

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER Chapter News – February 2011 Editor, Mary Helen Israel

A MESSAGE FROM “the PREZ”



Here she is!

Selasphorus rufus #N39620, aka “Big Mama”, in fine feather, almost finished with her molt, and not anxious to leave a warm hand on a very cold, wet morning. This is the seventh winter she has made her home in our garden. She was first banded in December 2003 as a second year bird. If we are lucky enough to have her return next year, it will be a record for a rufus.

Looking for a Volunteer Project?

Jennifer Wilson, USFWS, has contacted me with a “generic” request for volunteers. She is involved with several long term scientific studies, where events cannot be scheduled for specific dates. For instance, one project monitors the population of mottled duck, *Anas platyrhynchos*. The population appears to be decreasing and the banding/counting data are used to verify this problem. Help may be needed to capture ducks, scout the refuges for female ducks with broods and molting adults, and assist in monitoring water levels in key management areas.

The Texas Colonial Water Bird Census will take place in May. This count targets nesting herons, egrets, ibises, pelicans, skimmers, terns and other colonial water birds. Both total number of birds and nesting pairs is collected. Areas surveyed by Jennifer include Alligator Point, San Luis Pass, Drum Bay, Wolf Lake Skimmer Colony (Brazoria NWR), Cedar Lakes, and Dressing Point Island. In February she will be working on maintenance of the nesting site at Wolf Lake. April to July she will be monitoring bird nesting activity on this lot and would be interested in training someone to take on some of the monitoring visits.

When the Eagle Nest Lake area becomes part of the refuge system, it too will need work. There are a number of very interesting sites to be surveyed and neat places to visit and observe that the general public can't otherwise access.

Shane Kasson will again be needing help with the Kemp Ridley Turtle patrols from March through June. Many of our members have participated in this project in past years. If you are interested, please contact Shane and get your name on the training/patrol list. Thomas Adams could use our help with the native gardens in West Columbia and around the DEEP headquarters at Brazoria NWR.

- Shane Kasson, San Bernard NWR manager, (979)-964-3696, shane_kasson@fws.gov
- Jennifer Wilson, Texas Mid-Coast NWRC Biologist, (979) 292-4229, jennifer_wilson@fws.gov
- Thomas Adams, Texas Mid-Coast NWRC botanist, (979)292-5642, thomas_p_adams@fws.gov

We have a new class being taught as part of the 2011 Intern Training. If you are interested in fishes, other than catching and eating, you might want to “catch” Roy Morgan’s Ichthyology class on Feb. 16, at SCT. It will count as advanced training for certified members.

Don’t forget to reserve time in April to participate in the Migration Celebration. It runs from Friday, 4/15 to Sunday, 4/17.

The COT annual report was submitted to Michelle Haggerty, State MN Coordinator, on Jan. 16, 2011. A copy of the report can be found on our excellent website, http://txmn.org/cradle/files/2011/02/Annual_Report_2010_Edited.pdf. Also, information on the activities and accomplishments of the COT MN chapter has been added to the annual AgriLife report. A copy of this additional page is attached.

Because we had the great article from Tom Collins, the next bit had to be left out in January. Let’s try again with the request for information.

Information requested by Michelle and Sonny The end of one year and the start of the next is a great time to “check the pulse” of people in our organization, TMN. We have two easy questions for you with a very short feedback request. The first one looks back over the year ending, 2010, and the second looks ahead to 2011.

Please send your responses to your chapter president, (bburkhardt@sbcglobal.net) so that he/she can compile the information for chapter use and then pass it along to state.

1. In 2010, what two things did you do or see someone else do that you felt were really important to the TMN organization and natural resource community we serve?
 - a.
 - b.

2. For 2011, what two things would help you to be even more successful in your work with TMN?
 - a.
 - b.

“The Prez”

I had the enjoyment of reading this book several weeks ago. If you want an interesting read, give it a try. I am too lazy to write my own review, but this says it all. I would love to find copies of Tolbert’s original articles, but so far, I haven’t been able to locate them.

“Exploring the Edges of Texas” by Walt and Isabel Davis

By SI DUNN / Special Contributor to *The Dallas Morning News* Si Dunn is a writer and editor in Austin.

Published 14 March 2010 03:00 AM

In 1955, Dallas Morning News columnist Frank X. Tolbert set off on an expedition that would span a greater distance than the length of the Amazon River. Many readers were enthralled by the tales that emerged each week as the writer and his 9-year-old son, Frank Tolbert Jr., circumnavigated the Texas border in a dusty Willis Jeep.

Tolbert's tales struck an especially deep chord with Walt Davis, who was then 13 and living in Oak Cliff. Young Walt vowed he would someday make his own trek through the counties that outline his home state.

A half-century later, Walt Davis and his wife, Isabel, finally had the time and resources to undertake "a four thousand mile-long, three-century-deep exploration of the edge of Texas." Family responsibilities and other realities, however, kept them from duplicating the late columnist's arduous excursion. Instead, they broke their journey into sections. They made multiple trips to different border areas, with Isabel keeping travel journals and research notes, Walt serving as "the expedition artist," and both writing about their adventures and observations.

Their entertaining, enlightening book reflects the skills they took with them as they explored historical, and sometimes still controversial, sites along Texas' borders. Walt Davis, now an art teacher and museum consultant, spent 30 years on the staff of the Dallas Museum of Natural History and later headed the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. Isabel Davis had been a science librarian at Richardson Public Library, director of the Rockwall County Library, and later retired as a reference librarian at West Texas A&M University.

What they have created is a wealth of fresh observations about the rich cultural and natural histories of Texas' border areas. With old documents and current experts guiding them, they journey through nine of the state's 10 ecological regions and come face to face with the ways time and human activity have changed or ravaged many sites.

In the book, they look for bears on Bear River, now the Sulphur River. They visit areas once alive with ivory-billed woodpeckers and longleaf pine trees. They hike through mountains, national parks and sites rich with ancient fossils. They search for traces of old trading posts and 18th-century expeditions

They don't always find what they seek. They have to go to Connecticut to view the famous Red River meteorite and to Massachusetts to see what botanist Charles Wright gathered near El Paso in the mid-19th century. At each stop, they find surprises, encountering spirited people dedicated to keeping stories alive and preserving the artifacts and wildlife that remain.

This book probably will inspire others to explore the state's lengthy edges, as well as its vast interior.

Report from Membership Chairman, Jerry Eppner

As I close out the membership books for 2010, I am pleased to report that 66 chapter members reported 12,206 hours of volunteer service during the year. This brings our chapter's total VT to 93,270 since inception. An excellent record of which you should all be proud.

Moving into 2011, I would encourage every member to recommit to recording and submitting hours on a regular basis. Since I began serving as the membership chairman, I have seen time and again that the members that struggle the most with getting their hours reported are those that do not record and submit hours regularly. Because they don't do so, they wind up having to spend far more time reconstructing what they did over the year than they would have if they had just recorded and submitted hours on a regular basis. So please go find the new 2011 timesheets on the web and start getting your volunteer efforts recorded and submitted. As always, use of the Excel spreadsheet is preferable, but I will take them anyway you can muster.

Training on COT MN Time Accounting

If anyone is interested, we will have a short training session on how to use of the time accounting database. It shouldn't take more that 30 minutes of your time.

Reminder from Chapter Hosts, Jerry Krampota and Justina Dent

Those members who signed up to bring refreshments for the February meeting are Ed Johnson, Elaine Crews, Gerald Forrest and Jerry Krampota. 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 9, 2011 Intern Training, and Advanced Training

- 8:30 a.m.** - Coffee and Social Time
- 9:00 a.m.** - Business Meeting
- 9:30 a.m.** - Christmas Bird Counts, presented by Brent Ortego

NOTE: If anyone has suggestions for program topics, please email Mary Holler at maryh5152@embarqmail.com.

Training, Laura Brandes

2011 INTERN CLASS: The COT's advertisement through paid ads, newspaper articles and distribution of our brochure got a good response. We started with 20 names of Interested Persons. By the night of the 1st class (Orientation and Introduction), there were 7 Participants and 1 absent due to the weather. They are all paid and have handed in their list of classes that they plan to attend. The names of the "newbies" are as follows:

Holly Folkes-Molis lives in Pearland and is a Kindergarten Teacher; **Donna Graham** is a retired School Counselor and has returned to this area living in Surfside; **Bette Long** enjoys birds, resides in Manvel and is a Registered Nurse; **Bob Long** is Bette's hubby and wants to be a TMNer since he is a Retired Engineer; **Phillip Molis** is the person who hyphenated Holly's last name and is an Insurance Sales Manager; **Leo O'Gorman** is a Retired Physician, the former Brazoria County Health Director and wants to keep pace with Ramah; **Mike Rice** lives in Houston and is an ER Physician as well as an Instructor at Baylor College and Ben Taub; and, finally but not least, **Bill Yates** is starting his 2nd life having retired from being a Chiropractor.

This year's Training Schedule keeps the 2nd Wednesday open so that the Interns can attend as many of the COT General Meetings as they can. They all have name tags so make sure that you introduce yourself and welcome them to the TMN-COT.

SPEAKING OF TRAINING... The Intern Training Schedule is accessible via the website. (Thank you, Neal.) Some of the classes are new such as “Ichthyology” taught by Roy Morgan and Charlie Clements. Also, many of the topics have not been offered to the membership for more than 1-3 years. *This gives TMNers an opportunity to earn Advanced Training hours.* Or, you can just come out to brush up on your knowledge, help with the Interns and just have fun, Fun, FUN. Check the website or watch the Newsletter. The classes for the month will be listed with their Instructor, time, location and what to bring. ***Everyone is invited.*** (When planning to attend, please let the Training Director know so that the Instructor(s) can be prepared.) If you ever have a question, contact the Training Director, Laura Brandes, at ljb823@comcast.net.

FEBRUARY INTERN CLASSES:

February 8th: “Plants and Plant Structure” starts at 6:00 pm in Sea Center’s Conference Room. The instructor will be Barb Burkhardt. (Since the Center will be closed, enter at the far right driveway; go thru the double gates turning left to the parking area by the building. Enter the main building on the left and go straight ahead to the room.)

February 9th: the General Meeting with Advanced Training (AT) at the AgriLife building in the auditorium beginning at 8:30 am with “eats”.

February 16th: “Ichthyology” starts at 9:00 am in the Conference Room at Sea Center Texas. The Instructors will be Roy Morgan and Charlie Clements. (Charlie became a TMN in December, 2010 and now he’s teaching!) Follow the instructions given with the 1st class listed.

February 18 and 19th: “Dune Restoration” continues on the beach. This is an excellent opportunity to earn Volunteer Hours (VT) and do a good deed for Mother Nature. The project is coordinated by the County Parks Department. The activity is scheduled from 8:00 am to Noon with lunch provided. Usually the meeting place is at Stahlman Park and beach locations are assigned. Watch the website for additional and up-to-date information.

February 23rd: “Oceans and Jetties” will be taught by Connie Stolte in the Conference Room at Sea Center Texas (SCT). The class begins at 9:00 am and includes a power point presentation, handouts and a tour of the facility; Again, follow the entry directions given with the 1st class. (If you participate in this class then you can continue the SCT Volunteer Training. Let Connie know of your interest.)

February 26th: “Wildlife Rescue Basics” presented by the Gulf Coast Wildlife Refuge (GCWR). It starts at 8:00 am with registration and is completed by Noon. The GCWR Volunteers are the Instructors. The location will be at The Center for the Arts and Sciences in the Art League Library. (Enter from College Boulevard on the left side of the Center using that parking area. Enter the 1st set of doors on the right. (Do not go into the main building.) Following this class, contact Sandy Henderson to learn how to become a GCWR Volunteer. (After the class, go into the main building and explore the Art Gallery and the Museum of Science and Natural History. A hidden gem in Brazoria County that consistently appears as “Places to See” in Texas.)

AVOID THE CONSTRUCTION: For Sea Center Texas--**interns** using H288 South can exit on Oyster Creek Drive. Turn RIGHT; pass the shopping center/WalMart complex to the light at Lake Road. Turn LEFT and stay on this street until it ends across from the Animal Shelter. Turn LEFT and go to the end of this road with the hospital on your left, turn RIGHT. Continue until you reach Sea Center Texas which is the large complex on your RIGHT SIDE.

Interns that use H332 going to Lake Jackson, can use B288 turning LEFT onto College Boulevard which becomes Oyster Creek Drive at the railroad tracks. *Turn LEFT at the light by the firehouse. Go to the 3rd light at Plantation Drive and turn RIGHT (just past the Seafood Restaurant). Continue on Plantation, pass the school and turn LEFT where the traffic cones begin. Go across H332 and follow the road to where it ends across from Sea Center Texas. Turn RIGHT then use the 2nd LEFT turn lane to enter the property. Interns that use 2004 can turn LEFT onto B288. Go to the light at the 3-way intersection which is College Boulevard. Turn RIGHT. (The Center for the Arts and Sciences will be on your right after the bridge.) The railroad tracks are just beyond the curve where it turns into Oyster Creek Drive. Follow the directions above.*

For the Center for the Arts and Sciences—Interns using H288 South can exit on Oyster Creek Drive. Turn LEFT. Follow Oyster Creek Drive and go across the railroad tracks (after Dixie Drive and the firehouse). You are now on College Boulevard. Go past the college entrance under construction. There will be 2 left-turn lanes close together. Use the second and turn RIGHT into The Center's parking area.

Interns that use H332 to get to Lake Jackson should use B288. Turn LEFT onto College Boulevard (3-way intersection after McCoy's). The Center will be on your right just after the bridge. Turn RIGHT into the parking lot at the left side.

Interns using 2004 should turn LEFT onto B288. Go to College Boulevard (3-way intersection) and turn RIGHT. Past the bridge is The Center. Go to the 2nd entrance and turn right into their parking lot.

It is suggested that you highlight the directions that apply to your route. Save this section and put it with your Training Schedule. Interns will be using Sea Center Texas off and on through the year. (Also, I don't think that I can think to describe this again!)

RECRUITMENT, RECRUITMENT, AND MORE RECRUITMENT: The brochures are out there. Take advantage of this county-wide distribution. ALL TMNers are RECRUITERS. A friendly word of mouth delivered with enthusiasm is worth more than any ad or article. When talking to a potential Recruit, make sure that you record their NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER AND email. Give or send this information to the Training Director (Laura: ljb823@comcast.net) and she will take it from there. Note: If your contact becomes an Intern then it would be nice for you to "shadow" them as they go through the training.

See the Bats of Bracken Cave

From *Bat Conservation Times*:

One of the most unforgettable sights nature has to offer takes place each summer evening at the Bracken Bat Cave in Central Texas. Millions of Mexican free-tailed bats swirl up from the cave in a spiral so dense it seems at times almost like a single organism. The bats circle into the twilight sky, then fly over the rugged landscape in long, twisting columns in search of insects. By dawn, the world's largest bat colony will have consumed up to 200 tons of insects, including many pests that ravage farm crops.

Watching a Bracken emergence is a truly awesome experience. Members of Bat Conservation International are invited to visit the cave and view the evening emergence on special Member Nights each summer. Few besides BCI members are allowed on the site.

BCI owns Bracken Bat Cave and about 700 surrounding acres and carefully protects this invaluable resource from the urban growth of nearby San Antonio, Texas. To safeguard this incredible maternity colony of free-tailed bats, visitation is extremely limited.

Reservations for the 2011 Bracken Member Nights are now being accepted. Visit www.batcon.org/bracken for details and to register.

The 2011 Member Nights Schedule

- Saturday, April 30
- Friday, May 13
- Friday, May 27
- Saturday, June 11
- Saturday, June 25
- Wednesday, July 6
- Friday, July 8
- Wednesday, July 20
- Saturday, July 23
- Wednesday, August 3
- Friday, August 5
- Wednesday, August 17
- Saturday, August 20
- Saturday, September 17
- Saturday, October 1

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ATTACHMENTS

There are three PDF Attachments to the newsletter:

Minutes of the January General Meeting
February2011_Attach-1_General-Meeting-Minutes.pdf

TMN Whooping Crane Trip by Tom Morris
February2011_Attach-2_Whooping-Crane-Trip.pdf

ANR 2010 Master Naturalist Report
Attachment 3.pdf

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