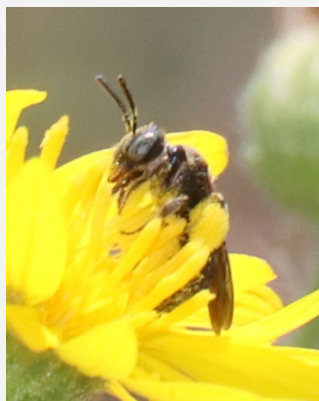
Join me and other TMN friends for Nature Tracker's October Texas Pollinator Blitz.

See page [3](#) for details.

The Texas Pollinator Bioblitz runs from October 6th -22nd. Because the world depends on plants, and 75-80% of plants require reproductive help (no, I did not make that up), pollinators are VERY important to our existence. I could bore you with chlorophyll, the Krebs cycle, redox, and gas exchange, but the bottom line is that without plants the world would be devoid of life, unless you're an anaerobic bacterium living in a deep sea vent. Where's the fun in that?

Practice shooting small things with your camera or camera phone. Brush up on your plant IDs. Keep an eye out for meet-ups. We're planning to hunt locally and in parts a little more remote to provide the fullest picture of our area.

Hope to see you there!!



Genus *Protandrena*, a mining bee, only record from Colorado County



Ectemnius decemmaculatus, a square-headed wasp: sole report for Fort Bend County



Spider Wasp, possibly Genus *Entypus*, dragging its prey, a Rabid Wolf Spider (*Rabidosa rabida*)



Common Thread-waisted Wasp (*Ammophila procera*) on *Solidago* (Goldenrod)



Lycium carolinianum (Christmas Berry) on the roadside at Port Bolivar

Seabourne Creek Nature Park

By Randolph Watson, TMNCPC Seabourne Park



I see our fall migrants passing through on their way south, and the calendar tells me it is fall. However, I still feel like I am in a sauna as I walk around Seabourne Creek. Official mid-morning temperatures in September were close to 90 degrees, but it sure felt much hotter than that to me. I want to give a big shout of appreciation to all the volunteers who braved the heat and helped at the park. We continued plugging away diligently on our end-of-summer tasks, and we tackled some new projects and community outreach events.

The Grand Poohbah himself, Jim Butcher, kept us hydrated and laughing on our weekly workdays.



Here 's Jim presenting his famous 'blue donut' award to Fran Wilcox - probably for wearing the right colors that day.

Speaking of hydration, watering was a big task last month as the

newly planted trees in the Arboretum as well as the larger, more established trees along the perimeter pathway struggled with the dry conditions. Our tree waterers often work far from the cameras, but I want to acknowledge the consistent work of Sal Cardenas, Janis Hodgson, Mary Saville, James Stepp, Rodney Walther, Jean Watson, Fran W., and Tom Zaal. Additionally, Garrett Engelhardt and Bob Naeger quietly and regularly maintain the Seabourne Lake water level and monitor the water quality.

Late summer is a time when many non-native plants drop their seeds. Part of our strategy to eradicate the invasives is to prevent them from doing this. Volunteers were out in the



Bob Naeger, Sal Cardenas, and Dennis West hard at work cutting and herbiciding in Section C of the Prairie.



Posing for a photo after doing battle with giant ragweed, sumpweed, and windmill grass are (L-R) Wanda Roof, Fran Wilcox, Jo Cain, Jan Kolk, Jean Watson, and Johanna DeYoung.



Chapter President Terri Hurley, Raji Mahesh, and Lynn Trenta discuss signage and plant labels in the garden.

Prairie and the Houston Wilderness Area cutting, herbiciding, and mowing.

Our Native Plant Garden was well-tended. With guidance from Lynn Trenta, volunteers removed weeds, cleared pathways, trimmed plants, collected seeds, and updated the plant inventory.

Much of the Chapter's focus in September was on the Butterfly Garden where we hosted a couple

Continued, [next Page](#)

Seabourne Creek Nature Park

By Randolph Watson, TMNCPC Seabourne Park



Continued from [previous Page](#)

of large efforts. The big event obviously was our first ever Nature Day. While the event itself was big news, our Butterfly Garden team put in a huge effort in the weeks prior to the event preparing the garden and turning it into a pollinator showcase.



Volunteers take a quick break (L-R): Shannon Westveer, Aida Pita Baston, Raji Mahesh, Barry Thompson, Caroline Kane, and Marilynne Malone having a good time in the Butterfly Garden.

Our other big activity in the Butterfly Garden was the installation of a hopscotch pad. This was a Girl Scout project that was coordinated by team lead Katie Sallean. Many members came out to provide guidance and assistance to the scouts. The hopscotch pad with its butterfly theme is a colorful complement to the flowers and will draw many children to the garden.

We were on-hand to see Jan Kolk, Membership Co-Director, present Barry Thompson (Spring 2023

Class) with his initial certification and his 2023 recertification pin. Barry has contributed greatly in both of SCNP's two gardens since joining the Chapter, and he closely monitors the bees and helps maintain their habitats.

TMNCPC members hosted several educational outreach events last month including Susie Doe's plant walk, a Nature Hike led by Emily Essa, and the monthly Insect Hike led by John Few and Kerry Padilla. Our hosts for these events share their knowledge and their passion for the natural world, and these events are great learning opportunities.

In October, Kevin and Jan Kolk will resume the Chapter's monthly bird hike on Wednesday the 4th, and Susie Doe will have another

plant walk on Saturday the 7th. Be sure to check the calendar for details.

Finally, I encourage everyone to visit Seabourne Creek Nature Park in October. Come out to work or come out to enjoy a bit of nature. Autumn is just around the corner, and the park is a wonderful place to be during fall migration.



Pam Jones, Aki Nomi, and Dorothy Tran do some gardening in the shade of the pergola.



Congratulations, Barry!

JOIN US!

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

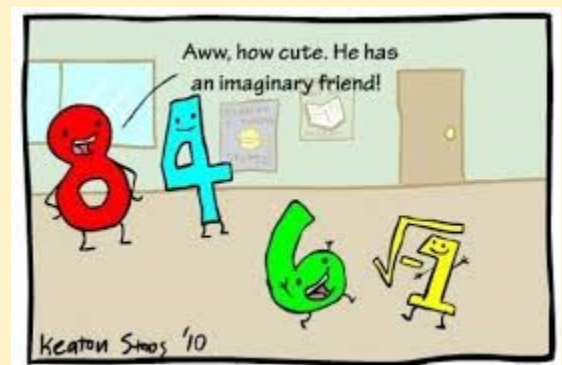
We are out at Seabourne Creek Nature Park every Wednesday morning and on the first and third Saturdays of the month.

The Lighter Side

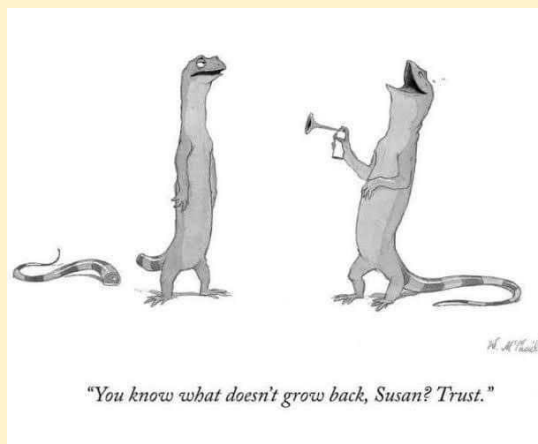
Various TMNCPC Members



Shared by Cindy Burns



Shared by Raji Mahesh



Shared by Lauren DeShazo



Elected Officers

President	Terri Hurley
Vice President	Susan Walther
Secretary	Joyce Tipton
Treasurer	Pam Jones

Board of Directors

Past-President	Bert Stipelcovich
Membership	Jan and Kevin Kolk
Programs	Jan Peterson
Communications	Tom Zaal
Volunteers	Johanna DeYoung
Adv. Training	Kerry Padilla
New Class Director	Lauren DeShazo
New Class Rep.	Lisa Sanders
Info. Tech.	Bert Stipelcovich
State Rep	Hoiman Low
Seabourne Creek	Jerry Trenta and Randolph Watson

TPWD / AgriLife Chapter Advisors

Prgm. Coordinator	Brandy Rader
Fort Bend Ag Agent	John Few

SLACK TIP — Copying a Message to a Channel

MEMBERS ONLY. Sometimes, those in one channel may benefit from a message posted in a different channel.

Simply copy the link to the message, then link it to the text in a message elsewhere on Slack. That way, when members click the link, they're taken to the other message to reply. *Thank you for using Slack!*



SPRING TRAINING — Didn't get in the Fall Class?

No worries! Coastal Prairie Chapter holds two training courses each year: **Spring** and **Fall**. Watch for information to be posted to our website's homepage sometime mid-to-late December.

If you know you'd like to join, please [complete the form provided](#) so you can be notified as soon as the next registration opens in the Spring. *JOIN US!*

See Y'all TMNs in McAllen!

Lots of great field trips and a solar eclipse are planned. See you outside!

[https://
txmn.tamu.edu/2023-
annual-meeting/](https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/)



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