

The Midden

Marbled Godwit by Sharon Evans

Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists

December 2022

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President's Corner by Pam House

As this year ends, we will be saying farewell to the 2022 recertification pin - the lightning whelk. Our February 2022 *Midden* shared the natural history of the whelk, but I find its history as a state symbol also interesting.

A gastropod with a beautiful shell, it was adopted as the State Shell of Texas, due in large part to the work of Margaret Tate, one of the founders of the Brazosport Natural History Museum. She was their curator of malacology (turns out that is the study of hard-shelled mollusks in their entirety). She discovered that the bluebonnet, the pecan tree, the mockingbird, the topaz, and the palmwood had already been designated as State Flower, State Tree, State Bird, State Gem, and State Stone (petrified palmwood). It seemed time to find a suitable symbol for the coastal areas. The campaign she led resulted in the resolution adopted by our legislature in 1987 which stated in part:

“WHEREAS, Texas' coastlands, bays, and tidal flats provide a total of 634 miles of valuable natural resources and recreation areas, attracting thousands of visitors annually to this lush locality; and

WHEREAS, The Lightning Whelk, *Busycon perversum pulleyi*, is one of the most attractive and plentiful of the many shells lining our lovely beaches; and ...

WHEREAS, as enchanting as it is unique, the Lightning Whelk is the ideal choice for a state shell and will serve as a fitting emblem of the exceptional beauty of the Texas Gulf Coast region.”

Found on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, I learned from Dan Worrall's presentation last month that it was held sacred by the people of the early cultures of North America, largely because of its unusual left-handed turn. Wearing apparel fashioned from the shell was distributed widely through the cultures of our early history.

Isn't the name wonderful? Originally *Busycon contrarium*, the always fussy taxonomists decided to be contrary, and redesignated it *perversum*. How perverse. *Busycon* may mean “large fig” (according to February's *Midden*), but it will always bring images of busy gastropods having a convention to me.

Slate of officers for 2022

The nominating committee (Chris Anastas, Lynn Wright, and Cindy Liening) has presented to the board the following slate of officers for 2022 which will be presented to chapter at the December meeting for a vote.

- President - Pam House
- Vice President - Gene Fisseler
- Treasurer - Meade LeBlanc
- Secretary - Cynthia Hughes

Next Chapter Meeting

December 1

Annual Awards
Celebration

And

Officer Election

In person only

Carbide Park

(Details on page 8)

Women in Nature: Beatrix Potter by Meade LeBlanc

When someone says Beatrix Potter, do you think of Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter Rabbit? The author of over 20 tales and 12 books was also a conservationist and a naturalist, and very interested in fungi in particular.

Potter was born in 1866 in London to wealthy, artistic parents who were interested in nature and the countryside. Her younger brother Walter was born six years later. The children grew up with governesses and few friends besides the extended family. They instead had numerous small animals as pets – mice, rabbits, a hedgehog and some bats, along with collections of butterflies and other insects – which they drew and studied. Potter was so devoted to the care of her small animals that she often took them with her on long holidays. Her first sketchbook of her pets was made when she was 8, and it is now held by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The family spent summers in the Lake District, where Potter met Hardwicke Rawnsley, who became a founding secretary of the National Trust. Rawnsley's interest in this countryside of beautiful lakes and valleys inspired Potter and had a lasting impact on her life.

Potter kept a diary from 1881 until 1897 in which she wrote her entries in code. It served as both sketchbook and literary experiment. In tiny handwriting, she reported on society, recorded her impressions of art and artists, recounted stories and observed life around her. Excerpts from her diary (after cracking the code) were published as *Beatrix Potter's Journal*, revealing fascinating details of her early life.

She was interested in nearly all aspects of natural science, but botany in particular. Botany was a passion for most Victorians and nature study was a popular hobby. She collected fossils, was interested in entomology and studied archaeological artifacts from London excavations. In all these areas, she drew and painted her specimens.

By the 1890s, her scientific interests centered on mycology. She was first drawn to fungi because of their colors in nature. "Beatrix's interest in drawing and painting mushrooms, or fungi, began as a passion for painting beautiful specimens wherever she found them," historian Linda Lear explains in *Beatrix Potter: A Life in Nature*. "She was drawn to fungi first by their ephemeral fairy qualities and then by the variety of their shape and color and the challenge they posed to watercolor techniques." During a summer holiday in 1892 she met Charles McIntosh, a naturalist and amateur mycologist. He helped improve the accuracy of her illustrations, gave her specimens to paint, and taught her taxonomy. She

became curious about how fungi reproduced, and so began microscopic drawings of fungal spores. In 1895 she developed her own theory of their germination.



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

She first used connections of her uncle to consult with botanists at Kew Gardens to discuss her theory of hybridization. However, she was not taken seriously because of her sex and amateur status. She then wrote up her conclusions and submitted the paper to the Linnean Society in 1897. As a female, she was not allowed to attend the proceedings or read her paper. She subsequently withdrew it, realizing that some of her samples were contaminated, but continued her studies for several more years. Her paper has recently been rediscovered, along with the artistic illustrations and drawings that accompanied it.

At the same time Potter was studying fungi, though, she was busy drawing sketches of mice and rabbits, among other animals. She often used these sketches to accompany letters to her young friends. Then one day, she didn't have much to say in the letter, so she told a story about "four little rabbits whose names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter". It became one of the most famous children's letters ever written. However, she was not an overnight success with the book. She could not find a publisher at first, so she published it herself for friends and family. The "bunny book" was later accepted for publication and her career took off.

At age 37, she purchased land and a working farm in the Lake District of England. She became known as one of the major Herdwick sheep farmers in the county. Over time, she purchased other farms and expanded her farming operations. According to the National Trust, "she supported the efforts of the National Trust to preserve not just the places of extraordinary beauty but also those

heads of valleys and low grazing lands that would be irreparably ruined by development."

She died in 1943 of complications of pneumonia and heart disease and left nearly all her property to the National Trust, including over 4,000 acres of land, sixteen farms, cottages, herds of cattle and Herdwick sheep. Hers was the largest gift at that time to the National Trust, and it enabled the preservation of the land now included in the Lake District National Park.

In addition to her legacy in conservation, she also left behind her paintings of fungi. She gave her mycological

and scientific drawings to the Armit Museum and Library where mycologists still refer to them. There is a collection of her fungus paintings at the Perth Museum and Art Gallery in Perth, Scotland. In 1967, the mycologist W.P.K. Findlay included many of Potter's beautifully accurate fungus drawings in his *Wayside & Woodland Fungi*, and so fulfilled her desire to one day have her fungus drawings published in a book. In 1997, the Linnean Society issued a posthumous apology to Potter for the sexism displayed in its handling of her research. Better late than never; certainly the creator of Peter Rabbit would be pleased to be included among the great Victorian amateur naturalists of botany and biology.

Prairie Ponderings: A Prairie Elegy by Diane Humes

Prairie climax grasses - Big bluestem, Little bluestem, Yellow Indiangrass, Eastern gamagrass, and Switchgrass - bloom, set seed and exhibit the beautiful rusty-brown fall color which marks the coastal tall grass prairie, during warm, sunny days of late autumn. This is also the time when most master naturalists prefer to work on the prairie, so, as is usually true, this fall has been quite busy, especially on the prairie.



Photo by Patty Trimmingham

At Armand Bayou Nature Center, the Prairie Friday Team has been working on multiple fronts - planting, potting, organizing - in preparation for planting events, in addition to monitoring transect sites so we can track our restoration progress. On October 15, the team hosted over 100 community volunteers for the 16th annual Prairie Pandemonium planting event. Despite near-drought conditions, we planted all 2000 grasses and forbs into the Grimes Prairie. By this time next year, we should all go check out the results!

Another planting event, the Sheldon Lake State Park Plantathon, scheduled for November 5, has been

canceled due to dry soil conditions. Look for this event next year; in the meantime, you can always visit the park, enjoy birding the trails around the lake or visit the boardwalk through the wetlands and prairie. Remember, you do not always have to be working to enjoy a park!

Many of us were fortunate to be able to attend the Prairie Conference at UHCL on October 28 and 29. Attendees spent an enjoyable and inspiring day listening to prairie practitioners from around Texas, followed by optional field trips. Prairies inspire passion in people; speakers included landowners, agency folk, biologists and the rest of us. This is all pertinent, of course, because most of Texas is privately-owned and most prairies have been converted to multiple other uses besides wildscapes. But, with dedication, hard work, and money (it usually helps), prairies can return, sometimes with a little help.

Prairies are home to many species of plants and animals; many are endangered or threatened because of declining habitat. Restoring prairies is beneficial to wildlife and is good for people, too. Personally, I am sure that having 900 acres of Armand Bayou Nature Center prairie upstream of my neighborhood has benefitted my neighbors and me enormously. Unfortunately, the Houston-Galveston metro area keeps expanding and converting more and more of the land to human uses. We should be preserving and restoring as much as we can, for the well-being of all species.

For me, the take-away message came from David Bezanson who said, "Prairies are rarer than bald eagles."

The Midden Deadline
for the next issue

January 2

Dick and Mark: Impact on Prairies by Diane Humes

During this most glorious time of year, we are able to celebrate our area's amazing prairies largely as a result of the hard work and collaboration between Dick Benoit, our chapter's founding father, and Mark Kramer, ABNC Stewardship Director. They founded the Coastal Prairie Partnership (with Jaime Gonzalez), the Prairie Friday Team, sometimes called the Prairie Liberation Army, and helped foster the prairie enthusiasm now seen throughout the Houston Metro Area. Sadly, Mark passed away on March 9 and Dick on September 25.



Photo by Nathan Veatch

Dick was a "numbers guy" who counted everything - plants, pots, volunteers - who said it was a good day if, on average, everyone on the team planted 10 plants. A hawk watcher (he counted them), teacher and naturalist, Dick loved the prairie and convinced a lot of us to come out to work and learn, with his simple invitation, "Come join the team; it's fun." Dick was the original "prairie whisperer" and I am certain he convinced Mark of the wisdom of recruiting master naturalist volunteers to join the stewardship effort. Dick also believed that, as a chapter, we had to enable volunteers to accomplish their volunteer service hours. (He used the same tactic with the Wetland Restoration Team.)

Dick Benoit by Susette Mahaffey

Leader
Visionary
Master Naturalist
Fun, Food, and Friends is our motto!
Cherished

Under Mark's direction, Prairie Friday Team members performed a myriad of tasks: whacking invasive Chinese tallow and retama trees, clearing out persimmon and baccharis, rescuing, propagating, and planting prairie natives. Mark was Burn Boss; we joined the Burn Team

and shared music and food at the Bluestem and Blackstem Rendezvous parties following planting and burn seasons. During team meetings, we discussed the calendar and details for upcoming events. We wrote signs for the Prairie Loop - a tedious process. Mark listened to every voice; in the end, each word on every sign was perfect.



Photo by Gene Fisseler

Mark loved the bayou and Dick appreciated that with a poem, tacked to the ABNC Stewardship Office door:

A Tribute to Mark by Dick Benoit

On the banks of Armand Bayou
lives a man that embodies the spirit of the Bayou.
His perspiration nurtures the life that flourishes there,
his inspiration encourages others to do the same.
This man with the golden heart, follows the path least
traveled.
His eloquence of speech has made many
follow his quest of preserving and bedecking his beloved.
The man who lives on the bank of the Bayou,
has made his mark on the spirit of men and the Bayou.

Owls home for winter,
Who, whooing to each other
Hear the joyful sounds!

by Susette Mahaffey

Cool crisp wind blowing.
Osprey whistles. Mullet leaps.
Swoop! Fish in talons!

by Rebekah Gano

Member Spotlight: Maureen Nolan-Wilde by Meade LeBlanc

Maureen Nolan-Wilde is the hero behind Beach Heroes and many other programs of the Galveston Bay Area Chapter. Maureen was in the class of 2011, which she took while working full-time, and she passed the 5,000 volunteer hour mark in 2017.

Maureen is probably most well-known as the creator and leader of the Beach Heroes program; chapter members visit Galveston area schools, typically in sea creature-themed hats, and talk about the importance of preserving and protecting the beaches and wildlife that live there. Afterwards, the children are invited to make a picture that shows what they are going to do to protect the beaches. Maureen is also involved in sea turtle rehab, stranding, and monitoring. She is chapter Facebook page administrator, and, during covid, started setting up weekly educational posts on topics such as birds and coastal life. Maureen has held various titles and roles in the past, including chapter President, VP and Communications Director.

When asked how she got interested in nature, Maureen recalled her childhood in New Jersey and love of all things coastal. "When I was young, my uncle Elwood shared his love of the land and nature with us. He always brought about magical moments and experiences," she said. Maureen recognized several individuals as being influential in her master naturalist journey: Stennie Meadours for her determination, Sara Snell for her passion and Chuck Snyder for his ability to make magic happen.

When asked to recall a favorite story, Maureen described the time she was asked to lead the sea turtle release of cold-stunned sea turtles for the Gulf Coast Sea Turtle Research Center aboard the Trident, thirteen miles off the coast. "When I agreed, I did not realize that I was in charge of the students, the press, other volunteers and ensuring the sea turtles were released to warm waters. It was truly a day full of hope and joy and a bit of apprehension (especially managing a few sea sick volunteers) but it will never be forgotten."

Maureen says her dream has been to help host an event where we celebrate and honor the children of our community for their commitment to nature. "At our recent art exhibit for the Beach Hero Program (during Galveston's Art Walk), I had more than one parent come up and thank our team for celebrating their children's work. However, the most poignant moment for me was when I was chatting with one winner, and he said that he was so happy that all these people came out to see that kids can make a difference too!"



Photo by Carlos Rios

In Memoriam: Members Lost in 2022 by Carolyn Miles

With much sadness , we reflect on the passing of four of our chapter members in 2022.

Dick Benoit (founding member)	
Sandy McHone (Spring 2004)	

Tim O'Connell (Spring 2006)	
Mark Kramer (honorary)	

Lost Bird Project and the Eskimo Curlew by Susette Mahaffey

The Lost Bird project is the work of sculptor and artist Todd McGrain, who honors the memory of birds now extinct. His Eskimo curlew sculpture - over six feet tall - was long-planned by the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council, with active support from several members of our chapter. The statue is a lasting memorial to a bird that we have lost for all of time.



Photo by Susette Mahaffey

When Todd McGrain begins a project, he researches the life histories of each bird, its ecological impacts and where it was last seen. The last confirmed sighting of an Eskimo curlew was by Victor Emanuel on April 10, 1962 on the west end of Galveston Island, which dictated the sculpture's placement.

Emanuel, now a renowned birding tour leader living in Austin,

Texas, was a college student from Houston when he and others first saw the Eskimo curlew in 1959, along the salt flats in the area where the park is now. Surprised to see this rare bird, Victor returned with other birding experts, including Armand Yramategui, to confirm the sighting. (Fortunately, Armand was able to view the bird before his untimely death in 1960.) Other sightings were never confirmed, and photographs are rare.

Although not officially declared extinct, the Eskimo curlew has not been sighted for over 60 years. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the sculpture's installation in March 2020 in Galveston Island State Park was a quiet event with only a few participants. However, for several weeks following the event, smaller replicas of the other Lost Birds statues were displayed on the grounds of the Bryan Museum in Galveston. These birds included: Great auk; Heath hen; Labrador duck; Passenger pigeon and Carolina parakeet.

If you have not had a chance to see the Eskimo curlew sculpture, it is located along an easy walk on the Clapper Rail Trail at Galveston Island State Park. It is worth the time and effort to go and see it.

If you want more information about the statue, you can use this link to the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council: <https://www.galvestonnaturetourism.org/the-lost-bird-project/>

The chapter participation in this project is one of our many proud accomplishments overlooked during the isolation caused by the pandemic. It is important to remember the work done, and the monument left to future generations.

Sculptor Todd McGrain said, "Forgetting that these birds ever existed is another kind of extinction. It takes real work to preserve habitat, raise awareness and mitigate the factors that adversely affect bird populations."

Editor's note: In his book *One More Warbler: A Life With Birds*, Victor Emanuel devotes a chapter to his search for the Eskimo curlew.

Better Bird House Signage by Ralph Fixel

As a new master naturalist, I started making birdhouses for Carolina Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds and Barn Swallows. Next, I built a Barred Owl nesting box referencing plans in the *Audubon Birdhouse Book*. This box used ¾" plywood and weighed 25 pounds. I added hooks and found four lag bolts; in June while having our trees trimmed, I asked the tree trimming crew if they could mount the Barred Owl nesting box. The crew quickly hoisted it up 20 feet in a pine tree and I instructed them to orient it to avoid the direct sunlight.

I thought it was late in the season to put up a Barred Owl nesting box, but I took the opportunity to get it in place for next year. To my surprise, Black-bellied Whistling-ducks checked out this new Barred Owl nesting box, but not seeing continued visits, I thought that was the end.

After about two weeks, I found a whole white egg on the ground below the nesting box. With some research, I learned whistling-ducks lay white chicken-sized eggs. This seemed odd, finding one egg on the ground, with no activity around the Barred Owl nesting box.

However, 22 days later, while we were having breakfast, we heard whistling-ducks. Looking over our roof at the Barred Owl nesting box, I saw no bird activity, but walking down the driveway were the Black-bellied Whistling-duck parents and 13 cute little ducklings. The parents led the ducklings through our backyard to the drainage culvert that flows into Coward's Creek. My wife took pictures and we shared them with our neighbors; we thought that was the end.

Later that evening, my wife heard little peeps again and found a duckling swimming in our pool. Our neighbor reported having seen a duck family in nearby Coward's Creek. That evening we walked the creek banks looking for the whistling-duck family, but no luck. We kept the duckling overnight, naming it James Whistler. What does a whistling-duck eat? I put James in a tall-sided bucket, since noticing this duckling can jump. In the bucket James had water in a large bottle cap, along with oatmeal and dry bread. It seemed to like the bread and turned over the bottle cap with water.

Our neighbor's children enjoyed seeing the duckling and were very careful holding James. The next day I rode along the creek on my bike and found the duck family. My wife and our neighbor's daughter brought the duckling, James. She lobbed the little duckling into the creek. The duck family with 13 ducklings paddled by and James, number 14, swam right in and joined the team.



My neighbor says I need better signage identifying the box as "for Barred Owls only". It was a fun experience learning as we worked together for the family reunion.

December Chapter Meeting Information by Pam House

Like the fussy taxonomists I mentioned in the President's Corner, our own perversity and contrariness will be recognized at our annual awards dinner on December 1. It will be a total commitment to an in-person event at the Wayne Johnson Center at Carbide Park.

We will celebrate accomplishments, joys, and some losses of the past year. Treasures of the Bay will be a highlight, along with the reveal of the centerpieces provided by the Spring 2022 class. Join class members from Spring and Fall classes; bring friends and spouses

and a side dish or dessert to share. Barbecue will be supplied by the chapter to leaven the bit of business we will conduct (officer elections).

We do request you RSVP so that we can plan for appropriate numbers. Also, if you would like to attend, but hesitate to drive, let me know and I will try to hook you up with a willing (and competent?) driver. Setup will begin about 4:30 - with festivities to start around 6 pm. Details will be included in the flyer that will be sent out. We will be excited to see you all!

Texas Master Naturalists State Meeting 2022 by Diane Humes

The 2022 annual meeting of Texas Master Naturalists was held from October 20 - October 23 at the Omni Houston Hotel, with 458 attendees registered, 82 of them online. With representatives from 42 of the 48 chapters in attendance, perfect weather, great field trips and interesting and pertinent topics to explore, we all enjoyed and were inspired by the experience; in fact, we took over the hotel and witnessed the first-ever appearance by a master naturalist and astronaut, Kjell Lindgren, home from the ISS!

Our Galveston Bay Area Chapter rocked the Silent Auction and sold all 176 items! Thanks to everyone who donated and purchased and our hard-working chapter members, the state organization is now approximately \$9000 richer. Note for next year: hot items were big, fat botany books, nature experiences and decorative nature items.

Chapter members registered for the meeting recognized for milestones were: Anita Alvarez, Rene Gedaly, Lisa Hardcastle and Tracy Walpole for initial certification; Lisa Hardcastle for 250 hours; Pam House and Meade LeBlanc for 500 hours; Mike Pettit and Chantele Singleton for 1,000 hours; and Ellen Gerloff earned 5,000 hours. It is a very special moment when you are recognized in a room full of your peers. Congratulations to all of you.

In addition to many advanced training sessions, the meeting is a time to recognize and reward those who have greatly benefitted the organization and the cause of conservation through chapter projects, service to TPWD and Agri-Life and our collective contributions. Since TMN inception, 15,220 trained master naturalists have contributed 5.9 million volunteer hours, worth \$131.53 million, earned 877,664 hours of advanced training,

made 6.63 million people contacts, created 2,234 miles of trails and enhanced 229,100 acres of habitat in Texas.

These remarkable achievements and more will be celebrated next year at the 25th anniversary meeting to be held in McAllen, Texas from October 12 - 15, 2023, during the annular solar eclipse. Think of the opportunities - monarchs and hawks migrating - and new habitats to explore. Mark your calendars!

Our chapter excelled in competition: out of 269 art and media entries, Debbie Repasz took third place in the Plants category for "Lilies on My Mind"; Gene Fisseler took second place in the Work and Play category for his

"Getting Down With Plants" and Maureen Nolan-Wilde tied for first for her "Beach Heroes Adventure". Gene also tied for second place for his photo in the Scenic category. See the winning photos below.

In conclusion, Roel Lopez spoke of the changes expected to come to Texas: population increases, anticipated private land transfers, to name just two. Out of 30 million current Texans, 1% of them own and steward 83% of the land. If the population doubles, and the landowners all retire, what will happen to the land? So, next year's re-cert pin represents Texas and its ecoregion. Get ready to earn that pin.



Photo by Maureen Nolan-Wilde



Photo by Debbie Repasz



Photo by Gene Fisseler



Photo by Gene Fisseler

Chapter 2022 Annual Photo Contest Winners by Carolyn Miles

Overall Winner:

Maureen Nolan-Wilde, Beach Heroes (on pg. 8)

Chapter Members at Work and Play:

Maureen Nolan-Wilde, Beach Heroes (on pg. 8)

Wildlife:

Robbie Lowe, Green Tree Frog

Scenic:

Gene Fisseler, Frio River Winterscape (on pg. 8)

Birds:

Linda Davis, Foot Soak

Plant Life:

Phyllis Koenig, Wild Sunflowers Against a Summer Evening Sky



Photo by Rob Lowe

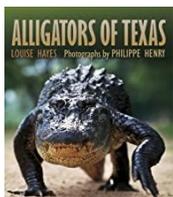


Photo by Phyllis Koenig



Photo by Linda Davis

Heritage Book Study - Review of *Alligators of Texas* by Madeleine K. Barnes



What is the apex crocodylian predator that resides in our area? I will give you a hint: the highest concentrations in Texas are found from the Sabine River to the Rio Grande, across the coastal marshes that include the Big Thicket and the bayous of greater Houston. Their habitat is “where land and water meet” as best described by Louise Hayes, Ph.D.

The answer is the American alligator, (*Alligator mississippiensis*), found in 10 states and only in the U.S. In the southern states, you may hear them referred to as “gators”. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department current estimates, approximately 400,000 to 500,000 alligators live within our state, both captive and in the wild.

Crocodylians, including caimans, crocodiles and alligators are mostly large, predatory, semiaquatic reptiles. They first appeared 95 million years ago in the Late Cretaceous period and are, amazingly, the closest living relatives of birds. That conjures up an interesting family tree, in my mind, as to how that could happen. As master naturalists, we are encouraged to learn about our regional environment and its inhabitants; *Alligators of Texas* is a perfect fit for us. The author, Louise Hayes, a biologist living in Brazoria County, has studied American alligators in Texas since 1985 at sites such as Brazos Bend State Park and the J. D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area near Port Arthur. She describes alligators in all their life stages, from egg to death, discussing their history and importance to the ecosystem

Alligators are a protected species; it is illegal to catch one to keep as a pet or to harass or kill an alligator unless you are signed up for a specific legal alligator hunt. Hayes writes, “The general public, for the most part, has not reached the stage of comprehending that unless an alligator is large, aggressive (usually habituated to humans), and in close proximity to human dwellings, it will be allowed to remain where it is and not be disturbed.”

I recommend this book for your list as the best current reference about alligators. With its great photographs, courtesy of wildlife photographer, Phillippe Henry, Hayes helps Texans to better understand this iconic animal and its place in our landscape, stressing the need for us to learn how to successfully coexist with this large four-legged neighbor.

Book Study participants did a great job this year, thanks to everyone. **2023 reading selections** with meeting dates are:

January 9* & February 6 - *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* by Douglas W. Tallamy

March 6 & April 3 - *A Thirsty Land: The Making of an American Water Crisis* by Seamus McGraw

May 1 & June 12* - *Issac's Storm: A Man, A Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History* by Erik Larson

July 10* & August 7 - *The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times* by Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams

September 11* & October 2 - *The Secret World of Weather: How to Read Signs in Every Cloud, Breeze, Hill, Street, Plant, Animal and Dewdrop* by Tristan Gooley

November 6 - *Armand Bayou Illustrated: A Life on the Bayou* by Mark Kramer

December 4 & January 8, 2024 - *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* by Suzanne Simard

The annotation of an *asterisk from above is as follows: 1) for January 9, July 10, and September 11, the dates have been moved to the second Monday due to holidays and 2) June 12, the move in dates allows participants the opportunity to volunteer for the Camp Wild activity.



Our next Zoom AT will be held on Monday, December 5, to finish our discussion of *The Man Who Planted Trees: Lost Groves, Champion Trees, and an Urgent Plan to Save the Planet* by Jim Robbins. We will be discussing the second half of the book, pages 105-204, Chapters 11-21. The first AT of 2023 will be on January 9 to begin our discussion of *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* by Douglas W. Tallamy with pages 7-123, which covers the Introduction, and Chapters 1-7. If you want to join us for either or both AT opportunities, please contact Madeleine Barnes at Mad2Btmn@aol.com to be added to the list for additional information and to receive the Zoom meeting link and password.

We welcome your participation each month for two hours on the first Monday of the month starting at 10am for these AT meetings. Please note that we welcome anyone to participate whether you are TMN certified, recertified, or just want to remain a chapter member. We look forward to seeing you and let us know if you have read any good naturalist books lately. Happy trails!

December and January Activities

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter Meeting - Year-end Celebration! (No AT)
6:15 Dinner, Social Time, Elections, Awards, Fun

No AT is scheduled for December

Ecological Function of Small Living Shorelines in Galveston Bay

Wednesday January 25; 6pm via Zoom; 1.25 hours AT
Registration required; look for email invite in early January
Presenters: Cindy Howard and Jim Dobberstein

Ongoing

Heritage Book Study Group

First Monday of every month via Zoom
10am-noon; 2 hours AT
Contact: Madeleine Barnes 281-474-9406
See Pg. 10 for meeting dates and books.

Which VMS activity do I use to report my time?

- [Opportunities with descriptions](#)
- Email [GBAC Membership](#) if you need an opportunity added to your profile

STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

For a complete list of stewardship activities, see our chapter website, <https://txmn.org/gbmn/what-we-do/>.

EDUCATION - OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

For a complete list of education - outreach activities see our chapter website, <https://txmn.org/gbmn/what-we-do/>.

Partner and Associate Programs - Many organizations sponsor guided walks and education programs or need volunteers to staff their nature center. Go to <http://txmn.org/gbmn/partners/> for the list, then click on the link to the organization's website.

CHAPTER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Calendar - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/events/month/> Includes meetings, AT and volunteer activities

Board - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/board-of-directors/>
Contact information for the Board of Directors. **Board Meetings** - usually first Tuesday of each month (via Zoom), verify on the calendar

Committees - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/board-of-directors/>
Contact information for the Committee Chairs

Volunteer Service - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/volunteer-service/> Volunteer Opportunities

Advanced Training - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/advanced-training/>

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