

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



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

President's Message, Dave Brandes

Welcome to the ninth month of the Gregorian calendar, the seventh month of the old Roman calendar, the height of hurricane season and meteorological autumn. In other words, you've probably noticed that school has started.

And, with school starting, our DEEP and INEOS programs are about to begin. The first INEOS session is Friday, September 17. DEEP begins Thursday, October 7. If you haven't experienced these fun programs, get with me and I'll help you discover them. Even if you aren't interested in leading any sessions, we always appreciate assistants.

You may have heard that our Parks Department received a CMP grant to replant 14 miles of Follets Island dunes with 100,000 combined bitter panicum, marsh-hay cordgrass and sea oats plants over the next 2 years. There will be morning volunteer opportunities November through March this year and next. Director Hurd is also willing to schedule times for our organization to come out as a group. Maybe we could make it a shrimp boil or two during the cooler weather.

If you like these restoration projects, the Parks Department is looking for help Saturday, October 16 from 9:00-12:00 planting trees at Resoft County Park near Alvin. If you've been there, you know it's almost treeless. The county will dig the holes and provide backfill, mulch and any tools needed. It would be great to show our support.

Our 2010 nominating committee was formed at our September board meeting. Past President Ed Barrios will chair the committee. Also serving are Jerry Krampota and Neal McLain. If asked to serve, please seriously consider it. Nominees will be announced in November with floor nominations and elections in December.

Finally, check out our new web site at <http://tmn-cot.org>.

See you at our general meeting Wednesday. John Arvin will be discussing raptor migration.

Dave

Report from Membership Chairman, Jerry Eppner

As the summer comes to a close, we are experiencing our end of summer slump in time submissions. Hopefully, as the programs we support, such as DEEP, INEOS, etc, fire up, we will begin to see those time submissions ramp up. As we enter September, 44 chapter

members have submitted time sheets so far this year. Of those, 37 have certified and/or recertified for the year. A total of 6197 volunteer time hours have been reported. The state organization needs all chapter members to submit the time for their activities to support their grant money.

We have one recent COT intern graduate, Shelia Williams, who has turned in enough volunteer and advanced training hours to certify as a Texas Master Naturalist. Recognition at the next meeting for recertifying in 2010 will include Bill Brown and Bob Woods. Kirby Rapstein has earned recognition for 1000 cumulative hours of VT.

The membership chairman would like to remind those people that submit written time sheets to make sure they are legible, have the hours totaled on them and are signed and dated. Thanks.

**Reminder from Chapter Hosts,
Jerry Krampota and Justina Dent**

The following folks signed up to bring refreshments for the September meeting: Sandy Henderson, Al Fedoruk, Barbara & Ellis Burkhardt, and Roy Morgan. If for some reason you have a conflict, please call Jerry Krampota at 281-585-3249 or email at jkrampota@hotmail.com.

**September Meeting
Wednesday, September 8, 2010
Intern Training, and Advanced Training**

- 8:30 a.m.** - Coffee and Social Time
- 9:00 a.m.** - Business Meeting
- 9:30 a.m.** - Raptor Migration, presented by John Arvin,
Research Coordinator, Gulf Coast Bird
Observatory

Training Report, Laura Brandes

Intern Enrollment Status: One Intern has completed their training, Don VanDragt. He will be recognized at the October meeting when he returns from Colorado. There are currently eight Interns completing the training program and four Interns who will begin active training this September. Meanwhile there are three possible Interns deciding whether or not to participate.

Since January, 2009 there have been eighteen Interns that have become Master Naturalists with all but one receiving their 1st Year Certification. All of these new members are very active volunteers.

"Pilot" Intern Training Program's Future: The survey was completed with 55% to 90% return rate. The rankings of various aspects and activities were all rated 80% and higher. All comments received were shared with the Board. At this time the 2011 Nominating Committee is looking for a new Training Director who will implement the previous program with aspects from the "Pilot". Laura has agreed to assist with this transition. Briefly the forms, handouts, reference materials, bibliographies, etc. have been completed. There remain several topics that the COT has not included because modules have not been developed. (Laura will be working on these which will complete the background material files.) Essentially, with a few "tweaks", the Intern Training program will revert to the 10 out of 12 classes offered weekly, once or twice yearly. The Training Calendar will be the immediate objective for the Training Director and no further planning or development activities will be required except for Instructor modifications of the subject topics.

Using Instructors from the Certified TMN Members has been most successful. Those who have taught are interested in teaching, or who just want to assist with a topic will be actively recruited in the next three months. "Outside" instructors will supplement the Chapter's expertise.

The Future of the Gulf of Mexico: The BP oil explosion has raised numerous questions and lots of speculation. This brief outline was printed in the August issue of "Popular Science" and outlines scientific expectations without the public relations hoopla. As residents of the mid-Gulf Coast, this information is something to keep in mind. The article was titled "The Future of Spilled Oil" and was written by Amber Angelle and Cassie Rodenberg:

One Week: Waves and wind mix oil with water to form a substance resembling chocolate mousse. Up to 40 percent of the surface oil evaporates, leaving behind viscous compounds. Plumes of crude deep below the waterline are not broken down by sunlight, and they spread with undersea currents. (Note: A 22-mile long plume has been identified radiating westward from the site of the Deepwater Horizon platform.)

One Month: Pellet-size balls form on the surface as the oily mousse breaks up. Plankton absorb the oil/water mix and excrete tainted metabolites that settle to the bottom, damaging larval shrimp, crab and fish. On beaches, oil starves plants of nutrients and kills emerging shoots.

One Year: The surface oil has broken into hydrocarbon components that allow water and carbon dioxide to re-form. In the wetlands, small creatures that depend on dead plant material for nutrients have exhausted that supply. Numbers of crab and shrimp plummet.

Five Years: Beaches and wetlands appear rehabilitated, but asphaltene--oil residue mixed with sediments--lingers beneath the sand and in pools in the bayous. Invasive plant species have taken root; the annual loss of wetlands accelerates from 25 miles up to 40 square miles.

Ten) Years: Underwater oil plumes still persist. Bacteria feasting on the oil consume oxygen, creating a shortage that suffocates life. Squid, sperm whales and whale sharks decline. (Currently several universities are implementing tagging programs for whale shark monitoring.) The plumes may eventually drift into the Atlantic where they threaten coral reefs. (By this time, the "Flower Gardens" could no longer be alive.)

Twenty Years: Caches of oil, trapped in underground pockets, linger on shore. These do little harm unless unearthed by storms, animal activities or man-made disruptions. Aboveground, wildlife has returned but species' life cycles have been altered.

Recent Website Changes By Neal McLain

This is to advise you of some recent changes to the Chapter website (<http://tmn-cot.org>).

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PAGE

- 2010-11 DEEP Schedule (Bryan Adams, USFWS)
- 2010-11 INEOS Schedule (Fred Lewis, TMN-COT)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES PAGE

- Dunes Day: Fall Beach Cleanup (James Glover, BCPD)
- Dune Restoration Project (Haley Creswell, BCPD)
- Brazos Bend Butterfly Count (Rich Jespersen, TMN-COT)

TRAINING » TRAINING PRESENTATIONS PAGE

- San Bernard River Watershed Protection Plan (Aubin Phillips, H-GAC)
- Bastrop Bayou Watershed Protection Plan (Justin Bower, H-GAC)
- Copperhead Snake Population Survey (Phil Huxford, TMN-COT)
- Partnerships (Phil Huxford TMN-COT)

Hoping to Divert Migratory Birds

From National Wildlife Refuge System



If only birds could read, wildlife experts could flash signs at them saying: "New all-you-can-eat buffet. Stop here." As the fall migratory season begins, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its conservation partners are trying the next best thing. In an extraordinary move, they're flooding hundreds of acres in Louisiana, east Texas and Mississippi and cultivating additional tons of rice and grains, in hopes of diverting migratory birds from oiled beaches and waters in the Gulf of Mexico. Much of the augmented bird habitat is on Wildlife Refuges.

A flock of Northern Pintail and other waterfowl head skyward. As migrating season begins, Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana and other refuges are planting and flooding new acreage in hopes of diverting some birds from the oiled Gulf coast.
Credit: Gary Kramer, USFWS

Every fall, millions of migratory birds, more than 70 species of waterfowl, seabirds, wading birds, shore birds and marsh birds, stop along the Gulf of Mexico to rest and refuel before heading south to wintering grounds in Central and South America. Some are already en route.

While some refuges have tried in the past to keep birds off contaminated habitat, "never before have we tried to redirect birds on a scale like this," said Larry Williams, chief of budget performance and workforce for the Refuge System. "It's unprecedented."

One refuge project, on Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana, involves planting 120 acres of impoundments in rice for migrating ducks and waterfowl and flooding a third impoundment for shorebirds. Two new wells, funded with \$127,000 in grant money from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and \$100,000 in contributions from private conservation partners, will supply water for the rice cultivation. The Service spent \$15,000 to have the test wells drilled.

In July, refuge staff sprayed and mowed the impoundments, before planting using a seed drill. Heavy rain delayed some operations. The planting is completed, and now they are praying for rain.

Will the effort pay off? "It may help," said Bob Strader, whose role as refuge manager at St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge, across the Mississippi River near Natchez, Mississippi, includes responsibility for Bayou Cocodrie Refuge. "We've got to try to do something. This is a pretty good effort. It may keep a few birds from going to the coast and getting in the oil, especially if there are a lot of people moving around there. If there's a disturbance issue, they may come back north. Or hopefully the shorebirds will be so fat and happy that they'll keep going to South America and won't have to stop on the southeast Louisiana coast at all."

Deisha Norwood, manager at Bayou Cocodrie Refuge, said bird population surveys this winter might help experts gauge the success of the flooding and planting efforts. But it will be hard to compare numbers, she said, because past survey data are thin.

Regardless, Norwood said, getting water on the impoundments has been a long-time refuge goal, consistent with its mission. "That's what we're here for, to provide habitat for migratory birds," she said.

To learn more about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's response, visit:
<http://www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/index.html>

To learn more about Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge, visit:
<http://www.fws.gov/bayoucocodrie/> or call 318-336-7119.

Attachments

There are three attachments included with the newsletter:

Minutes of the August 11, 2010 General Meeting Minutes
September10-Attach-1_General-Meeting_Minutes.pdf

Cultural History: Disintegration of Spain's American Empire
September10-Attach-2_Cultural-History.pdf

Dunes Restoration Project
September10-Attach-3_DunePlanting.pdf

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