

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER Chapter News – February 2010 Editor, Mary Helen Israel

Membership Report, Jerry Eppner

The time recording books are closed for 2009. Aided by some late submissions, the chapter recorded 11,242 hrs of volunteer time for the year. Congratulations to all for helping your communities.

If you still have unreported 2009 time, you can still report it. Just use the 2010 forms (preferably the Excel form) found on our website and report your previously unreported 2009 time along with accrued 2010 time. Although too late to be officially recorded 2009 time, you will get credit for your lifetime hours, and the chapter gets 2010 credit for the hours.

We still have a few members that contribute a lot, but for whatever reason do not turn in their time. No matter what your reason is, you need to be aware that you are losing recognition for yourself and our chapter. Even worse, much of the funding for the state Texas Master Naturalist program and the projects they support is linked to how many hours the state volunteers contribute each year. So please take the time to record and report your hours. They are needed. Thanks.

Reminder from Chapter Hosts, Jerry Krampota and Justina Dent

The following folks signed up to bring refreshments for the January meeting: Jim Calvert, Ruby Lewis, Gerald Forrest and Rich Tillman. If for some reason you have a conflict, please call Jerry Krampota at 281-585-3249 or email at jkrampota@hotmail.com.

February Meeting* Wednesday, February 10, 2010 Intern Training, and Advanced Training

8:30 a.m. - Coffee and Social Time

9:00 a.m. - Business Meeting

9:30 a.m. – Dr. Carlos Bogan, an Entomologist and Associate Professor and Extension Specialist from Texas A&M University will present a program on bees.

***Note change of location: Conference room in West Annex of Brazoria County Courthouse, directly across Velasco St. from the courthouse.**

Training Report, Laura Brandes

Another Intern bites the dust! Don Rosebury has passed his training requirements that he started In January, 2009. Don will receive his official TMN-COT name tag, t-shirt and certificate at February's general meeting. A bit of personal information--Don has worked in real estate and sales development, likes to travel to places like Costa Rico, and is volunteering to develop new wetland acreage in Sargent, TX. If you're interested in this project, please contact Don for more information.

Congratulations, Don!!! Welcome to the TMN-COT.

Dow Woods Update by Neal McLain

In December 2009, Dow Chemical Company donated 330 acres of bottomland hardwood forest to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The property is known as the Dow Woods Unit of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. It is located in Lake Jackson northwest of the intersection of FM 2004 and Old Angleton Road.



The land is now part of the National Wildlife Refuge system and will remain as habitat for wildlife in perpetuity. "We feel very privileged to have the opportunity to add this piece of living history to our national wildlife refuge system," said Gary Hockstra, Dow Texas Operations vice president and site director. "Not only will it provide excellent habitat for local wildlife, but it will also allow for the development of new environmental education programs for children, and give our communities a new eco-tourism feature to attract visitors to our beautiful region. We are

very proud to continue to partner with U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to enable the protection and conservation of this valuable environmental legacy."

Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (FOBWR) has received a grant to construct a trail and restroom facility in the property. Several TMN-COT and FOBWR members are now involved in the planning stages, and we expect to start work within a month. Volunteers are needed! If you'd be interested in helping, please contact me at nmclain@refugefriends.org.

BASTROP BAYOU TRASH BASH, Pam West

The 2nd annual Bastrop Bayou Trash Bash will be held on Saturday, March 27, 2010. Registration will be held from 7:30-8:00 a.m. at Marlin Marina located across the county road 227 bridge over Bastrop Bayou. A short safety meeting will be held before the beginning of the pick up. Every volunteer will receive a free t-shirt. Gloves, safety vests, and trash bags will be provided. Boaters will be picking up debris along the waterways while others may pick up trash along boat ramps, roadways, and ditches. Last year the event was held along the Demi-John area. This year the event will be expanded further up the bayou. The event will end at approximately 11:30 with a free lunch and door prizes for volunteers. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear. More information is available at <http://www.trashbash.org>.

This activity is approved volunteer time.

Coming in from the Cold

From USFWS February 2010 Downloads Website

During 10 unseasonably frigid days in January in Florida, 2,148 sea turtles were rescued from Mosquito Lagoon at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – saving wildlife in a most dramatic way.

Merritt Island Refuge dispatched five or six airboats each day searching for turtles that had floated to the surface. Ninety-five percent of the rescued turtles were endangered green sea turtles. The turtles were brought to a large maintenance shed at Merritt Island Refuge, where they were numbered, tagged, checked for disease and sent to other facilities that could care for them. "There were turtles covering every inch of the shed's floor," said refuge biologist Dorn Whitmore, "some the size of a desk." NASA even lent its huge space shuttle heater on behalf of the turtles. Most of the turtles were returned to Merritt Island Refuge as soon as temperatures warm.

There was also a cold-weather turtle rescue at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, FL, as well as a major fish kill and cold stunning event at Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge. On the opposite coast of Florida, Three Sisters Springs near Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge became a haven for manatees. On January 13, a record 641 manatees, including almost 100 calves, were counted as they sought the haven of warm waters. The overwhelming majority – 556 manatees – was found in Kings Bay, which includes Three Sisters Springs.

Duck-Drawing Time

From USFWS February 2010 Downloads Website

On your mark . . . get set . . . draw! Youngsters in grades kindergarten-12 have just a little more time to prepare their entries for the 2010 Junior Duck Stamp contest that combines science and art to teach students about waterfowl conservation. The competition is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act enacted by Congress in 1994.

Participants, grouped in four age categories, compete to create visually compelling and biologically accurate drawings or paintings of any of 46 native species of ducks, geese and swans. Students are encouraged to visit National Wildlife Refuges with their families or environmental education groups to observe or photograph waterfowl for their drawings and paintings.

The winning national entry is reproduced on stamps sold by the U.S. Post Office and some National Wildlife Refuges. Sales of the \$5 stamps help support environmental education programs and provide awards and scholarships for the students, teachers and schools participating in the program.

Each state or territory first selects winners. The “best in show” from each state or territory contest goes on to compete nationally. National winners will be selected April 23 during ceremonies at the Science Museum of Minnesota. The top three national winners earn cash prizes ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

In most states, the submission deadline is March 15; Arizona and Ohio require entries by March 1. For contest information and entry forms, visit:
<http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck/>.

A Place of Renewal – And What We Take for Granted

By Greg Siekaniec

Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

For the past quarter century, Katy Sheehan Morris and Susan Macdonald Bray have kept their friendship fresh and vibrant through their connection with Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri. Sure, Katy was a bridesmaid in Susan’s wedding. And for years, they’ve swapped stories about child rearing and family successes and travails.

But what’s given them a sense of renewal year after year? A fall weekend of birding, hiking and camping at Swan Lake Refuge, an easy drive from Kansas City. They missed the annual trip the year that Bray got married and for a few years when pregnancies made such travel a little tough. But they haven’t skipped the trip for very many years.

They camp at Pershing State Park, next door to Swan Lake Refuge, where they have seen coyote pups, armadillos, egrets and white pelicans – including the pelican migration. “For me, this trip is a renewal,” says Bray, who works for the Kansas City

Department of Parks and Recreation. “I couldn’t go into winter without hearing the wild call of geese every fall,” says Morris, who trained as a naturalist – as did Bray.

They discovered Swan Lake Refuge when they led a children’s field trip to the refuge and learned of its wildness and naturalist values. “Thank goodness for the Refuge System and its pockets of nature,” says Morris.

Typical story? Not really. But more and more, it should be – and it could be.

The first step for us is to understand that being comfortable and knowledgeable about the natural world isn’t second nature to the millions of youngsters – and their parents – who live in high-density cities. Just consider a recent round of the television game show, *Jeopardy*, when none of the contestants could identify North America’s tallest bird. At the time, I was with a group of Fish and Wildlife Service employees who blurted the question before that answer was read. We knew, but what does that tell us about America’s natural resource education when three, obviously intelligent individuals were stumped by a “whooping crane” question? It made us all pause.

Second, we need to find and support more people like Katy and Susan to be mentors to young people, to teach them to camp, hike, fish, hunt, identify birds and be comfortable in nature. Your community may well be filled with people whose passion is the natural world – but they may not know it. As your new year’s resolution, make it your business to bring them into the National Wildlife Refuge System fold. America’s conservation future depends on it.

I’ll see you in the field.

BEES--European/Africanized

Following is a summary of Gerald Forrest’s notes from a Dec 2009--Presentation by Paul W. Jackson---Texas Agrilife Research Specialist. Mr. Jackson is involved with Beekeeper Regulations in Texas. Reading through these notes prior to the general meeting on Wednesday might prompt some questions for Dr. Bogan:

Bees are a major pollinator, so there are commercial beekeepers, who rent hives to farmers.

There are an estimated 500,00 bees moved in Texas during the spring. This does not count hobbyist.

Bee swarm season is Feb through May. While swarming all bees are docile.

European honeybee swarms will be approximately one half of the existing hive. They travel a relatively short distance to establish a new hive.

AFRICANIZED BEES

Africanized bees split but they form many small units--approximately the size of golf balls. There will normally be as many as 12 to 15 units swarming. Some will go short distances, but others will hitch rides. They are known to settle into mobile camper

shells--pipe, etc. In other words they will settle on metal surfaces. European bees will not settle on metal and hitchhike. Due to this Africanized bees are on the move 12 months out of the year. Any bees seen swarming in late summer or fall will be Africanized

Africanized bees are now in several states including Texas-Oklahoma.-Louisiana-New Mexico and California.

Africanized bees like semi desert. They can survive cold weather, but do not store large amounts of honey, so they may starve in prolonged cold weather.

Absconding season (Non swarm season)--The bees will concentrate in very large numbers behind walls or other protected areas.

European bees will attack, if disturbed, but will normally only sting a few times in a couple of minutes. The Africanized bees may sting several hundred times in a few seconds.

Africanized bees will attack at the slightest disturbance--It could be vibration or simply a shadow crossing nearby.

If attacked by Africanized bees, the only defense is to get away from them. Try to get into an enclosed space--a vehicle shed, etc.; if there is a dark area that is best.

If there is a bee hive that you would like to remove or kill, most people would be wise to call a professional. If you choose to do it yourself, make sure you wear good protective equipment or make sure it is a very dark night. If the bees are in a wall cavity, there is a gas available to put into the wall.

If there is a swarm in the open you can spray with a mixture of 5 cups liquid soap per gallon of water.

ATTACHMENTS

There are two attachments included with the newsletter:

February10-Attach-1.pdf – Minutes of the January meeting

February10-Attach-2.pdf - Cultural History article

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