

Texas Master Naturalist Program Cradle of Texas Chapter President's Call to Service Award

By Neal McLain



In January 2003, President George W. Bush signed an Executive Order creating the *President's Council on Service and Civic Participation (The Council)* within the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The mission of The Council, as set forth in the Order, is:

- To encourage the recognition of outstanding volunteer service and civic participation by individuals, schools, and organizations and thereby encourage more such activity, especially on the part of America's youth; and
- To facilitate awareness of the ways in which Americans throughout our history have helped to meet the vital needs of their communities and Nation through volunteer service and civic participation.^[1]

The Council created an awards program known as the *President's Volunteer Service Award* program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service. The awards recognize individuals, families, and groups that have achieved a certain standard — measured by the number of hours of service over a 12-month period or cumulative hours earned over the course of a lifetime.^[2]



The Council has established several award levels. The *President's Call to Service Award* recognizes 4,000 hours or more of volunteer service over the recipient's lifetime. Persons of all ages are eligible to receive the award.

The *President's Call to Service Award* includes a lapel pin (left), a Personalized Certificate, and a Congratulatory Letter from the President of the United States. All awards are ordered through officially registered and approved "Certifying Organizations." Certifying Organizations verify the hours of and nominate qualified volunteers and distribute the Awards locally.^[3]

The Texas Master Naturalist State Office is the registered and approved Certifying Organization for the Texas Master Naturalist Program. The State Office nominates Certified Master Naturalists for recognition and administers procedural matters. Local Chapters present the awards.

In the years since the Cradle of Texas Chapter was founded in 2001, six members (or former members) have earned the *President's Call to Service Award*. On the following pages, these members are recognized in chronological order by date of award.

President's Call to Service Award

Phil Huxford. Phil received the *President's Call to Service Award* in November 2008 in recognition his volunteer efforts on behalf of the Chapter and its partner organizations. At the time of the award, Phil had donated over 5000 hours of volunteer service.



Phil was a member of the Cradle of Texas Class of 2001, the first intern training class. He qualified for certification in 2001 and has recertified every year since. He has served as Chapter Vice President and as a member of the Executive Board. Phil has been an active participant in the Chapter's environmental educational activities. In this capacity, he has served as team instructor for the Discovery Environmental Education Program (DEEP) and the Linville Environmental Education Program (LEEP).

Phil was a founding member of Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges, a volunteer organization that supports the Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Phil has served on the Friends' Board of Directors since its founding, and has been a driving force behind Migration Celebration. In 2001, Phil was named Volunteer of the Year in recognition of his efforts on behalf of the refuges.

Phil has participated in several citizen science projects including bird banding, bird counts, butterfly counts, plant surveys, and a copperhead study.

The Texas Master Naturalist State Office was the Certifying Organization for this award.

Tracie Teague. Tracie received the *President's Call to Service Award* in November 2008 at a meeting of the Texas Master Naturalist Mid-Coast Chapter. The award was presented in recognition Tracie's volunteer efforts on behalf of the Cradle of Texas Chapter, the Mid-Coast Chapter, and their partner organizations. At the time of the award, Tracie had donated over 5000 hours of volunteer service.



Tracie was a member of the Cradle of Texas Class of 2002 and qualified for certification that same year. In 2006, she transferred her membership to the Mid-Coast Chapter. The Mid-Coast Chapter includes, Aransas, Calhoun, Jackson, Matagorda, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria Counties.^[4]

Tracie has been an active participant in numerous citizen science projects including sea turtle patrol, habitat restoration, and trail interpretation. She has participated in the environmental educational activities of both chapters. She served as Program Development Chair and team instructor for the Linville Environmental Education Program (LEEP) during its first year of operation, in 2006-07.^[5]

The Texas Master Naturalist State Office was the Certifying Organization for this award.

President's Call to Service Award

Mary Helen Israel. Mary Helen received the *President's Call to Service Award* in January 2009 at a Volunteer Recognition Banquet at Sea Center Texas, a unit of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, in Lake Jackson. The award was presented by Gene McCarty (TPWD), John Blaha (Coastal Conservation Association Texas), and Laura Ambrose (Texas Operations, The Dow Chemical Company).



Since 1995, Mary Helen has served SCT as tour guide and as editor of the volunteer newsletter *Sea Center Fish Tales*. She has served as a member of the Volunteer Advisory Board and as a delegate to TPWD's statewide volunteer committee.

Mary Helen is a certified member of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. She has served as editor of the Chapter's Newsletter *Chapter News* since its inception. She has been an active participant in several of the Chapter's volunteer activities including Migration Celebration, Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza, and the Summer Library Program "Nature at the Libraries," presented at branches of the Brazoria County Library System. She has been an active participant in the Chapter's environmental educational activities including the Discovery Environmental Education Program (DEEP) and Linville Environmental Education Program (LEEP).

Sea Center Texas was the Certifying Organization for this award.

Tom Collins. Tom received the *President's Call to Service Award* in February 2009 at a meeting of the TMN Hill Country Chapter at the Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville. The award was presented in recognition of his volunteer work on behalf of three organizations: TMN Cradle of Texas Chapter, TMN Hill Country Chapter, and Sea Center Texas. At the time of the award, Tom had donated over 5000 hours of volunteer service to these organizations.



Tom was a member of the Cradle of Texas Chapter from its founding in 2001 until 2006 when he moved away from Brazoria County. He served as president of the COT Chapter during its first year, and taught several Advanced Training classes. He also contributed several articles and book reviews to this newsletter.

Tom is now a member of the Hill Country Chapter, based in Kerrville, Texas. The Hill Country Chapter includes Bandera, Gillespie, Kendall, and Kerr Counties "located in the heart of the Texas Hill Country."

Most of Tom's work with the Hill Country Chapter has been with Monarch butterfly monitoring and other butterfly counts at the parks and nature centers in the area, both as a trainer and a participant. ^[6]

The Texas Master Naturalist State Office and Sea Center Texas were the Certifying Organizations for this award.

President's Call to Service Award

Denis Mudderman. Denis received the President's Call to Service Award in October 2009 at a Strategic Planning Board Retreat for the Tamarac Interpretive Association (TAS). TAS is the friends group associated with Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, Becker County, Minnesota. The award was presented by refuge volunteer coordinator Janice Bengtson. At the time of the award, Denis had donated over 5000 volunteer hours of volunteer service to Tamarac NWR.



Denis's volunteer work with TAS involved in a variety of projects including service on the TAS Board, website editor, newsletter editor, grant writer, grant administrator, and refuge historian. He served as instructor and administrator of environmental education efforts and a summer interpretive program. ^[7]

Denis has been a summer RV Volunteer at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge since 2008. In this capacity, he has undertaken several projects on behalf of the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex including construction and maintenance of displays and exhibits, participating in the DEEP program, and acting as visitor host at the Discovery Center. Through his efforts, the Discovery Center is open for visitors on weekends,

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was the Certifying Organization for this award.

Jim Renfro. Jim received the *President's Call to Service Award* in April 2010 at a meeting of the TMN Cradle of Texas Chapter at the Brazosport Planetarium in Clute. The award was presented by Chapter Membership Chair Jerry Eppner in recognition Jim's volunteer efforts on behalf of the Chapter and its partner organizations. At the time of the award, Jim had donated over 5000 hours of volunteer service.



Jim was a member of the Class of 2001, the first intern training class offered by the chapter. He qualified for certification in December 2001 and has recertified every year since.

Jim's volunteer activities have included service as Chapter Training Chair (2002-03), team instructor of the "Birds & Birding" class at Brazosport College's Adult Life and Learning Program (2006-09), and team instructor of "Introduction to Ornithology & Bird Identification" for Chapter Interns (2006-09). He has served as field trip leader and bird bander at Migration Celebration (1995-2009).

Jim has served as team leader for several data-collection projects including bird censuses for USFWS (collecting data used to determine wildlife populations in the Columbia Bottomlands), breeding bird surveys (collecting data used by USGS and USFWS in determining North American bird population distribution), winter bird population surveys (measuring winter bird population dynamics), and several year-round bird banding studies on private properties. ^[8]

The Texas Master Naturalist State Office was the Certifying Organization for this award.

President's Call to Service Award

Endnotes

- [1] Office of the President of the United States. "By the President: Executive Order." The White House, Washington, 29 Jan 2003. Accessed 09 Jan 2010.
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=1239>
- [2]. President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. "President's Volunteer Service Award: About the Award." The White House, Washington, 2006. Accessed 01 Jan 2010
<<http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/tg/pvsainfo/dspAboutAwards.cfm>>
- [3] President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. "President's Volunteer Service Award: Honor Your Volunteers." The White House, Washington, 2006. Accessed 01 Jan 2010
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- [4] Texas Master Naturalist Mid-Coast Chapter. "Where are we?" Accessed 01 June 2010.
<<http://midcoast.tamu.edu/Whoarewe.htm>>
- [5] Tracie Teague. "Linville Environmental Education Program (LEEP) Pilot Year Completed." Accessed 01 June 2010.
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- [6] Julie Clay. "President's Call to Service for Tom Collins." E-mail to author, 09 Jan. 2010.
- [7] Refuge Watch. "Refuge Volunteer Receives President's Call to Service Award." 04 Nov 2009. Accessed 09 Jan 2010.
<<http://www.refugewatch.org/2009/11/04/refuge-volunteer-receives-presidents-call-to-service-award/>>
- [8] Jim Renfro. "Renfro COT bio." E-mail to author, 21 Dec. 2009