

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER Chapter News – July 2006 Editor, Mary Helen Israel

Message from the President

We've just witnessed how true the old adage is "be careful what you wish for." Everyone wanted some rain and one week later – stop, enough already. Ok, now for the important stuff. This month we start advertising our upcoming fall Master Naturalist classes. (See last month's newsletter or our website for all the details about the training.) What I wanted to encourage all of you to do is to personally talk to your friends or family members about taking the classes. Marty Cornell conducted a survey of last year's class and the biggest driver for signing up was a friend that talked to them about the classes. It was far more persuasive than posters, fliers or newspaper articles.

As we all know, what you learn in class is fantastic and then you get to use your knowledge to educate the citizens of Brazoria County or work on projects. If you've been reading the recent newsletters or coming to the general membership meetings, you are aware that our partners have more projects and expansion plans than we can handle. We need a batch of 25 enthusiastic volunteers every year if we are to supply their needs. So please get out there and talk up the program. It would be a shame not to fill up the fall class.

Thanks,
Ed

UPCOMING MEETING JULY 12, 2006

8:30 - Social time
9:00 - Program – Bird Banding Update presented by Jim Renfro, John Thayer, and Tom Morris

Texas
Master
Naturalist
– Cradle
of Texas
Chapter

<http://grovesite.com/tamu/tmn>
**Board of Directors Meeting
June 13, 2006 – Minutes**

Opening: Attendees Carolyn May-Monie, Alice Sieling, Ed Barrios, Tom Morris, Barbara Burkhardt, Carl Dodson, Neal McLain, Jim Renfro, John Marshall, Roy Morgan, Jerry Eppner, Jan Kater, Jerry Krampota, Rich Tillman, and Justina Dent were welcomed to the meeting by President Ed Barrios at 2:02 PM.

Interest Group Communication to Membership: Ed Barrios summarized the three changes to the Common Interest Group Draft proposed at the general membership meeting on May 10, 2006: All notices of Common Interest Group Meetings would be published in three sources, TMN-COT website, TMN-COT newsletter and a general membership e-mail. Experts that are not members of TMN-COT would be allowed to participate in meetings, consult with groups and present programs. Common Interest Groups would be open to participation

from Non-TMN COT members. For example, members of other TMN chapters and other interested volunteers could attend meetings. A straw poll taken at the May10th meeting approved the inclusion of outside experts in Common Interest Groups.

Barbara Burkhardt brought up the Prairie Restoration Project at Brazos Bend State Park where four TMN chapters are participating under TMN-COT leadership of Al Childs. This is a project and not a Common Interest Group; therefore participation rules would not apply. Carl Dodson was concerned that a Sea Center Common Interest Group would detract from TMN membership as there would be no reason for volunteers to join TMN-COT if they could have all the TMN benefits from a Common Interest Group without paying for TMN training. He also questioned whether non-members would be covered by our insurance at these meetings.

The question was asked, "Can a volunteer be a member of more than one TMN chapter?" Rich Tillman answered, "No. This is the reason Tracie Teague transferred her TMN membership."

Carl Dodson made the motion that membership in Common Interest Groups be limited to TMN-COT members. Alice Sieling seconded the motion. The motion passed 4 to 1. Barbara Burkhardt made the motion that non-TMN experts may consult with and participate in Common Interest Groups, but not be voting members. Carl Dodson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Carl Dodson made the motion to approve the Common Interest Group Final Draft as amended. Barbara Burkhardt seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Volunteer Service Coordinator

Update: Carolyn May-Monie announced that TMN-COT has signed a new partner agreement with INEOS/Innovene. She also announced Partner Project Leaders: San Bernard Oak (Big Tree) Brochure -Laura Brandes and Phil Huxford; Levi Jordan Plantation Surveys - Rich Tillman and Sandy Jespersen; Peach Point Wildlife Management Prairie Restoration – Tracie Teague will do start-up. A new Partner Project leader is needed to run the ConocoPhillips/Sweeny ISD project. Jerry Krampota volunteered to be project leader on the Brazoria County Parks Camp Mohawk Interpretive Signs Project. Justina Dent, Barbara Burkhardt, and Rich Tillman volunteered to help with this project. Original site survey was done by TMN-COT in 2004. Peach Point Prairie Restoration Project consists of a 3-acre training site. The site will need to be fenced as it has free-range cattle. Tallow trees will need to be removed. Then, a controlled burn to clear current vegetation must be done before the site can be reseeded. Bill Brown wrote the Project Agreement Form. Todd Meredino will provide materials for an electrified fence enclosure and seed balls. Eventually, Todd would like the project to include 200 acres of restored prairie.

200 bluebird-nesting boxes for Peach Point Wildlife Management Area are to be built by Hunter Todd of Brazoria as an Eagle Scout project. ConocoPhillips turned down Hunter's request for project funding. He would like to start an Adopt-a-Box program. Each box adoption would cost \$6. Jim Renfro stated that improperly installed bluebird boxes are set-up scenarios for nestling deaths. "There are more don'ts than do's for setting up bluebird boxes." He felt proper monitoring of the boxes was a necessity and installation of even 25 boxes would be a considerable task.

Before TMN-COT considers an Adopt-a-Box program under their auspices, a meeting between Hunter Todd, Todd's Scoutmaster, Jim Renfro, and Todd Meredino was suggested by the board.

INNEOS would like help constructing a prairie, wetland and butterfly garden on the site of the current school project. Step one requires help of a consultant to sketch an overview of the project to take to management for funding. Step two would entail identifying invasive plants and creating paths for education projects. Step three would hide old tanks left on site, perhaps with a bird-viewing stand. Gulf Coast Bird Observatory was suggested as a contact since they recently did a similar project. Barbara Ray, teacher of a landscaping class at college, and Paula Craig, the horticulture extension agent, are also suggested as contacts for INNEOS. Master Gardeners has several members with landscape experience.

A Memorandum of Agreement was suggested as a means of alliance with Brazosport College. Jim Renfro did not feel comfortable signing a partnership agreement with the college. The partnership agreement did not fit the services TMN-COT members provide for the college. Four members teach Adult Life and Learning classes at the college: Jim Renfro, Tom Morris, John Thayer and Jerry Eppner. A class minimum is set at six in order for the class to continue. Class size is 12 to 15 at present.

The board authorized Jim Renfro, Tom Morris, John Thayer and Jerry Eppner to meet with the Brazosport College Board of Regents to create a project form and memorandum of agreement. Jim Renfro is authorized to ask if TMN-COT can have a similar relationship fee as Master Gardeners has with the college. Master Gardeners receives one half of the student fees paid for its classes as a

donation to the organization, approximately \$750.

Volunteer Hours Discussion: Barbara Burkhardt asked for a list of questions to ask state to clarify volunteer hours. Ed Barrios requested that four points be clarified with Michelle Haggerty, State TMN Volunteer Coordinator:

- "Are writing of grants volunteer hours?"
- "Are greeting at Brazoria Wildlife Refuge and desk manning at Sea Center volunteer hours?"
- "Are manning phones for Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue volunteer hours?"
- "Are we free to say anything we do for a TMN-COT partner is a volunteer hour?"

John Marshall suggested volunteerism be worded in the broadest possible sense, just asking clarification of service for a TMN-COT partner. How much leeway? Carl Dodson wanted clarification on what happens to activities that do not meet volunteer hour guidelines.

Membership Report: Tom Morris reported 4,782 total volunteer hours this year and 102 current members, 91 active members. 431 advanced training hours this year, which computes to more than 10 volunteer hours per hour of advanced training. 3622 people were reached by TMN-COT in 2006.

Six members are still actively getting recertified. 25 members have recertified so far out of 91 active members. Eleven members dropped out. Four members earned 250 hour pins, and two members earned 1000 hour pins. Bob Schwebel has agreed to become inactive status.

Miscellaneous: Artist Boat Adventures, a local kayaking company based in Galveston, would like a link to their website added to the links page of TMN-COT website. Sea Center will be

starting kayak instruction on its 8-acre saltwater pond. Barbara Burkhardt made a motion to add the Artist Boat link to website. Jan Kater seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Rich Tillman gave an update on background checks. Bryan Adams has suggested that TMN-COT members may be able to get free background checks thru the BISD system. At present BISD volunteers fill out a background check form and their IDs are scanned on campus. Another possibility for free background checks is the Texas Department of Fish and Wildlife. The department does a 3-year background check of volunteers and could send us a list of volunteers with questionable backgrounds.

Treasurer's Report: Jan Kater highlighted a final budget problem for 2006. No one monitors the club expenditures for snacks at advanced training, training and general meetings. The receipts just float in to the treasurer. He feels we need one person in charge of expenditures, not only snacks, but honorariums for speakers and sales of extra class curriculums. Last year four extra curriculums were sold. The cost was included in training expenses, but the income from their sale was not. The amount of working capital for the club is insufficient. The club starts the year with \$2000. If expenses this year are only \$300 over budget we would start next year with only \$1700, not enough for 2007 club expenses. TMN-COT needs a \$500 cushion in our assets.

John Thayer suggested offering training at the college for a fee as well as an increase in dues. Master Gardeners pays \$13 annual dues per member. \$10 goes to the chapter. Ron Bisbee offered to pay half the cost of class for Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge Volunteers. Ed Barrios mentioned that we have a prospective 2006 class member, Sandy

Henderson, who is familiar with Tax Status 501 (c)(3) filing, and that the time has come for TMN-COT to file for tax-exempt status. The board agreed to poll TMN-COT members at June 14th general meeting as to dues and tax-exempt status.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Sieling, Secretary

A Repeat Call for Help in Recruiting New COT Members, Marty & Carole Cornell

We have begun to accept applications for the 25 available spaces of our 2006 training program. The most effective method to attract new members is by personal contact, so current members are encouraged to actively help in recruitment.

The fall training classes will start on Wednesday, September 6th and will continue for the following ten Wednesdays, culminating in graduation on November. Once again, our speakers are all recognized experts in their subject, so these classes remain a bargain at \$130.

To sign up for the 2006 fall classes, have your friends contact Sandra Smith at the Brazoria County Texas Cooperative Extension at one of the following numbers:

281-756-1564 ext 112

979-388-1564 ext 112

979-864-1564 ext 112

or e-mail Sandra Smith at sandrasb@brazoria-county.com. Or, have them browse our web site to download an application form and the detailed class schedule.

**COT Texas Master Naturalist Awards
June 14, 2006**

2006 Certification - 8 hrs AT and 40 hrs VT

Rosalee Marshall
Davie McCaskill

Re-Certification - 8 hrs AT and 40 hrs VT

Betty Bouley
James Calvert
Phil Huxford
Paula Jacobs (2005)*
John Marshall
Roy Morgan
Archie Pratt*
Dianne Richmond
Alice Sieling

Bronze Award – 250 hrs

Betty Bouley
Laura Brandes*
Paula Jacobs*
Jan Kater*

Silver Award – 500 hrs

Rainbo Johnson
Dianne Richmond

*Absent previously

From the VP, John Boettiger

IF ... you have attended all of our Regular Monthly Meetings so far this year, you would now have **11.50 hours of "Advanced Training" (remember that you only need 8-hours of "Advanced Training" plus 40-hours of Volunteer time to Certify or Re-Certify in 2006).**

Coming Programs (with expected AT-hours) are:

* **July 12, 2006** ... Bird Banding Update (Jim Renfro, Tom Morris & John Thayer) * 1.5-AT hours expected

* **August 9, 2006** ... Fire at the San Bernard NWR (Fall, 2005), Jennifer Sanchez, Refuge Manager * 2-AT hours expected

* **September 13, 2006** ... Earth Science Lecture, Wayne McAlister, USFWS (Retired) * 2-AT hours expected

* **October 11, 2006** (afternoon) ... Astronomy, Judi James, Brazosport Planetarium * 2-AT hours expected
& **October 14, 2006** (evening) at the George Observatory (Brazos Bend State Park) Tom Morris * 2-AT hours expected

* **November 8, 2006** ... Fall-2006 Commencement, Naturalist Lecture & Photography, Gary Clark and Kathy Adams Clark * 2-AT

* **January 10, 2007** ... Red Drum Lecture, David Abrego, Sea Center Manager, Sea Center Texas * 2-AT (WORKING)

* **February 14, 2007** ... Feral Hogs on the NWRs John Boettiger and Mark Hazelrigg * 2-AT hours expected

Advanced Training Summary, you should now have **11.5-hours completed** and **11.5-hours are scheduled** by mid-November, 2006.

Call me with any Advanced Training questions or problems ... 979-297-5427. **ENJOY the SUMMER ... and, take lots of photos!**

Advanced Training, John Thayer

The Advanced Training Committee has reviewed AT opportunities listed on nearby TMN Chapter Web Sites and has approved the advanced training opportunities listed at the end of the newsletter (Attachment 1). If you find other opportunities not listed that you would like to attend, please submit a Request for Advanced Training Form. (Available on our Website.)

Brazos Bend Butterfly Count, Sunday, September 24

Everyone interested in butterflies is invited to participate in the annual Brazos Bend Butterfly Count on Sunday, September 24. No previous experience is necessary.

This is one of many counts held in our area and around the country under the auspices of the North American Butterfly Association. The purpose is to promote interest in butterflies and provide data for scientific monitoring of butterfly populations.

Each count area is a 15-mile diameter circle within which a one-day census is conducted. At Brazos Bend State Park, counters will be divided into small groups and each group will count within a specified area in or near the Park. Beginners can be very helpful in spotting butterflies and veterans in the group will help with identification. This is a great way to learn to identify butterflies and it can be a lot of fun, too.

Meet at the 40 Acre Lake parking lot at 8:30 am so we can be organized and begin counting by 9:00. We usually count until lunchtime and then meet at the picnic grounds to discuss our progress over lunch (bring your own). Those who still have the time and energy can cover additional territory in the afternoon. The Park entry fee will be waived for participants, but NABA

charges a \$3.00 administration fee for each counter 12 years of age or older. Younger children with an adult can participate free of charge. Sometimes they are the best spotters!

Be sure to wear sturdy walking shoes and bring sun protection, plenty of water and mosquito repellent. A pair of close-focusing binoculars and a butterfly field guide are helpful, but not required.

For additional information email Rich & Sandy Jespersen at jespera@consolidated.net.

What Was That Cheeky Wading Bird We Saw Near Dahlia Street? – birding notes by Jan Kater

“Bold” and “self-assured” are good words to explain what cheeky means. And that’s the way this bird looked on July 1 as it stood in a large storm-flooded area behind our church on Dahlia Street, intent on augmenting its evening meal. Jean and I agreed we wouldn’t want to be on the receiving end of its bill when it makes a decisive move to capture some tidbit it has its eye on. But besides its bold self-assurance, which it shares with a number of other birds, it has a distinctive color pattern that also merits the nickname of “Cheeky.” This creature is a large wading bird with a black head and a blue-gray body. And its black head has unmistakable markings. In addition to a white crown with traces of yellow, it has a bold white stripe under its eyes on each cheek, all the way back to its ears. You can’t miss it! This bird is uniquely “cheeky!” Have you guessed what it is? Right! It’s a Yellow-Crowned Night Heron! With those oversized stripes on its cheeks you won’t mistake it for a Little Blue or a Great Blue Heron, even though it visits the same places that other wading birds visit -- like drainage ditches when it’s inland, and the

wetlands of the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge when it's on the coast. Our son asked me if the birds gather in groups or if they are loners. I had to admit that I had never seen one in the company of another Yellow-Crowned Night Heron. But that was before Sunday, July 2. At dusk that day there were six Yellow-Crowned Night Herons standing like statues, or stalking, near the church – foraging in the small lakes created by the storm among the trees. What a scene! No other birds were in sight. Just those unmistakable cheeky ones! Could you have identified them? No? Bet you can now!

CRADLE OF TEXAS OFFICERS

President	Ed Barrios
Vice President/Program	John Boettiger
Secretary	Alice Sieling
Treasurer	Jan Kater
State Representative	Barbara Burkhardt
Past President	Carl Dodson
Membership Chair	Tom Morris
Training Chair	Marty Cornell
Volunteer Service Chair	Carolyn May-Monie
Resource Library	Jim Renfro
Advanced Training Coordinator	John Thayer
Outreach Chairman	Jane & Jerry Eppner
Chapter Hosts	Jerry Krampota & Archie Pratt
Web-site Manager	Neal McLain
Newsletter Chairman	Mary Helen Israel
Sponsors:	Connie Stolte (TP&W) and Rich Tillman (Extension)