

# TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



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

### President's Message, Ed Barrios

Greetings fellow Naturalists!! First I would like to announce that TMN-COT received the 3<sup>rd</sup> Place award in the Project Fair at the State meeting at Mo Ranch this year. Our entry was the Loblolly Loop Trail, Jerry Krampota project leader. Jerry led a team that identified and placed markers on the trails at Camp Mohawk County Park and then wrote a trail guide describing the plants on the trail. This project actually began in 2003 when teams of our members conducted flora/fauna surveys and created a Nature Checklist. This project involved 30 of our members over a 3 year time frame and represented over 500 hours of volunteer time. The Brazoria County Parks Department estimates that 20,000 people visit the park each year. Next year, the County Parks would like us to start an environmental education program at Camp Mohawk with some of the Alvin schools. Thanks to Jerry and everyone involved in this project especially for the flurry of work that occurred in the last few months. A special thanks to the several training interns that helped out as well.

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year for a Project Fair at the State meeting and TMN-COT has won both years! The prize this year was \$150. Our chapter was represented at Mo Ranch by Roy Morgan, Justina Dent, Tom Morris, Rich Tillman, Carolyn May-Monie, Barbara and Ellis Burkhardt and myself. Carolyn May-Monie led a discussion group on our initiative to renew our agreements with our partners. Also Barbara and Ellis were in charge of the photography contest and Ellis won a prize for one of his entries – it's not what you're thinking - all the 250 participants voted on the best entries. If you have never been to a State meeting you should consider it. There are very interesting advanced training sessions and good social bonding with your fellow TMN members.

### November Meeting, COT TMN

Wednesday, November 15, 2006

Gary Clark, nature columnist for the Houston Chronicle, will talk about the "Search for the Connecticut Warbler". It will count for 1.5 hours of Advanced Training if you have not heard this presentation in two years. This presentation begins between 10 am and 10:30 am.

At 8:45 AM, the new graduating class will present their class projects. Everyone is welcome to come early to see what the new class has done.

After Gary's talk, a catered lunch will be held for the new graduating class. As in previous years, the lunch is also open to all existing members for a \$5 donation. If you will be staying for lunch please contact Jerry Krampota, [jkrampota@hotmail.com](mailto:jkrampota@hotmail.com) or Barbara Burkhardt, [bburkhardt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bburkhardt@sbcglobal.net).

COT Texas Master Naturalist Awards  
October, 2006

**Re-Certification** – 8 hrs AT and 40 hrs VT

Jane Eppner	Bill Brown*
Neal McLain	Paula Jacobs (2005)*
Ramah O’Gorman	Carol Jones*
Lynne Ray	Rich Jespersen*
Archie Pratt*	

**Bronze Award** – 250 hrs

Jerry Krampota	Paula Jacobs*
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**Silver Award** – 500 hrs

Rich Jespersen\*

\*Absent previously

**What in the World is That Bird Doing?**  
**Birding notes by Jan Kater**

This question came to mind as I sat in a school bus last spring, listening to Laura Brandes, that day’s docent for the Birds-by-Bus program at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge. We were beginning our 25-minute trip in the Cross-Trails bus, and had stopped at the trail intersection for Laura to talk to the kids about the use of binoculars and the general importance of the refuge. I was looking straight ahead; Laura was facing the 4<sup>th</sup> graders seated behind us in the bus.

What caught my attention? Straight ahead, well beyond the trail intersection in front of us, was a lengthy stand of Giant Reed Grass. It’s common in the refuge, growing as high as ten feet, and looking like a stand of bamboo from a distance. The stand of Giant Reed Grass in front of the bus was probably 300 feet away. And, from behind the stand of grass, I saw a bird fly up to an altitude of about 25 feet, and then dissolve in an apparent jumble of feathers and disjointed body parts – wings, head, feet, and tail – as if it had been blasted out of the sky by a shotgun and had lost all control. But then it reappeared from behind the stand of giant grass, flying almost straight up again, and repeating twice more the free-fall impression of a bird that had been shot out of the sky.

The bus started up, turned left, and Laura continued her interesting presentation, with no time for me to politely interrupt her with a question about what I had seen. I resolved

to research the strange maneuver in my bird books and on the internet, and be prepared to explain it to the children during some trip in the future when I was the docent. There were only six more trips that spring and I never saw the phenomena again.

Since then I have looked on the internet and in my bird ID books, and questioned some of my more experienced birding friends. My conclusion after this research is that what I saw was neither a bird being shot out of the sky nor was it a bird doing a free fall out of control. So, what was it?

Tom Morris helped me get closer to identifying it and its strange behavior from the following facts I reported to him: 1) the bird appeared to be tan, 2) it was hunting from a fairly low altitude, 3) it was in an area frequented by Northern Harriers (formerly called Marsh Hawks), and 4) small hawks have been known to execute a maneuver known as a flutter glide 4a) when hovering or executing a slow glide while hunting, and 4b) in mating season, for show, or when feeding the female before and after the hatching of the eggs. Other birds use the flutter maneuver too, and for a variety of reasons – Kestrels, Merlins, and Falcons to name a few.

Although I don't feel that I have a definitive explanation for all the flutter habits of birds, I'm closer than before I sat on the Bird Bus that day in April!

If you're interested, further research can be done on any internet search engine with the entry "flutter glide". If you can fill in my sketchy understanding of this phenomenon, please e-mail me at [jankater@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jankater@sbcglobal.net).

## Out and About

Five members of COT TMN were recognized recently in *The Facts* for volunteer time at Sea Center Texas. Those recognized were Laura and Dave Brandes, Jerry Eppner, Rainbo Johnson and Mary Helen Israel. Congratulations to these folks for volunteering for one of our partners.

## Advanced Training Opportunities

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 in **Attachment 1** to this Newsletter.

If you find other opportunities not listed that you would like to attend, please submit a Request for Advanced Training form. (Available on our Web Site).

Don't forget the 2006 Intern Class graduation and mark the annual Feral Pig Roast on your calendar as well, I'll be there to answer any and all questions on AT - may even give you the "correct" answer!"

### CRADLE OF TEXAS OFFICERS

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#### Attachments:

- [November06-Attach-1.pdf](#)  
Advanced Training Opportunities at nearby TMN Chapters
- [November06-Attach-2.pdf](#)  
Minutes: Board of Directors Meeting, October 10, 2006