



NOVEMBER 2011

Chapter News

Editor: Mary Helen Israel

NOV. CALENDAR

Nov. 9: Regular Meeting and Advanced Training - See page 5 for details

Nov. 12: Family Day at Hanson Riverside County Park, West Columbia, 10:00-4:00

November 19: Festival of Lights, Lake Jackson Civic Center, 10:00-5:00

December 14-31 - Christmas Bird Counts - See page 6 for details

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A MESSAGE FROM "the PREZ"

Nine members of the COT Chapter attended the state meeting at Mo Ranch Conference Center in October. I thought it was a very good meeting, with interesting topics and excellent presenters. The keynote speaker was Laura Huffman, director of the Texas Nature Conservancy.

Her primary topic was the necessity of bringing water conservation and lands which influence water conservation, more to the public awareness. She particularly wanted us to educate ourselves about the two constitutional amendments on the Nov. 8th, ballot. I have found very little about these in the newspapers, so I am including summaries/discussions of these two amendments. They are found in an attachment and have been included strictly for information purposes.

CONTRATULATIONS

In case you haven't heard, COT won the State Chapter Scrapbook Contest. Ours was chosen "best" out of twelve entries.

Please give Mary Holler and Kathy Speight's a big thank you for their hard work. It is a great scrapbook and I hope you will make an opportunity to have a look at the November meeting.

I presented Sonny Arnold, Assistant TMN Coordinator, with the framed Lightning Whelk shell and shell encyclopedia. Both Sonny and his wife Liz greatly

appreciated the gifts. They love to come to the coast to go shelling. The gift was in honor of Sonny's retirement.



The 2012 State Meeting will be held at Camp Allen, about six miles out of Navasota. The dates are October 26-28. Michelle is asking all chapters to give her a hand with certain jobs to organize the meeting. More to come on this, next year.

We have a new project in conjunction with GCBO which will start in December. Tom Morris will give us all the details at the November meeting.



Mary Holler and Jeanne Manry setting up the COT Project Exhibit, below.



We have a busy month coming up as you can see from our calendar. If you haven't already signed up with Ruby to help, she will have the signup sheets at the meeting on Wednesday. Give yourselves the pleasure of visiting Hanson Riverside County Park. It is just out of West Columbia on the Banks of the San Bernard River. It is easy to get to and is a real hidden jewel.

Another activity is the Festival of Lights in downtown Lake Jackson, at the Civic Center. We will have our booth set up there and hopefully we will be able to recruit interns for the 2012 class. Ed Johnson has been appointed to fill the vacant Training Chair position, until the December election of officers. The full Slate of candidates is found on Page 4.

Don't forget two of our most important on-going projects, DEEP and INEOS. These projects can always use more trained volunteers. The first time you participate, the time can be counted as advanced training. It is very fulfilling to see the wonder in the children's eyes, when they understand the importance of nature and just how close it really is to them.

Thanks to everyone for their contributions to Dow Woods. The dedication was a huge success. The officials who came to the dedication were very impressed with the planning and quality of work that was necessary to complete the project—on time. Kirby and his boardwalk building crew—everyone who helped with the trail building—Marty and his grant writing—to name just a few who contributed. Great job everyone!!!

Finally, save Wednesday, December 14th on your calendar. This is the date for the annual "Hog Wild" party at Ed Barrios'. Chef Marty, et. al., will again cook up a feast for us. The standard menu (you can't improve on it) will be served. There will be the nominal charge of \$5.00/person to cover expenses.

THANK
YOU
ALL
THE PREZ!

Upcoming events

This list does not include DEEP or INEOS schedules.
These schedules for 2011-12 are posted at:

- DEEP - <http://bit.ly/DEEP-2011-12>
- INEOS - http://bit.ly/INEOS_2011-12

Wednesday, November 9, 8:30 am

TMN-COT

General Meeting and Advanced Training
Agrilife Building, Angleton

Program: Edible Plants

Speaker: Thomas Adams, USFWS

See page 5 for details

Approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time

Approved for Advanced Training

Wednesday, November 12, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Family Day

Hanson Riverside County Park
Volunteers needed to lead nature walks
Volunteers needed to staff booth

Approved for Volunteer Hours

See website calendar for details.

<http://tmn-cot.org/calendar/>

Saturday, November 19, 8:00 am

Monthly Bird Banding at GCBO
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

<http://tinyurl.com/MBB-GCBO>

Wednesday, November 19, 10:00am - 11:00pm

Lake Jackson Festival of Lights

Downtown Lake Jackson
Volunteers needed to staff booth

Approved for Volunteer Hours

See website calendar for details.

<http://tmn-cot.org/calendar/>

Friday, December 2, 10:00am - 6:00pm

GCBO Open House and Holiday Sale

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

<http://bit.ly/tGpJto>

Saturday, December 3, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm.

Levi Jordan Plantation SHS Open House

<http://tinyurl.com/LJ-Plantation-SHS>

<http://www.visitlevijordanplantation.com/>

Wednesday, December 7, 3:00 pm

TMN-COT Board Meeting

Agrilife Extension Building, Angleton

Approved for Volunteer Hours

All TMN-COT members are invited to attend

Wednesday, December 14, 8:30 am

TMN-COT General Meeting

Election of Officers for 2012

Agrilife Extension Building, Angleton

See Page 4 details

Approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time

Approved for Advanced Training



Wednesday, December 14, 11:30 am

Hog Wild Holiday Party

325 Timbercreek Drive, Lake Jackson

All TMN-COT members are invited to attend

Guests welcome!



Christmas Bird Count Schedule:

- December 14 - Guadalupe River Delta
- December 16 - San Bernard NWR
- December 17 - Brazos Bend State Park
- December 18 - Freeport
- December 19 - Matagorda County
- December 20 - Galveston
- December 21 - Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR
- December 31 - Brazoria

See Page 6 for details

Election of Officers Scheduled for December General Meeting

By Neal McLain

The Election for officers and directors for the year 2012 is scheduled for the December General Meeting, December 14, 2011, at the AgriLife building in Angleton. The Nominating Committee, consisting of Dave Brandes (chair), Ed Barrios, and Joan Simonsen, has submitted the following slate of candidates:

<u>2012 SLATE OF OFFICERS</u>		
Office	Incumbent	Nominee
President	Barbara Burkhardt	Dave Brandes Barbara Burkhardt
Vice President	Mary Holler	Mary Holler
Secretary	Marty Cornell	Marty Cornell
Treasurer	Sandy Henderson	Sandy Henderson
Membership Director	Jerry Eppner	Jerry Eppner
Training Director		Ed Johnson
State Representative	Ed Barrios	Ed Barrios
Past President	Dave Brandes	
Committees	Incumbent	Nominee
VT Chair	Neal McLain	Neal McLain
AT Chair	Tom Morris	Tom Morris
Outreach Chair	Ruby Lewis	Ruby Lewis
Chapter Host	Jerry Krampota	Jerry Krampota
Webmaster	Neal McLain	Neal McLain
Newsletter	Mary Helen Israel	Mary Helen Israel

New Policy Governing the COT Email List

By Neal McLain

As most of you know, our chapter uses an email distribution list officially called the "COT E-mail List." Google hosts the list, and provides it to us at no charge.

The COT E-mail List can be used by any chapter member to send an email message to all other members by using a single address:

TMN-COT@googlegroups.com.

We use this list for many purposes, including meeting announcements and distribution of the monthly newsletter

Chapter News.

When we first started using this list (2005), I added every then-current member to the list. Since then, I have added new members, including interns. If somebody's email address changed, I removed the old address and added the new one.

However, Google recently changed the rules: I can't add anybody directly now. Instead, I have to send an invitation to every potential new member, and the invitee has to accept the invitation. The invitation actually comes from Google, and it includes a note from me.

Continued...

If you recently changed your email address, you should have received an invitation from Google to rejoin the list. If you accepted the invitation, you've been getting all messages normally.

For those of you who received an invitation but ignored it, you may have noticed that you haven't been receiving any TMN-COT

emails lately. You received this issue of *Chapter News* only because I sent it to you directly.

If you've lost the original invitation, please let me know and I'll resend it.

Neal McLain, Webmaster
nmclain@annsgarden.com



**Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
General Meeting and Advanced Training
Wednesday, November 9, 2011
AgriLife Building, Angleton**

8:30 AM	Fun and Fellowship Today's snacks are provided by Barbara Bruyere and Susan Severance.
9:00 AM	General Meeting This meeting is approved for 1.00 hour Volunteer Time.
9:30 AM	Program "Edible Plants: Where to find wild edible plant food in the fall and winter if the entire food distribution system collapsed and you had to survive with no food in the stores." Speaker: Thomas Adams, Botanist, Mid-coast NWR Complex, US Fish & Wildlife Service. <i>Thomas Adams holds degrees in Anthropology (B.A., University of Texas at Austin), Wildlife Management (B.S., Texas Tech University), and Range Science (M.S., New Mexico State University). He has been employed by the U.S. Forest Service (1998-1999) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (1999-present).</i> This training is approved for Advanced Training credit. Approved credit hours will be announced at the meeting, and will be available after the meeting at http://bit.ly/AT_Opportunities

Christmas Bird Counts

By Tom Morris, David Plunkett, and Neal McLain



The Audubon Christmas Counts is a North-, Central-, and South-American campaign to count as many birds and species within a fixed circle 15 miles in diameter. The first Christmas Count was in the Northeast in 1900 on Christmas Day. The counts were started to counter a popular "sport" of killing as many birds as one could on Christmas Day. The data from the counts are compiled in a database and results are printed annually and the raw data is available to researchers and amateurs. Population trends have been used to help protect species that show marked decreases.

During these counts, we typically meet early in the morning, around 6:30 am and work in small groups with at least one knowledgeable birder in each group. Each group covers a specified territory in the morning, and usually covers another in the afternoon, with a break for lunch. Each group includes at least one knowledgeable birder to assist with identification. Less-experienced birders thus have an opportunity learn from more-experienced colleagues.

Continued . . .

2011 Christmas Bird Count Schedule

Wednesday, December 14, 2011 - Guadalupe River Delta - McFaddin Family Ranches

Friday, December 16, 2011 - San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, December 17, 2011 - Brazos Bend State Park -

Sunday, December 18, 2011 - Freeport Bird Count

Monday, December 19, 2011 - Matagorda Co. - Mad Island Marsh Bird Count

Tuesday, December 20, 2011 - Galveston Bird Count

Wednesday, December 21, 2011 - Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuges

Saturday, December 31, 2011 - Brazoria Bird Count

For details about each count, and the names of coordinators, go to:

<http://refugefriends.org/BirdCounts/>

A typical count day requires a lot of walking — 2 to 3 miles — and you are exposed to the elements a good part of the day. However, in case of bad weather such as rain, we resort to birding by car. In the evening we meet at a "countdown" to eat and tally results.

Good hiking shoes, hat, rain gear, repellent, layers, water, light snacks, and binoculars are the basics.

Less experienced birders are welcome to participate. If you wish to participate, please contact the Count Coordinator as soon as possible. For names of coordinators, see <http://refugefriends.org/BirdCounts/>

The coordinator will assign you to a specific group, and let you know where to meet your group on the morning of the count.

There is a \$5.00 fee charged by the National Audubon Society for each individual who participates. These fees fund the program and help to cover the costs of generating materials for compilers, producing an annual CBC summary issue, and maintaining the CBC website and database. There is no fee for persons 18 years old and under.

Every Bird Count is named for something — a city, a park, or some geographic feature — located inside the 15-mile-diameter circle. These names can sometimes be confusing. For example, the Brazoria Bird Count is named for the City of Brazoria, but it includes a larger area. Similarly, the Freeport Bird Count is named for Freeport, but it also includes a much larger area.



TMN-COT MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

Christmas Birdcounts are supported by the Houston Audubon and are accredited by the National Audubon Society.

Participation in any Audubon-accredited birdcount is approved for volunteer hours *provided that* you sign in, pay the entrance fee, and participate in the counting activity.

"Counting activity" includes all time spent in the field plus training meetings, travel among count sites (if any), meals, and the countdown.

TMN-COT approves credit as follows:

- Current members may claim all hours as volunteer time.
- Subject to the approval of the training director, interns may claim up to 2:00 hours toward initial certification. Additional hours count as volunteer time.
- All members may claim round-trip travel time to/from the meeting point, not to exceed the total number of hours claimed as volunteer time and intern training.

Please code your timesheet (in the "partners and events" column) as "other".

TMN Master Naturalist CAMP OUT 2012 Scheduled for January 27-29, 2012

Sarah Smith, Native Plant Society of Texas

The TMN Master Naturalist CAMP OUT 2012 will be held at Brazos Bend State Park in January. See [Attachment 4](#) for details and registration information.

This event includes three training sessions totaling five hours. These sessions are approved for five hours of Advanced Training credit by the TMN-COT Chapter.

Please note that only five hours have been approved for AT, not eight hours as indicated in the flier.

Travel time is approved in an amount equal to your actual round-trip travel time to/from Brazos Bend State Park OR the number of AT hours claimed, whichever is less.

This event is not approved for Intern Time or Volunteer Time

Proposed Amendments to the Texas State Constitution

Submitted by Barbara Burkhardt, Chapter President

Amendment No. 2 (S.J.R. 4)

The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of additional general obligation bonds by the Texas Water Development Board in an amount not to exceed \$6 billion at any time outstanding.

Summary of Proposed Amendment.

The proposed amendment would add Section 49-d-11, Article III, Texas Constitution, authorizing the Texas Water Development Board to issue general obligation bonds on a continuing basis for Texas Water Development Fund II accounts in amounts such that the aggregate principal amount of the outstanding bonds issued by the board under that section that are outstanding at any time does not exceed \$6 billion. The \$6 billion bonding authority would be in addition to the board's current bonding authority. The proposed amendment would make the proposed bonding authority subject to the general framework governing the Texas Water Development Fund II found in Section 49-d-8, Article III, Texas Constitution, except for the limitation in that section that the board may not issue bonds in excess of the aggregate principal amount of previously authorized bonds. In addition, the proposed amendment would exempt a project funded with the proceeds of bonds issued under Section 49-d-8 or 49-d-11 of Article III of the Texas Constitution from a limitation on the percentage of state participation in any single project imposed by that article.

Summary of Comments Made About the Proposed Amendment. The following paragraphs are based on comments made about the amendment during the legislative process and generally summarize the main arguments supporting or opposing the amendment.

Comments by Supporters. The increase in Texas' population and the persistent threat of severe drought highlight the need to update infrastructure to meet current water needs and to anticipate and plan for future water needs. Without the additional bonding authority, critical water planning and infrastructure upgrades will be greatly impeded or halted altogether, which will negatively impact local water development and conservation programs in many communities across Texas. Although this bonding authorization may finance only a small portion of state water plan implementation projects to meet the long-term water needs of Texas, the total estimated cost of which is \$30 billion, it will be used in support of implementation. The additional bonding authority is needed also to meet federal matching requirements to draw down capitalization grants through the federal Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs.

The provision in the proposed amendment making the bonding authority continuous (also known as the evergreen provision) would give the Texas Water Development Board, which has been a good steward of the bonding authority granted to date, flexibility over a longer term in the board's financing options. However, even with the evergreen provision, the legislature would retain its ability to provide oversight through its statutory and constitutional authority to determine how the board administers its programs. These bonds, if approved, would be self-supporting and not a detriment to the state budget, would not cost the state any money from the general revenue fund, and would not count toward the state's constitutional debt limit.

Continued...

Comments by Opponents. No comments opposing the amendment were made during the house and senate committee hearings or during discussion of the amendment in the house and senate chambers. A review of other sources also did not reveal any apparent opposition to the amendment. However, a witness at a committee hearing, while noting that the additional bonding authority is critical and the board has demonstrated the ability to

effectively administer the additional bonding authority, recommended removing the evergreen provision, arguing that periodic review by the legislature and the voters increases the board's accountability for the administration of the funds. The witness also noted general concern that funding for implementation of the state water plan is inadequate and should be considered where possible.

Amendment No. 8 (S.J.R. 16)

The constitutional amendment providing for the appraisal for ad valorem tax purposes of open-space land devoted to water-stewardship purposes on the basis of its productive capacity.

Summary of Proposed Amendment.

Section 1(b), Article VIII, of the Texas Constitution generally requires real property to be taxed at its market value. Section 1-d-1, Article VIII, Texas Constitution, requires the legislature, for the purpose of promoting the preservation of open-space land, to provide by general law for taxation of open-space land devoted to farm, ranch, or wildlife management purposes on the basis of its productive capacity, rather than at full market value, and authorizes the legislature to provide, on the same basis and by general law, for taxation of open-space land devoted to timber production. The proposed amendment would require the legislature, by general law, to provide for taxation of open-space land devoted to water stewardship on the basis of its productive capacity.

Summary of Comments Made About the Proposed Amendment. The following paragraphs are based on comments made about the amendment during the legislative process and generally summarize the main arguments supporting or opposing the amendment.

Comments by Supporters. According to the state water plan, active conservation will

account for 23 percent of the state's future water supply, and the plan endorses voluntary water stewardship as a water conservation strategy. Promoting water stewardship is sound and sustainable water conservation policy. Voluntary water stewardship is a new tool to advance water conservation in a tough budget cycle and is revenue neutral because eligible landowners already would be receiving the agricultural-use property valuation (sometimes called the agricultural-use exemption). In a state where more than 90 percent of the land is privately owned, a water-stewardship tax incentive would encourage private landowners to conserve water without more regulation. Farmers and ranchers would have a financial incentive to run fewer cattle on their land, helping to preserve the land's habitat and native plant and animal species.

Comments by Opponents. The proposed amendment and its enabling legislation could provide a way to undermine the agricultural-use property valuation, or have other unintended consequences. There already are several other tax breaks for Texas landowners, and providing for another one is excessive. The separate water-stewardship valuation is superfluous because landowners already practice voluntary water conservation. Furthermore, some options under the water-stewardship appraisal method already are available under the wildlife management appraisal method.

Attachments

There are four attachments to this issue of *Chapter News*:

Attachment 1 - Minutes of the General Meeting of October 12, 2011.

[Attachment-1_Oct-2011-GenMtg.pdf](#)

Attachment 2 - Dow Woods Grand Opening Celebration

[Attachment-2_Grand-Opening.pdf](#)

Attachment-3 - Building Trails at San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge

[Attachment-3_Building-Trails.pdf](#)

Attachment-4 - Flier and Registration form for Master Naturalist Campout 2012

[Attachment-4_Campout-2012.pdf](#)

Attachment 3 was written by Marty Cornell for submission to the 2011 Annual Meeting Project Fair at the TMN Statewide Annual Meeting & Advanced Training held October 21-23 at Mo Ranch Conference Center in Hunt, Texas

CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Vice President/Program	Mary Holler
Secretary	Marty Cornell
Treasurer	Sandy Henderson
State Representative	Ed Barrios
Past President	Dave Brandes
Membership Director	Jerry Eppner
Volunteer Service Chair	Neal McLain
Advanced Training Chair	Tom Morris
Outreach Chair	Ruby Lewis
Chapter Host	Jerry Krampota
Webmaster	Neal McLain
Newsletter Editor	Mary Helen Israel
Chapter Advisors	Connie Stolte (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department) Corrie Bowen (AgriLife Extension Service)

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