

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



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

President's Message, Ed Barrios

Greetings Fellow Naturalists:

Well, it seems like our services are even more in demand than we thought. In the last few weeks we have learned that the Brazoria County Parks at Camp Mohawk wants us to conduct some environmental education programs and guided trail walks in the near future. Also the Boys and Girls Club in Freeport wants our group to lead an environmental awareness program for their kids. At the next Board meeting, October 10th at 2pm, we will be discussing the ever more important topic of how to prioritize all the projects we are being asked to help with.

The camp Mohawk Interpretive Trail project is making great progress. This is the project that our chapter will be presenting at Mo Ranch at the State TMN meeting. Jerry Krampota, project leader, and over a dozen COT members have been contributing many hours to have this project ready for the meeting on Oct. 20th. Mark Hansen, Director of the Brazoria County Parks Department, estimates that 20,000 visitors are at this park every year. So the impact our interpretive trail guide is significant. I would like to thank all of our members that have been working so hard on this important project in the last few weeks!

Our chapter's efforts to renew the partner agreements not only will be presented at the State meeting at Mo Ranch but has been accepted at the National meeting in Flagstaff in November. Carolyn May-Monie and Michelle Haggerty will be making the presentation in Flagstaff. The efforts of our chapter have not only been noticed by the State but now by the National organization.

Finally, our TMN-COT training class members are doing exceptionally well. More than half of the group has already been involved in many volunteer activities and could potentially be certified by the end of the year. I hope their exceptional enthusiasm continues in the next few months.

October Meeting, COT TMN

October 11, 2006
Brazosport Planetarium, 400 College Dr., Clute, Texas
8:30 - 9:00 am Social time
9:00 - 11:00 Astronomy class

Introduction to Astronomy is the October Advanced Training session. It will be presented by Judi James, the Director of the Brazosport Planetarium. The session will be held at the

Brazosport Planetarium on 400 College Drive in front of Brazosport College. The Brazosport Planetarium has one of the best projection systems available.

The program is entitled "Navigating by the Stars" and will be similar to the training NASA astronauts receive. Judi has been honored to give this course to astronauts-in-training for several years. This is a great opportunity, so plan to be there!

Location: Brazosport Nature Center & Planetarium at the Center for Arts & Sciences, Clute. Parking is available near the building.

If you have questions, please call Tom Morris, 979-297-4678

COT Texas Master Naturalist Awards September, 2006

Re-Certification – 8 hrs AT and 40 hrs VT

| | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Bill Brown* | Paula Jacobs (2005)* |
| Carol Jones | Rich Jespersen* |
| Archie Pratt* | Joan Simonsen* |

Bronze Award – 250 hrs

Paula Jacobs*

Silver Award – 500 hrs

*Rich Jespersen

*Absent previously

New Addition to the Newsletter

Beginning this month we will be including an article from one of our partners. We want to welcome Bryan Adams of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to our October newsletter. His article follows. Please be sure to thank Bryan for taking the time from his busy schedule to send us this article.

Wetland Management At The Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex by Bryan Adams

Long before humans became a major factor along the Texas Gulf Coast, there were vast areas of wetlands providing habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Of course, not all of these wetlands were in ideal condition at any particular moment, but because there were so many possibilities to choose from, critters could usually find one area or another that suited their needs. However, as the human population increased, many of these wetlands were drained and filled to provide land for agriculture, roads, towns, and recreation. Though some folks realized the possible consequences, most considered wetlands to be wastelands and something to be conquered by human ingenuity. The result is that today we have only a small remaining percentage of the original wetland habitat.

The Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex consists largely of wetland but that area is small compared to the original coastal wetlands, so we don't have the luxury of taking a hands-off approach. Instead, we must try to make every acre of wetland provide the best quality habitat possible. Of course, this leads to the question of "best quality habitat" for what? Are we trying to improve habitat for wintering waterfowl, migrating shorebirds or nesting mottled ducks? In making decisions on these issues, the refuge management must consider a variety of factors, including whether there is already adequate habitat for a particular species outside the Refuge boundaries and whether the species is in decline either in our area or throughout its range. We must also take into consideration the specific reasons for which the Refuge was established. Once those questions have been addressed, the best management techniques must be determined.

Many areas of the Refuge are managed for waterfowl and the ideal mix for many waterfowl consists of 50% open water and 50% vegetation (to provide food and cover). This is referred to as a "hemi marsh". In some climates, maintenance of a hemi marsh is within reach, but along the Gulf Coast it tends to be difficult because of the rank growth of some types of vegetation, like bulrushes and cattails. Those plants are not of themselves undesirable, but they tend to rapidly expand their coverage causing the loss of open water areas, and so many management activities are designed to counteract their encroachment.

Since a number of ducks and geese prefer shallow water, desirable habitat can be created by developing impoundments referred to as *moist soil units*. The water level in these ponds can be manipulated by adding water from other areas, pumping from wells, or by draining. Water levels may need to be adjusted during the year. Often, ponds are allowed to dry up or are drained in the spring, which provides large mudflats and very shallow wetlands for migrating shorebirds. Allowing the impoundment to dry completely provides an opportunity to mow or disk the unit. Disking is intended to control unwanted vegetation and encourage the growth of more desirable forms, like smartweed and millet, which will provide food for waterfowl upon their return. Although many impoundments are allowed to dry in the summer, others must be maintained with water to provide brood ponds for ducklings. The tradeoff is that these brood ponds may not make good winter ponds because of the overgrowth of large plants. Having several ponds in close proximity is desirable so the units can be managed in varying stages and as a group, thus always providing desirable habitat.

Additional management techniques to control less desirable vegetation include applying prescribed fire, mowing, rolling with a stubble chopper, temporary flooding with saltwater, and application of herbicides. Each of these has both advantages and disadvantages that must be considered when deciding which to use.

Many people have the misconception that refuges are places that are to be left untouched, areas where “nature can take its course”. The reality is that the limited area set aside for wildlife demands that active management be used to provide the best habitat possible.

If you would like more information on the Complex’s wetland management program or Adopt-A-Wetland, or would like to assist in managing a wetland through plant and animal surveys, manipulating water levels, and mechanical manipulation, contact Jennifer Sanchez, Deputy Project Leader, at 979-849-7771 or Jennifer_sanchez@fws.gov .

A New Page on the Chapter Website: MAPS by Neal McLain

At the suggestion of one of our members, I have added a MAPS page to the chapter website. This new page contains links to maps and related information about many of the venues where chapter activities take place. You'll find maps to venues operated the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Brazoria County, and numerous other entities.

Although most of these maps were previously available on the website, they were buried in meeting announcements and training schedules. This new page groups them all together in one central location.

Here is a summary of the information typically available for each venue:

- **Website:** A link to the website of the destination venue.
- **History:** A link to historical information about the destination venue, provided by the *Handbook of Texas* or other reliable source.
- **Annotated road map:** A road map indicating the location of the destination venue with respect to easily-described landmarks.
- **Road Map (Google):** A road map provided by Google Maps, presented at a scale that includes the entire venue. The destination venue is approximately the center of the map.
- **Road Map (MapQuest):** A road map provided by MapQuest, presented at MapQuest's default scale. The destination venue is indicated by a red star.
- **Topographic Map (Topozone):** A topographic map provided by Topozone, Inc., presented at a scale of 1:50,000 or 1:100,000. The destination venue is indicated by a red target at the center of the map; in the case of large venues (state parks, wildlife refuges), the red target indicates an arbitrary point more-or-less in the center of the

portion of the venue of interest to chapter members. Topozone maps are scanned from paper maps published by the U.S. Geological Survey.

- **Satellite Photo (Wikimapia):** A combination map and satellite photo provided by Wikimapia.org, presented at a scale appropriate to the size of the destination venue. You can view the map, the satellite photo, or a hybrid of the two. The destination venue is indicated by one or more white rectangles; click inside each rectangle for information about the venue. Wikimapia maps are based on digital imagery provided by Google.

Some venues include extra links to special maps of unique landmarks, trails, auto tours, etc.

Some venues are still missing (e.g. INEOS); I'll add them when I collect the necessary data.

You can find the new MAPS page listed under Organization on the chapter website, <http://grovesite.com/tamu/tmn>

Note to COT Membership

It is time to start thinking about the coming New Year. Our President has appointed a Nominating Committee and assigned us the task of preparing and presenting a slate of candidates to the General Membership no later than the last week in November. The candidates will be voted on at our Annual Meeting in December.

The members of the Nominating Committee are:

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Carl Dodson | cdodson5@houston.rr.com | 979-265-7329 |
| Jim Renfro | jrenfro@brazosport.edu | 979-297-2119 |
| Tom Morris | tmorris66@houston.rr.com | 979-297-4678 |

The five elected positions to be filled are;

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- State Representative

If you are interested in holding one of the above offices, please contact one of the members of the Nominating Committee. If you are interested in holding a Standing Committee Chairmanship, please contact us with this information also. We have been assigned to prepare a list of possible Committee Chairmen for the incoming President to consider.

To find information about the duties and responsibilities of these offices and committee chairmen please go to the COT web site and chose Forms from the menu. Find the section titled Bylaws and Policies and click on the selection "TMN COT Policies and Procedures (2006)". You will find them listed on pages 3 thru 7, titled Office & Committee Chairs Roles and Responsibilities.

Carl Dodson
Chairman – Nominating Committee

Brazos Bend Butterfly Count, September 24, 2006

The 11th Annual Brazos Bend Butterfly Count was held in September. All previous counts were in June. Last year, our first attempt at a September count was cancelled by the threat of Hurricane Rita. Predictions of a cold front and heavy rain made us wonder if we would be washed out again this year.

Two inches of rain during the night, followed by a dark overcast sky did keep the butterflies pretty quiet in the morning. But our eleven dedicated observers were determined to find them. We divided into five parties and spent the day scouring the various habitats within and near the park. By lunchtime, we had 41 species. In the afternoon, the sky brightened somewhat and the butterflies became more active.

By the end of the day the species count had climbed to 51—our second highest total ever. The individual butterfly total of 838 was about average. Three species had not previously been seen on a Brazos Bend count: Southern Dogface, Painted Lady and White Peacock. Here are the totals.

SWALLOWTAILS

| | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|----------------|
| 7 | Black Swallowtail | 5 | Tawny Emperor |
| 13 | Giant Swallowtail | 2 | Gemmed Satyr |
| 5 | Eastern Tiger Swallowtail | 36 | Carolina Satyr |
| | | 4 | Monarch |
| | | 29 | Queen |

WHITES & SULPHURS

| | |
|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Southern Dogface |
| 16 | Cloudless Sulphur |
| 97 | Little Yellow |

HAIRSTREAKS

| | |
|----|-------------------------|
| 18 | Gray Hairstreak |
| 7 | Red-banded Hairstreak |
| 2 | Dusky-blue Groundstreak |

BRUSH-FOOTED

| | |
|-----|-----------------------|
| 106 | Gulf Fritillary |
| 7 | Variegated Fritillary |
| 9 | Silvery Checkerspot |
| 28 | Phaon Crescent |
| 15 | Pearl Crescent |
| 6 | Question Mark |
| 1 | Painted Lady |
| 1 | Red Admiral |
| 4 | Common Buckeye |
| 3 | White Peacock |
| 3 | Red-spotted Purple |
| 11 | Viceroy |
| 12 | Goatweed Leafwing |
| 40 | Hackberry Emperor |

SKIPPERS

| | |
|----|----------------------------|
| 48 | White-striped Longtail |
| 80 | Long-tailed Skipper |
| 3 | Dorantes Longtail |
| 4 | Southern Cloudywing |
| 7 | Horace's Duskywing |
| 4 | Funereal Duskywing |
| 12 | Wild Indigo Duskywing |
| 22 | Common Checkered-Skipper |
| 10 | Tropical Checkered-Skipper |
| 6 | Turk's-cap White-Skipper |
| 4 | Neamathla Skipper |
| 1 | Julia's Skipper |
| 66 | Clouded Skipper |
| 2 | Least Skipper |
| 1 | Southern Skipperling |
| 17 | Fierly Skipper |
| 11 | Whirlabout |
| 18 | Southern Broken-Dash |
| 1 | Sachem |
| 1 | Broad-winged Skipper |
| 23 | Dun Skipper |
| 1 | Eufala Skipper |
| 8 | Ocola Skipper |

Total 838 individuals / 51 species

Observers were Karl Baumgartner, Gardner Campbell, Chuck Duplant, Bill Godley, David Heinicke, Phil Huxford, Rich Jespersen, Sandy Jespersen, Dianne Kerr, Warren Pruess and James Smith.

Address Change

Please Note: The following is John Boettiger's email address for personal use. The address change recently sent out by John is for business use. Thanks.

jboettiger@houston.rr.com

The Extended Vulture Families at Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue

by John Marshall

I do quite a bit of my volunteering with Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue. Two or three times a year Dana will go on a vacation and I, along with others, will care and feed for her animals. During the last two years, I've had the opportunity to care for, feed and handle a wide variety of animals including raccoons, opossums, skunks (baby), pelicans (my favorite), kites, owls, hawks and gulls to name a few. One of the more interesting animals I have had the pleasure of caring for is a pair of non-flighted Black Vultures and their "visitors". The pair (male and female) both have wing injuries that rendered them flightless. It is virtually impossible to tell the sex of the birds. One of the Vultures was named handsome-man until it laid an egg!

The pair have mated on several occasions and produced offspring that eventually reached maturity and flew off into the wild. The babies are fairly large hairy brown fluff balls early in life but with the unmistakable Vulture head. As the babies fledge then mature into juveniles, the brown fluffy hair is gradually replaced with the black feathers and white wing tips. The last bit of hair to go is from the top of the birds' heads and at one point they appear to have a Mohican haircut. The birds take several weeks or months to mature into fully flighted adults. What's interesting is that the young birds hang out with their parents well into adulthood, even with a variety of people around. My perception is that the birds have decided Dana's place is a "safe" place and all the people in it are "safe" people. I have walked within 2 or 3 feet of the birds, or maybe I should say they have walked within 2 or 3 feet of me without any indication of fear.

Vultures seem to be very smart animals. One of my tasks when I care for Dana's birds is to put up a mixed flock of fowl at night. The birds usually herd quite well if it's late enough in the evening. The motley crew of ducks, guineas, geese, chickens & roosters waddle up to the pen but there are usually one or two who decide they are going to duck under the hospital (on stilts) where I can't get to them. This is where the Vultures come in. Under the hospital they go and the errant fowl emerge with a great deal of squawking and make a beeline for the pen.

Vultures are very family oriented and the offspring will occasionally come to visit their parents, usually at meal time. Two or three siblings will sometimes appear in the morning perched on the fence surrounding the enclave or on the porch of the hospital. The animals have been in the wild for years but will return to the rehab area, usually for breakfast. When it snowed Christmas before last I went over to do the morning task and found 9 birds perched all over everywhere, all looking for a handout (which they got). Once again the birds didn't show the slightest fear of me and would walk within 2 or 3 feet of me. I made the mistake of putting down the hawk's food bucket and walking back into the hospital for a forgotten item. There wasn't much left when I came back out.

CRADLE OF TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST SHIRTS

Shirt orders for the Master Naturalist interns will be placed on **October 17, 2006**. I will be accepting orders for shirts from the general membership as well. If you would like to order a shirt, the information is listed below. With the exception of the women's denim shirts, the styles are the same as last year. The company that supplied the women's washed denim shirts is no longer in business.

The prices of the shirts shown are based on an order quantity of 12 to 19. If greater than 19, of a specific type, are ordered, the price of the shirts will be reduced by \$2.00 each. This does not include the tax. All checks should be made out to the Cradle of Texas Master Naturalist Chapter (COTMN). ✂ Denotes dark green jersey or denim "official" shirts

ORDERS MUST BE PLACED NO LATER THAN MONDAY OCTOBER 16, 2006.
PLEASE PLACE YOUR ORDERS BY E-MAIL SO THAT I WILL HAVE A COPY OF YOUR ORDER. bburkhardt@sbcglobal.net

✂ JERZEES: 100% Solid Pique Sport Shirt –100% Cotton- Style 8400
Multi colors to choose from. S to XL \$16 – 2 XL to 3 XL \$18
Page 74 in catalog **MEN'S SIZED ONLY SO ORDER ACCORDINGLY**

✂ JERZEES :100% Cotton Jersey Sport Shirt –50% Cotton/50% Polyester- Style 8304
– Forest green
S to XL - \$14 – 2 XL to 3 XL \$16
Page 68 in catalog **MEN'S SIZED ONLY SO ORDER ACCORDINGLY**

✂ JERZEES – Style JZ10
Men's Long and short sleeve denim – Medium stonewash
S to XL \$16 – 2XL to 3XL \$18
Page 101 in catalog

✂ **WOMEN**—Sierra Pacific
Style SP11—Light Denim-- Women's long sleeve
Style SP12—Light Denim-- Women's short sleeve
Style SP10—Light Denim—Women's sleeveless

S to XL \$16 ---2XL \$18

Page 91 in catalog

●●●This shirt is a replacement for the Three Rivers Shirts we ordered last year. There may be some differences in the color from the light washed denim we have previously gotten.

JONATHAN COREY – Long and short sleeve fine luxury brushed twill

Multi colors to choose from.

C618-Men’s Long Sleeve

C612-Ladies Long Sleeve

C619-Men’s Short Sleeve

C613-Ladies Short Sleeve

S to XL \$26 – 2XL to 3XL \$28

Page 96 in catalog

Lots of 20 or more of same style shirt subtract \$2 per shirt. The above listed shirts can be purchased individually from EPD, 1407 East Cedar, Angleton, TX. Group purchases will go through COT Treasurer, **so please make checks payable to COTMN.**

Please send newsletter contributions and comments to mh-israel@sbcglobal.net

CRADLE OF TEXAS OFFICERS

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| President | Ed Barrios |
| Vice President/Program | John Boettiger |
| Secretary | |
| Treasurer | Jan Kater |
| State Representative | Barbara Burkhardt |
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| Volunteer Service Chair | Carolyn May- Monie |
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| Advanced Training | |
| Coordinator | John Thayer |
| Outreach Chairman | Jane & Jerry Eppner |
| Chapter Hosts | Jerry Krampota & Archie Pratt |
| Website Manager | Neal McLain |
| Newsletter Chairman | Mary Helen Israel |
| Sponsors: | Connie Stolte (TP&W) and Rich Tillman (Extension) |

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 — Advanced Training Opportunities at other TMN Chapters
- Attachment 2 — Minutes of the September Board Meeting