

The Midden

Cactus by Verva Densmore

Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists

June 2023

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President's Corner by Pam House

Serendipity is one of my favorite words and concepts. As Chat AI reports: "Serendipity in the exploration of the natural world refers to the process of discovering unexpected and valuable things in nature by chance or accident. This concept is based on the idea that when scientists, explorers or naturalists venture into the natural world with open and curious minds, they are likely to encounter surprises and unplanned discoveries that may lead to new insights, discoveries or inventions." Chat AI had a lot more to say, but I have decided to proceed without its help (it scares me and, besides, I like the Oxford comma).

A visit to Galveston beach is always an exercise in serendipity. On a recent sea turtle nest patrol, my husband and I were shuffling through the sargassum and bemoaning the ubiquitous presence of plastic, when we spied a jewel. There, on the edge of the seaweed, one side covered in tiny barnacles, was a perfect sea bean. Three years ago, I wouldn't have recognized that it was anything special. But thanks to Maureen Nolan-Wilde, the Sea Bean Symposium, and postings on our Facebook page, I could recognize it as a treasure. I am not sure, but I think it is a snuff box sea bean (*Entada rheedel*).

We continued exploring down the beach, now more attuned to the possibilities of the unexpected. A few feet from our original find, we spotted another sea bean of an entirely different species. This one, globe-shaped and sized like a ping pong ball, appears to be sea coconut (*Manicaria saccifera*). This should not be confused with the true coconut (*Cocos nucifera*). However, we found several of those along that same stretch of beach on that same day. With my newfound confidence, I proclaim them to also be sea beans since they could also be considered drift seeds.

But our chance encounters that day were not limited to sea beans. The iridescent blue of the Portuguese man o' war (*Physalia physalis*) drew us to many lurking on the beach. Being wise to their stinging ways, we looked but did not touch. If not unexpected, our discoveries of intricate shells and encounters with ghost crabs, gulls, terns, sand pipers, and squadrons of brown pelicans were also by chance.

I have always loved the beach, but my appreciation has deepened and broadened with knowledge. The myriad of AT opportunities presented by our chapter and the continued informal education from other members has made that possible. Chance encounters in the natural world have always occurred to me, but recognizing the meaning and using them to expand my knowledge is rather new. I am still so profoundly grateful to have found this organization that has, for me, opened a wider door for those serendipitous discoveries.



Photo by Pam House

Next Chapter Meeting

June 1

100 Years of Audubon
Conservation in Texas:
What Will the Future Bring?

by
Lisa Gonzales

Vice President of
the National Audubon
Society

Hybrid

Women in Nature: Caroline Dormon by Meade LeBlanc

Caroline Dormon “lived the most extraordinary life through the most ordinary of things - birds, flowers, trees, people” according to her biographer. She spent her life immersed in nature and gained deep knowledge and insights which she shared with experts and the general public through literature, arts, and educational programs. She championed protection of Louisiana plants and animals at a time when these were new concepts and is considered one of the most influential American naturalists of the early 20th century.

Caroline (Carrie) was born in 1888 at the family’s summer home, Briarwood, in northern Louisiana. She and her seven siblings were fortunate to belong to an extraordinary family. Her mother emphasized a love of reading and writing; Carrie learned to write by age three and was a voracious reader her entire life. Her father, a very successful attorney, was able to provide a comfortable lifestyle for the family and insisted all the children, even the girls, attend college. He encouraged all the children to appreciate nature. The family went camping, learned birds, flowers, and trees, and learned both the common names and scientific names.

Their parents encouraged the children to explore the longleaf pine forests of Kisatchie Wold. *Wold* is an old English term for forest or rolling countryside. Carrie recalled, “We were rather delicate children, of a nervous temperament; so...our parents made it possible for us to spend every moment we were outside the schoolroom in the woods.” The children spent so much time in nature that they were considered wild by friends and neighbors. They built tree houses, played in the lakes and creeks, collected bird eggs, studied birds carrying materials to build nests, and excelled at activities like tree climbing and rope swing building.

Carrie happily lived as a tomboy until age 16, when her parents sent her to a private college in Alabama. There she proved herself to be a consummate student, questioning, observing, and exploring each subject. Despite her scientific interest, her formal education focused on literature and art. She graduated in 1907 with a teaching certificate, and then began work teaching primary classes. However, it wasn’t long before she began to experience poor health, suffering from the flu, arthritis, and heart problems.

Poor health, combined with an unconventional upbringing, led her to retire from public life in 1918. She moved to a cabin that she and her sister Virginia had recently built at Briarwood. Carrie planned to “put into usable form the store of information which I had been gathering all my life.” Virginia moved to Briarwood as well, where she took care of the house so that Carrie

could focus on her numerous interests. Carrie was never satisfied to limit herself to one field—forestry, botany, horticulture, conservation, ornithology, archeology, ethnology, literature, art, education, or preservation. She wanted to do it all.

One of her first projects was to preserve longleaf pine forests of the Kisatchie Wold. The early 20th century was the heyday of lumbering in Louisiana and the South, and virgin longleaf pine forests were being cut down at an unbelievable rate. Carrie began to lobby for a national forest. She wrote letters and met with government representatives for years, lobbying for the federal government to buy land for the national forest. Finally, over 10 years later, the Federal Government purchased the first unit of national forest land in Louisiana, though most of the virgin timber had already been harvested. Because of her influence in the establishment of the national forest, she was asked to suggest its name. Carrie chose “Kisatchie”—an Indian word meaning “long cane” and also a name the Kichai Indians (part of the Caddoan Confederacy) of the area called themselves.

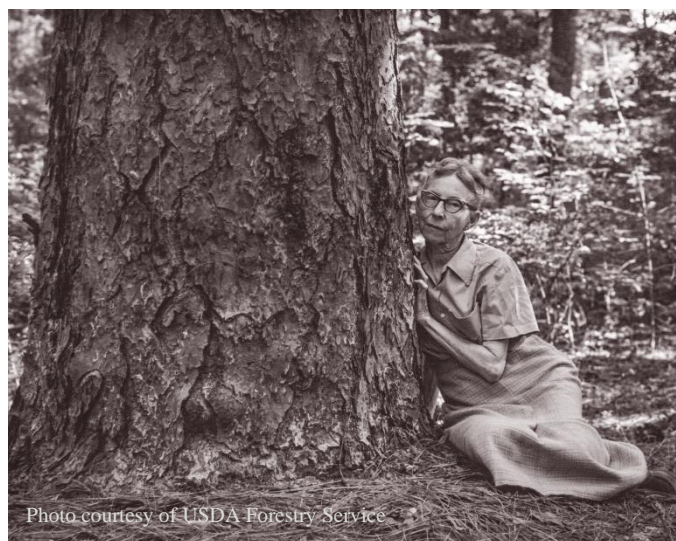


Photo courtesy of USDA Forestry Service

She advocated for state parks by giving lectures to clubs, schools, churches, scout groups and the like. She traveled the state, identifying potential sites for state parks. She began to be noticed and her knowledge appreciated, leading to appointments to various governmental agencies to promote forestry education. She prepared Arbor Day programs, wrote books about trees, conducted teacher workshops, prepared bulletins and art work, and established long-lasting programs in conservation across the state.

Carrie studied the iris that grew in south Louisiana and began hybridization efforts that resulted in colors and forms that attracted a great deal of interest. She was

responsible for the international recognition that Louisiana irises achieved, and demand for the iris grew as people figured out they could grow the iris in their own backyards.

Her interests were wide and varied, and invariably connected to her life at Briarwood. She studied the native plants, wrote articles and books, corresponded with botany experts and friends, provided illustrations for her own books and contributed to the books of others. She sketched and wrote stories about birds, which were published in a local magazine, and had a pet mockingbird named Shelley. Carrie studied the local native Americans, their baskets, pottery, and use of native plants, met with local tribe members, and wrote several stories about native American children.

Carrie claimed that she was too busy to die, saying, "If I [was] on my way to heaven I'd have to say, 'Wait St.

Peter, I have to write a few letters.'" Carrie died in Shreveport, LA on November 21, 1971 at the age of 83. Even in death she is surrounded by her beloved nature, with a flowering dogwood at her gravesite.

Louisiana State University conferred an honorary Doctor of Science upon Carrie for her "scientific achievement" and "valuable contributions to knowledge in the fields of botany, horticulture, and forestry" as well as her work in archeology, ethnology, conservation, education, and preservation. Another monument honoring Carrie is found at the Louisiana State Arboretum, where the State Legislature designated the office building the "Caroline Dorman Lodge". The largest monument to Carrie's dedication and perseverance is the Kistatchie National Forest, which today encompasses over 600,000 acres of managed forest land in central and northern Louisiana and is the only national forest in the state.

Common Water Hyacinth - Invasive Species Dilemma by Madeleine K. Barnes

We have learned that not all plants are created equal; their impacts on the natural environment can be positive or negative. Some plants are invaders or "invasive species," often called exotic or alien. As Jack Webb would say in *Dragnet*, "the facts, ma'am, just the facts." Let us explore some facts about one invasive: the common water hyacinth, one of the fastest growing plants in the world. There may be more to this water hyacinth, as it does pose a dilemma.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) says: "An invasive species is an introduced, nonnative organism (disease, parasite, plant, or animal) that begins to spread or expand its range from the site of its original introduction and that has the potential to cause harm to the environment, the economy, or to human health." There are four characteristics of an invasive species: fast growth, rapid reproduction, dispersal ability, and a tolerance of a wide range of environmental conditions. As a result, it out-competes native species.

One example of an invasive species, is the common water hyacinth, (*Pontederia crassipes*), an aquatic floating plant. The plant floats above the water due to bulb-like air-filled petioles. Leaves are thick, shiny, bright green and kidney-shaped. Roots are dark and feathery, some occurring at the end of the leaves. Flowers are showy, light blue to lavender, with 6 petals and stamens, in groups of 8-15 on stalks reaching 16 inches. The upper petal has an oval yellow spot. Found mostly in a submerged, withered flower and rarely seen, the fruit is a 3-celled capsule containing many seeds. Peak flowering occurs in late summer and early fall, although water hyacinths mainly reproduce by fragmentation and

offshoots of branching stems. Plants can become rooted if stranded in shoreline mud.



This plant will grow in a variety of aquatic habitats: lakes, ponds, rivers, wetlands, and marshes, and even drainage ditches. Optimum conditions include lower water salinity, high nutrient content, warmer temperatures above 55 degrees F, and high humidity.

Introduced to the U.S. in 1884 at the Cotton States Exposition in New Orleans, common water hyacinth is native to the Amazon River basin in South America. It has become naturalized across the southeastern states from Florida to Texas and is now found in numerous states. The spread continues by the aquarium and water garden trade and through boat traffic breaking up plants and dispersing them.

Water hyacinth populations can double in as little as 6 days and form thick massive mats on the water surface. A one-acre mat can weigh more than 200 tons. Mats

block sunlight from penetrating the water, inhibiting photosynthesis by submerged plants, and prevent oxygen dissolving in the water. This causes the death of aquatic organisms which further depletes aqueous dissolved oxygen. In addition, water hyacinth mats impede boat traffic, clog canals and intake pumps and accelerate water loss by 200-300%.

Management options - none completely successful - include avoiding introduction into waterways, physical removal by raking or harvesting machines, application of herbicides (such as 2,4-D and glyphosate) on small populations. Since water hyacinth thrives in nutrient-rich freshwater, attempting its removal without dealing with the causes of nutrient loading in the water can have unintended side-effects such as harmful algal blooms. In its native South American environment, natural predators like weevils and moths act as biological controls, so the non-native Mottled Water Hyacinth Weevil, (*Neochetina eichhorniae*), has been introduced into various areas of the U.S. to attempt biological control.

Water hyacinth has many beneficial uses: making textiles, rope and handicrafts, paper; as a food source for humans and for animals, green manure, compost, and for camouflaging fish traps. It has a high water and nitrogen content, ferments rapidly, and can supply biomass for biogas production, bioethanol, biohydrogen, biofertilizers, and fish feed.

For phytoremediation, the root structure of the water hyacinth provides a suitable environment for aerobic bacteria to remove algae, fecal coliform bacteria, suspended particles, trace toxic metals, and organic matter from water. Effective in wastewater treatment, it

transforms sewage effluent into comparatively clean water. In Texas, cities and industries have used these plants since the 1970's as natural systems to treat wastewater.



photo credit: C. Jacono

It is illegal in Texas to possess, grow, or transport this plant species. Please report sightings to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at (512) 389-4800. Do not spread it! Be sure to "Clean, drain and dry your boat" before leaving a lake or river. Act locally. Individuals or groups can apply for a \$27 Aquatic Vegetation Removal Permit that allows them to remove water hyacinth from neighborhood lakes and ponds. (TPWD)

Native Alternatives: *Pontederia cordata* (pickerelweed), *Utricularia gibba* (humped bladderwort), *Nymphaea odorata* (American white waterlily), *N. mexicana* (yellow waterlily). www.tsusinvasives.org

So now you have it, the dilemma. Pluses and minuses. "The more you know, the more you know you don't know." Aristotle

Sense of Place: Bowl and Doily Spider by Robbie Lowe

I don't know about your yard, but every night right about sundown, my garden seems to come alive with the most interesting creatures. Somewhere between 8:00 and 9:00pm on warm summer nights, I will grab my flashlight and visit my garden. As I meander the perimeter of my little yard, I see everything from the lowly roach to the regal sleeping dragonfly and none of them seem bothered by my spotlight.

I see significantly more activity at night than during the day. I supposed the dark-of-night offers a sense of security and some protection from predators but, I have to admit, the tree frogs didn't get that memo because they are quite abundant and pretty healthy. One can hope they are getting their nightly fill on mosquitos but I'm quite sure they just grab whatever tasty treat crosses their path.

I live on a city lot of 6000 square feet in south Pasadena where one would not expect a large variety of backyard creatures. However, you might be surprised to learn that in 2022 I logged over 250 different observations on my iNaturalist account right from this tiny yard.



Photo by Robbie Lowe

Particularly, one observation caught my eye. I was shining my light into my crepe myrtle tree when I spotted what looked like the web of a drunken arachnid. I mean, this thing was a mess, but when my flashlight hit at certain angles, I could see little grids that actually looked like a miniature city map. I investigated farther and decided this little weaver was more organized than I thought. I took a dozen pictures or so and headed back in to find out what I discovered.

Turns out it was a not-so-uncommon Bowl and Doily spider (*Frontinella pyramitela*). Have you ever heard of such? Well, I hadn't, so let me introduce you to this little marvel. Besides the grid, they weave what looks like the safety net under a circus trapeze act. Words just can't really describe it, so you probably need to keep your eyes open to really understand my fascination. Here is a photo but nothing takes the place of a face-to-face, up-

close-and-personal, nature experience. Grab a flashlight and check out your own yard... you might be surprised!



Ecofiction – Considering the Environment in Fiction by Sharon Evans

Ecofiction is a classification of fiction writings that has its roots in many areas. The term “ecofiction” was first used in the 1970’s at the time of the environmental movement, but writings that could be classified as ecofiction have been around for many years. The term was first used by John Stadler as a title for his anthology *Ecofiction* (Pocket, 1971), in which he reprinted science fiction short stories with the environment as a theme. Some of the authors of those short stories are Ray Bradbury, John Steinbeck, Edgar Allan Poe, Isaac Asimov, William Saroyan and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Today this supergenre can include many genres - mystery, romance, westerns, science fiction, and fantasy.

Eco-fiction writings encompass stories about the natural world and the human connection with the environment. The story elements can be about the natural landscape, environmental issues, wilderness experiences, not existing just as background, but as a valuable and major part of the story. Many of the ecofiction novels are about climate change and other environmental issues, but there are also good stories written with wildlife and nature as their focus.

Why read ecofiction? In many instances, we get our ideas and values about nature from the stories and theories that people pass on to us. We use these stories and theories to shape our own views of nature and our interactions with the environment. Ecofiction is a tool for promoting conservation and environmentalism in the general public and, hopefully, creating an intellectual and emotional sensitivity to the environment.

The book *Where the Wild Books Are: A Field Guide to Ecofiction* by Jim Dwyer (Univ of Nevada Press, 2010) is

considered the definitive guide to fictional literature that has ecological themes. He also discusses the history of the genre. It is an extensive introduction to “green fiction” and lists enough ecofiction books to keep you reading for several years.

Another resource for all fiction ecological is the online site “Dragonfly: An Exploration of Eco-fiction” at dragonfly.eco. Here you can find a database that lists books by title, author, publication date, type (novel, anthology, series), category (all, YA, teen, etc.), and genre. This database has over 1000 books listed and categorized, all with ecological themes or subplots.

Following are a few of the ecofiction novels I have read recently and that I recommend:

The Overstory: A Novel by Richard Powers (W. W. Norton & Co, 2019) - A Pulitzer Prize winner that is ranked in the top 10 on most lists of best ecofiction. It is a story of 9, seemingly unrelated, main characters that come together to save trees. The overarching theme is trees - their beauty, their destruction, and people's indifference and misunderstanding of them. The book can be considered long and a bit overwhelming, and sometimes tragic, but it is worth the read.

Clade by James Bradley (Hamish Hamilton, 2015) - A multi-generational story about climate change and the repercussions on the family and friends in this story. Set in Australia in the future, when the earth's tide levels are rising, storms are getting more severe and more frequent, new viruses are killing and governments are trying to deal with it all, the story follows four generations

of a family and their friends through relationships and survival.

A Rain of Nightbirds by Deena Metzger (Hand to Hand, 2017) - Two climatologists struggle with the abatement of climate change while they are falling in love and balancing their different cultures, and the cultural differences between Navajo and whites.

Flight Behavior by Barbara Kingsolver (Harper Collins, 2012) - A family grappling with their financial problems, finds millions of Monarch butterflies congregating on their land - land they were about to clear cut to pay off loans. Should they continue with the logging? Or do they try to find the reason the Monarchs are roosting here? The book delves into the consequences of climate change and the impacts it may have on our everyday life.

Shadow Flicker by Melissa A. Volker (Karavan Press, 2019) - An eco-romance set in St Francis Bay, South Africa - a widower with a 5-year-old daughter is fighting a wind farm project with a trust fund set up by his late wife - a windmill business woman with a traumatic past is helping to gain support for the wind farm project; a bit of romance, a bit of back-stabbing and danger; good discussion of the politics and environmental issues with wind farms.

Parable of the Sower by Octavia E. Butler (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993) - The collapse of the world, madness, starvation, drugs, gang rule, drought, rising seas, and the strength of one teenage girl to survive and help others in her journey to a safer future. An interesting look at the breakdown of society, economics, environment and government - it will make you think about where our present-day problems could lead.

Swallow-tailed Kites at Hawk Watch by Diane Humes

The hawk watcher's mission is to spot, ID and count migrating raptors - in our case, mostly Broad-winged Hawks (BW) and Mississippi Kites (MK) - from March 1 to April 30. After a slow season, our 2023 Sylvan Beach Hawk Watch ended with a grand finale; we counted 4346 MK and 288 BW on the last day, bringing the season total to 4477 Mississippi Kites and 1088 Broad-winged Hawks.

We know that nearly 400,000 Broad-winged hawks passed over Tolima, Colombia *en route* to North America. Also, at Kekoldi, in Costa Rica, counters tallied 233,000 Broad-wings and 87,000 Mississippi Kites heading north. At the first Texan watch site in Bentsen Rio Grande State Park, hawk watchers have counted 110,000 Broad-wings and 8230 Mississippi Kites. See data from these and many other hawk watches at: hawkcount.org.

As we ponder where the migrants could be, we scan the skies and are thrilled to see everyone's favorite: the Swallow-tailed Kite. This strikingly beautiful, graceful and unmistakable bird is also a migrating raptor and our hawk watch has counted 33 this year, including 15 on the same day!

Hawk watchers always feel happy to see Swallow-tailed Kites, the largest of American kites, with a four-foot wingspan and body length of two feet. Known for their agility, buoyancy and maneuverability, their long forked tails are rudders; they veer, circle and maintain their path without wing beats.

They eat and drink in flight, snagging dragonflies, cicadas and small reptiles from the treetops and skimming water to drink in flight like swallows. They may

even eat fruit, especially on wintering grounds. They are gregarious, unlike most raptors, roosting and migrating in large groups, not even minding close proximity to other nesting pairs.



Photo by John Wright

Swallow-tailed Kites spend a lot of time diving, chasing and vocalizing during courtship. They build their twig nests in the tops of tall trees, such as bald cypress, pines, or cottonwoods, lining them with Spanish moss or other soft vegetation. In addition to requiring a habitat of humid forest with tall trees, they require large open spaces for finding prey to feed their chicks.

Swallow-tailed Kites (*Elanoides forficatus*) belong to the family Accipitridae, which includes hawks, eagles, kites, harriers and Old World vultures. All family members have strongly hooked bills, but variable body shapes depending on their diets. Further division of this diverse family is based on mitochondrial-DNA evidence.

The sub-family Perninae contains Swallow-tailed Kites and 8 closely related genera, including cuckoo-hawks, honey buzzards, bazas and Madagascar sea eagles. This diverse group, living on every continent except Antarctica, suggests an incredibly old lineage: could they have had a common ancestor before Gondwana broke apart? Well, maybe.

In any case, most of the world's 260,000 Swallow-tailed Kites live and breed in South and Central America. A population of 15,000 - 20,000 birds migrates to North America to breed - the birds we are seeing. They now breed most commonly within 7 southern and Gulf Coast states, particularly Florida. There is only one species within this genus; migratory and sedentary populations may be sub-species.

Formerly, Swallow-tailed Kites bred throughout 21 states, following the Mississippi River riparian forests and bottomlands north to Minnesota. During the last century, habitat loss and shooting caused numbers of U.S. breeding pairs to severely decline. However, in Texas they seem to be expanding, nesting along the Trinity River, in Ganado and even Clear Lake!

We have never known these beautiful birds to be common; since 1911 only 3 nests had been seen in Texas. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) wanted a new assessment and in 1998 -1999 asked residents to report sightings of Swallow-tailed Kites, particularly those nesting. During the two-year survey, TPWD received 510 citizen responses indicating 1,240 sightings, including nesting in Orange, Liberty and Newton counties.

We should be pleased to learn that Dick Benoit and the Sylvan Beach Hawk Watch are specifically mentioned in the report, *Swallow-tailed Kite in Texas*:

"Dick Benoit counted 19 Swallow-tailed Kites in one group. He did a Sylvan Beach unofficial hawk watch on his own for roughly 5 hours per day for 31 observation days (151 hours of total observation) from March 8 to May 10."

According to my reading of the fine print in the report, Dick saw 16 Swallow-tailed Kites at Sylvan Beach in 1998 and 5 in 1999, northbound in the spring. At Smith Point Hawk Watch in Chambers County, he reported a tight group of 19 Swallow-tailed Kites circling in 1998, presumably in the fall.

At that time, TPWD thought our Texas birds followed the coast east to Florida in June after breeding and returned to wintering grounds by island-hopping across the Gulf of Mexico, as do Florida-breeding Swallow-tailed Kites. Recently, however, the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey

radio-tagged 16 birds to track their travels with interesting results.

Birds depend on tailwinds to make the 500-mile southbound flight to the Yucatan Peninsula. Kites can survive about four days over open water, but if weather changes, it can go badly. Some stop in Cuba. One tagged bird was blown back to Louisiana from the Florida Coast but was able to successfully cross the Gulf a week later. Some then continued to South America by crossing the Andes. Tagged birds reversed the same route for the northbound spring journey!

It was thought that only the northernmost South and Central American kites migrated to North America to breed. However, radio-tagged birds have traveled from Florida to southern Brazil to spend their winter. Hawk watches in Corpus Christi, TX and Veracruz, Mexico report Swallow-tailed Kites returning south in August and September. At Smith Point Hawk Watch they count 200 Swallow-tailed Kites in the fall. Obviously, all birds do not fly across the water from Florida. Do "our" Texas birds follow the coast back and forth from Central America? Are Florida nesting kites a separate population from ours? Clearly, we have much more to learn. What to do? Keep watching!



Photo courtesy of Cornell Labs

On the Rio Negro in Brazil one July, our group was thrilled to see 50 Swallow-tailed Kites on the skyline. Another piece of the puzzle. All I know is 50 Swallow-tailed Kites is a beautiful sight.

Member Spotlight: Alan Wilde by Meade LeBlanc

A member of the inaugural class of 2001, most people know Alan Wilde as the man who sends the chapter emails via Constant Contact. As such, he holds the distinction of being in touch with every member of the chapter, from their first day in training class to the present. He has been involved in communications since Day 1, sending messages, creating early websites, and publishing the early newsletters.

Alan is also very involved with oystercatcher conservation. He describes how he got started: "One day I was kayaking down the intracoastal with Maureen [Nolan-Wilde] and Chuck [Snyder] when we saw someone land a boat on one of the nesting islands and disturb a whole colony of black skimmers. We paddled over as fast as we could, allowing me to photograph the boat as it departed. I contacted the boat's owner to protest this behavior, kicking off a firestorm of correspondence. It transpired that the boat was being used by Dr. Sue Heath of GCBO as part of her extensive and ongoing study of the local American oystercatcher population. She graciously invited me along on one of her weekly boat trips around the bay - and I've been volunteering with her ever since, accruing hundreds of hours since 2015, taking over 200,000 photographs and helping to band innumerable oystercatchers."

Like many of the Galveston Bay Area Chapter members, Alan is also passionate about sea turtles, and participates in sea turtle patrols on Galveston Island, as well as work at the turtle hospital at the Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research. This led to another communications project: "I believe it was in 2012 that Shelley Dupuy of NOAA showed me some boxes of printed material donated by stalwarts that had dived at the Flower Garden Banks in the 1970's and 1980's. She asked me to catalog the contents and then create a short history of the Banks' journey to national marine sanctuary designation. It is fair to say that this project

has blossomed: the book is now well over 300 pages and I'm still collecting oral histories from divers. Perhaps it will get published one day!"

While Alan learned to respect nature from his parents, he says what really opened his eyes to the diversity of nature was his career in the oil industry, which took him to places like North African deserts and the North Slope of Alaska.



He cites Dick Benoit as a primary influence in the chapter's early days, a man Alan describes as "a calm, knowledgeable teacher and guide." Alan was impressed when, during the chapter's inaugural training class, Dick "showed up at a frigid Galveston Island State Park before any of the attendees with a large urn of hot chocolate, invaluable since the class was being conducted entirely outdoors."

While you may not see him in person very often, all chapter members are the beneficiaries of Alan's continued support of chapter communications. Alan recently achieved 10,000 hours of volunteer service, the equivalent of working 5 years full-time.

Silly Summer Seining Funny Fill-in (Part 1) by Rebekah Gano

If you have ever participated in seining, this funny fill-in-the blank activity is for you! Write down a word to fit each category. Then use your list to fill in the story on the next page.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Adjective _____ | 7. Number greater than zero _____ |
| 2. Name of famous person or character _____ | 8. Adjective _____ |
| 3. Adverb _____ | 9. Animal _____ |
| 4. Adjective _____ | 10. Noun _____ |
| 5. Thing _____ | 11. Adjective _____ |
| 6. Type of fish _____ | |

Silly Summer Seining Funny Fill-in (Part 1) by Rebekah Gano

Use your list of words from the previous page to complete this silly story!

I just had the most ____ (1) ____ experience! I went seining with the master naturalists, and you'll never guess who was there leading the trip: ____ (2.) ____!



Photo by Rebekah Gano

We hiked to the water's edge and put on our water shoes. We waded ____ (3) ____ into the ____ (4) ____ water. As our feet squished into the mud, we shuffled along and pulled the seine net at an angle, hoping for a/an ____ (5) _____. We pulled the net up to the top of the water and held it level, wondering what creatures we had snared. It was a small catch, with two juvenile ____ (6) ____ and three

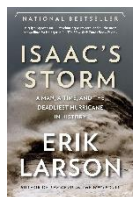
shrimp, so we freed the animals and waded farther along the shore. This time, when we pulled up the net, we had a spectacular catch of ____ (7) ____ shrimp, three ____ (8) ____ crabs, and a rare ____ (9) ____!



Photo by Rebekah Gano

After a few more seining sessions, our leader spotted an approaching ____ (10) ____ and called everyone out of the water. We looked at some of our specimens up close and then released them back into the water. What a successful and ____ (11) ____ seining trip!

Heritage Book Study by Cheryl Barajas



If you are a lover of history and weather, you will love the book we are reading and discussing for our May and June Book Study. We will be discussing *Isaac's Storm* by Eric Larson. *Isaac's Storm* chronicles the life of Isaac Cline and his role in the Great Hurricane of 1900. This hurricane wiped out the city of Galveston and killed over 6,000 people.

Cline was a meteorologist and physician. He was fascinated with how storms were created and how they affected people physically and mentally. He, along with his colleagues, was obsessed with weather patterns and how to predict storms.

At that time in our history, meteorologists were not allowed to publicize their findings and predictions. The government officials in charge believed that telling the public about storms and tornadoes would cause mass hysteria. Thus, any weather-related communications had to be sent from Washington, D.C.

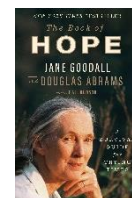
A note of interest- Weather Bureau employees had to be committed to insane asylums more often than employees from any other federal agency.

At the turn of the century, Galveston was destined to become the number one port for the shipping industry. It had more millionaires per square mile than Newport, Rhode Island.

We will learn that in the late 19th century and early 20th, scientists still believed that any hurricanes that entered the Gulf of Mexico were accidents. They simply did not believe that storms could travel from Florida to Texas!

Join us on May 1st and June 12th at 1pm to discuss this fascinating piece of history and what lessons we have learned.

On July 10 and August 7, we will be discussing *The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times* by Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams.



Summer Word Search Activity

I	E	O	L	A	N	A	C	I	R	E	M	A	G
N	A	C	O	N	E	F	L	O	W	E	R	R	T
D	S	P	I	D	E	R	L	I	L	Y	E	X	N
I	I	B	F	R	J	K	M	L	N	E	D	X	A
A	R	L	G	H	O	T	E	M	N	B	E	P	L
N	I	U	I	O	Q	S	X	M	H	T	E	L	P
B	R	E	M	P	Z	M	I	I	X	L	W	Z	T
L	E	B	L	E	Y	L	C	N	F	D	E	S	N
A	P	O	A	T	K	A	A	S	W	T	Z	Z	E
N	P	N	B	W	A	N	N	A	C	E	E	Z	I
K	O	N	E	S	R	T	H	W	R	Q	E	Q	D
E	C	E	E	Y	P	A	A	N	H	I	N	D	E
T	D	T	B	W	M	N	T	O	G	F	S	B	B
C	B	D	E	X	L	A	K	J	Y	Z	B	C	O

Copper iris
Canna
Green milkweed
Mexican hat
Indian blanket
Coneflower
Spiderlily

American aloe
Sneezeweed
Obedient plant
Bluebonnet
Beebalm
Rosinweed
Lantana

June and July Activities

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter Meeting - June 1; 100 Years of Audubon Conservation in Texas: What Will the Future Bring?
Presenter: Lisa Gonzales
6pm Social, 6:30pm Meeting, 7pm Speaker
At Extension Office* and via Zoom; 1 hour AT

Texas Native Cats

Wednesday, June 14, at 6-7pm via Zoom
Presenter: Monica Morrison

Ongoing

Heritage Book Study Group

First Monday of every month via Zoom
2 hours AT
Contact: Cheryl Barajas cherylbarajas9@gmail.com
See Pg. 9 for meeting dates and books.

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/>

Midden Archives - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/> Go to The Midden on the top menu.

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/gbactmn>



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The Midden Deadline for the next issue

June 26

The Midden

Published bimonthly by the Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists. The purpose of *The Midden* is to inform, communicate and educate chapter members and the community. If you have an article that contributes this purpose or want to join the team, please contact Diane Humes, treimanhumes@gmail.com.

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The Midden is posted on the GBAC-TMN chapter website: <https://txmn.org/gbmn/> two weeks prior to chapter meetings. Archived issues also on chapter website. If you prefer to receive *The Midden* in hard copy and are not currently receiving it, please contact: Julie Massey, julie.massey@ag.tamu.edu.

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