

The Midden

Shells by Sharon Evans

Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists

December 2023

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President's Corner by Pam House

When I submitted my application to become a master naturalist in 2019, I had been retired for a little over a year. Through my friendship with Helle Brown and Arline Laughter, I became aware of TMN. During a trip that summer to the Amazon with Cindy Howard, I met several of you and was charmed. I was seeking a way to find a larger community of friends and to contribute in a way that had meaning. It was also important to me to continue to experience intellectual stimulation and learning. In envisioning what I would find with GBAC, I underestimated greatly.

This year most of my volunteer time was spent with the sea turtles. Prior to joining GBAC, I didn't even know that there was a sea turtle program in the area. Nearly (actually all) of our AT programs and Midden articles have been about subjects new to me: from the Karankawa to herbariums. I am proud of the small role I have played in expanding our diversity programs and supporting Mohammed Nasrullah in his amazing efforts as our JEDI director. Mostly, the opportunity to get to know so many people of varied backgrounds and astounding abilities and knowledge has been the highlight of my membership. That, and the gift of friendship with Julie Massey. She is so special.

No organization is perfect. But what I have learned through observation of our members over the past few years is how sincerely each of us wants our efforts to matter and to be valued. Glory is not necessary, but appreciation is mandatory for our joy and enthusiasm to continue. That is why our December meeting is always so delightful. It is a time to celebrate all that we give to our community.

In contemplating this, my last column as president, I found myself looking back at where I began. There I discovered a poignant connection to our recent chapter loss. In my first President's Corner in April of 2021, in describing the previous chapter meeting, I reported: "It was such a pleasure . . . to hear the stories of Sara Snell."

Sara was my class mentor in 2020 and helped me navigate the twisty course of our unique circumstances. After three in-person sessions, she remained a steadfast support as our class coped with COVID and transitioned to Zoom for the remainder of our training. The continuing wild ride that led me to becoming president in February of 2021 was eased by so many, but particularly by the constant care and wisdom that Sara shared. Oh, how she will be missed! But she would want us to fill up with joy anytime we remember her. So, in honor of her, we will go forward with "Food, Fun and Friendship" as we transition to the next season of our chapter. How appropriate that one of the Treasures of the Bay awards that we will be presenting in December will be the Sara Snell Education Award.



Next Chapter Meeting

December 7

Annual Awards
Celebration

And

Officer Election

In person only

Wayne Johnson
Community Center
At Carbide Park

Women in Nature: Lucy Way Sistare Say by Meade LeBlanc

Lucy Way Sistare Say was born in 1800 in Connecticut, one of ten children in a Quaker family. She attended a girl's school in Philadelphia, learned illustration, met her husband, and traveled with him to a new town in Indiana. She worked as a teacher of illustration and later illustrated and colored over 60 plates for his book *American Conchology*. After her husband died in 1834, she devoted her life to preserving his legacy.

Reading the summary of her life, she seems like many of the women who were married to scientists, and who used their own talents to support their husband's careers. But looking at the details, you find a fascinating story.

Lucy attended school when few girls were educated. Her school was experimental and based on teaching methods that were considered revolutionary at that time. The school followed the teaching methods of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a Swiss educational reformer, whose motto was "Learning by head, hand and heart". He believed that human nature was essentially good, and that educators needed to focus on the entire child - his physical, moral and intellectual education. These teachings were the foundation of kindergarten.

At school, she studied illustration under the direction of several famous men: Charles Alexandre Lesueur and John James Audubon. Lesueur was a French naturalist, artist, and explorer who collected natural history specimens in Australia, Southeast Asia, and North America. Audubon was a French-American self-trained artist, naturalist, and ornithologist. He was notable for his extensive studies documenting all types of American birds and for his detailed illustrations, which depicted the birds in their natural habitats.

Lucy's school was operated by educator and social reformer Marie Duclos Fretageot, and it was there that she met many naturalists and artists, including some of the founders of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. In 1825, the British educational reformer Robert Owen came to Philadelphia to recruit for his newly founded utopian community in New Harmony, Indiana. Owen's vision was for "a New Moral World" of happiness, enlightenment, and prosperity through education, science, technology, and communal living. Owen believed his utopian community would create a "superior social, intellectual and physical environment" based on his ideals of social reform.

Thomas Say, Lesueur, and several other members of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia decided to go to New Harmony, along with Mme Fretageot and three of her students - Lucy and her two younger sisters. The following year, all traveled by stage to Pittsburgh,

and then by the river boat, the *Philanthropist*, also known as the "Boatload of Knowledge," to New Harmony. It was aboard the *Philanthropist* that Lucy met Thomas Say, American conchologist and her future husband.



Lucy taught illustration in New Harmony while her husband carried out scientific research expeditions; her other responsibilities included spinning, knitting, and sewing. She also involved herself with the free public school and free library. Due to the frontier nature of the town, and especially from the liberal views supporting equality of the sexes advocated by community leaders, women faced fewer social restrictions in

New Harmony than in other eastern American cities. In contrast, when Lucy returned to New York City in 1834 following her husband's death, she described her new life as "too circumscribed, I long for the freedom I used to enjoy when I lived on the Banks of the Wabash."

She applied her drawing and painting skills when she illustrated Thomas's monographic work, *American Conchology*. Besides furnishing drawings for 66 of the work's 68 plates, she performed much of the coloring of individual impressions, which came to number in the thousands. R.E. Banta wrote in 1938 that these colored plates "surpass anything else produced in this country [at that time] in delicacy and accuracy of detail. Each shell is a masterpiece of miniature painting which, apparently, involved hours of labor."

Lucy spent her remaining years studying natural sciences and maintaining her late husband's reputation. She donated his entomological collection and library to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. She was elected the first female member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia in October 1841, and a member of its Conchological Section in 1868. She died in 1886.

What happened to New Harmony? By March 1827, the community was devolving into chaos. The larger community was divided into smaller communities that led to further disputes. Individualism replaced socialism in 1828 and New Harmony was dissolved in 1829 due to constant quarrels. The town's parcels of land and property were returned to private use.

Sara Snell – Leader, Friend, Teacher, Inspiration by Verva Densmore



Photo courtesy of Chapter Archives

Sara Snell became a Texas Master Naturalist in 2004 and during her 19 years of membership clocked more than 6,000 hours of volunteer service. She served as chapter President, Education Outreach Coordinator, Training Coordinator, and Teacher Workshops Facilitator.

An avid birder, Sara went to Brazil on a Cindy Howard Amazon adventure and traveled to Ecuador three times to see the birds. Traveling with Sara was always a treat. Her enthusiasm was contagious, and she shared her knowledge willingly, making the trips rich with information.

Her awards from the chapter were impressive. In part, she received several Treasures of the Bay awards and the Dick Benoit Leadership Award. In addition, a chapter award has been named in her honor -- the Sara Snell Education Award is given each year for outstanding contributions to education outreach.

Many in our chapter knew Sara as not only a leader and teacher but as our friend. It was her way to connect with people on a deeper level and to stay connected. And she was fun. Sara epitomized our motto of "Food, Fun, and Friendship."

She will be missed.

Please consider honoring Sara's Master Naturalist legacy with a donation to the Texas Master Naturalist Endowment in her name. Please put Sara Snell Scholarship in the memo line and mail your donation to 4102-B Main Street, La Marque, Texas 77568.

100 Years of Texas State Parks by Diane Humes

'To an Englishman 100 miles is a long way, while an American thinks 100 years is a long time.'

The origin of that statement may be unclear, but it is certain that Texas is huge, with a land area of 268,597 square miles. Larger than most countries, Texas is 801 miles from top to bottom and 773 miles from side to side, approximately. Total acreage is 171,902,080 acres, 96% of which is privately owned.

One hundred years ago, a far-sighted Governor Pat Neff believed that the growing numbers of car travelers could use places to camp on their journeys along the few and primitive roads of Texas. In 1923 he convinced legislators to create a State Parks Board. Although the Parks Board had no funds, within ten years 24 parcels of land had been donated, with the first coming from the governor's mother, Isabella. This explains the origin of the first state park - Mother Neff State Park.

During the Depression, members of the Civilian Conservation Corps worked mightily to construct trails, cabins, bridges and pavilions for the 29 parks of Texas. In World War II these served as housing for military

families and were the sites of many parties for soldiers going to war.

After 40 years, in 1963 the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) formed, finally with funding from tax and bond revenue. This allowed enormous growth in new parks; at one time there were 130 parks! Today Texas has 89 parks with more planned, spanning every corner of the state and its eleven highly varied ecosystems.

I believe we would all agree that we need to celebrate 100 years of Texas State Parks!

How many Texas State Parks have you visited? My personal list is fairly small, only 17. But, I wonder, within our chapter, how many parks have we collectively visited. Could we have been to all? Has anyone been to Mother Neff SP? Please let me know where you have been. Let's put pins in a map at the December meeting!



Annual Meeting 2023 by Pam House

The state annual meeting held in McAllen on October 12 through 15 was a spectacular success. With 475+ participants from 42 of the 49 current chapters, Galveston Bay Area Chapter members shone pretty brightly.

Emily Incerto's "Fruiting Fungi" won 1st Place in the Photography: Plants & Fungi category. First place in the Wildlife Birds went to Deborah Repasz photo "Contemplation." "Beach Heroes" by Maureen Nolan-Wilde was awarded 3rd place in Chapters @ Work/Play. Our exemplary project award submission "Bayside Regional Park: From Fish Farm to Natives" tied for third place and the chapter will receive a \$300 project grant as an award. Thank you, Sandy Parker and the Bayside team!

The service award recognitions included Tracy Walpole (for 250 and 500 hours) and me (for 1000 hours). It was with the high number of service hour recognitions that our chapter really stood out. Mike Pettitt was one of eleven attendees honored for 4000 hours. Only six attendees achieved 5000 hours; Chris Anastas was one of those. Maureen Nolan-Wilde was one of two who had achieved 10,000 hours. The only registrant to achieve 30,000 hours was Tom Solomon (who was celebrated *in absentia*).

Our 19 chapter members that attended the meeting were treated to 25 field sessions from sea turtles to butterflies.

132 AT sessions covered topics from "Tardigrades in Space" (my favorite) to "Beyond the Choir: Fairs, Festivals, and Farmers Markets" whose fabulous presenter we may have wrangled into giving our chapter meeting program in February. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Lawrence Lof with a fascinating presentation on "The Forgotten Rio Grande."

The highlight of this meeting was probably Saturday's trip to the El Sauz Ranch. Over 400+ of us loaded into eight luxury buses and travelled for 90 minutes out to one of the last refuges for wild ocelots in Texas. There we were presented with TMN eclipse glasses, folding chairs with our logo, and box lunches and proceeded to gaze safely at the sun. Cooler, windier, and cloudier than the first few days of the meeting, it turned out to be ideal eclipse viewing conditions. After the solar show, we broke into six groups and rotated to different stations to learn about the East Foundation's efforts to protect wildlife (including their approximately 30 ocelots) while managing a working ranch. TMN went high tech with drone photography for our group picture.

Next year we will be in San Marcos and those of us in attendance were already planning on being there. The recertification pin you will be striving for in 2024 will be the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. Fun fact: this was Cindy Howard's FIRST annual meeting. She says she will never miss another.

Did You Know? by Mary Dobberstine

Our chapter has amassed a treasure trove of resources for use in education and outreach. Over the past few months, Karen Hazen and Mary Dobberstine have begun to organize and inventory the contents of the Carbide storage room. The goal is to create an inventory listing that could be used for reference for chapter members.

Some of the amazing items cataloged so far include: a stuffed Great Horned Owl along with a variety of animal skeletons; shell collections; binoculars; magnifying viewers for kids; signs for chapter activities; and a variety of worksheets, games & reference books. Early wins of the efforts have enabled members to leverage resources for Fall festivals and school birding clubs.

Special mention goes to Sara Snell who provided guidance and counsel to kick the project off earlier this year. She provided insight on the location of archives and understanding of past programs (and a few fun memories along the way). Sara truly leaves a legacy of

educational outreach within the chapter that continues to make an impact in the community.



Photo by Julie Massey

Winning Photos (and Group Photo)



Walking Through an Ancient Woodland in Yorkshire, England by John Jons

While recently visiting England I had the opportunity to walk through an ancient woodland. This ancient woodland is located on the Bolton Abbey Estate and is called "Strid Woods." An ancient woodland is legally defined as "a woodland that has existed continuously since 1600 or before...". Ancient woodlands, like rainforests in the tropics, the Pineywoods or Big Thicket, are often home to rare and threatened species. For the native plant enthusiast or naturalist this is an opportunity to visit the European version of a great forest.

The Bolton Abbey Estate is a large tract of land on the Yorkshire Dales near the town of Bolton Abbey. Located in Wharfedale, North Yorkshire, England, this estate was listed in The Domesday Book (1086 AD) as containing multiple estates consisting of 9,240 acres of land. Today the estate consists of 33,000 acres and contains six areas designated by the United Kingdom as "sites of special scientific interest" which may be biological or geological and is a legal conservation designation denoting an area protected from development and/or change. Because Strid Woods is an ancient woodland, it is designated as a site of special scientific interest. Also on the estate are the ruins of an Augustinian monastery called Bolton Priory that was founded in 1154 and was closed in 1539 by King Henry VIII.

To further complement the historical, natural and plant beauty of this ancient woodland, Strid Wood is located on a unique section of the river Wharfe. This river is the boundary between west and north Yorkshire. This section of the river within the ancient woodlands is called "The Strid" that is derived from the old English word *stryth* meaning "turmoil." This is based on a section of the river within Strid Woods that contains a narrowing of the river from approximately 90 feet to about 6.5 feet in less

than 300 feet, with a series of deep rapids that are cut within the sandstone.



Along both sides of the river and through the ancient woods is a well-maintained walkway. The walkway starts in an area on the estate called Cavendish Pavilion. It follows the river through the ancient Strid Woods and past The Strid for about two miles. You can then cross the river by walking across Barden Bridge and walking back through the ancient woods to Cavendish Bridge that is opposite the pavilion. Along the way you will have the opportunity to enjoy all the unique plants within the ancient woods, the scenic Wharfe river, The Strid and the occasional wildlife. After the walk you can enjoy a nice cup of tea and lunch in the pavilion. For more pictures of this ancient woodlands, please view my YouTube video called a "Walk through an Ancient Woodland in Yorkshire, England." <https://youtu.be/OVcuXMGWF1c>

VMS Reminders by Patty Trimmingham

End of Year Information

- Dec 31 is the last day you can watch 2023 TMN Tuesdays for AT credit.
- Dec 31 is the last day to earn volunteer hours and AT Credits for the Texas Ecoregions recertification pin.
- You have until Feb 15 to enter Dec 31 hours into VMS, but please enter them as soon as you can.

Outreach versus Training

If you are volunteering for an event where the public can come and go, it is considered **public outreach**. An example would be a greeter or docent. If the public has signed up for a specific time period, or the event is something where the public has to stay and

listen/participate then it is **training & educating/youth field trips**, for example kayak tours, school field trips or night hikes.

Volunteer Opportunities

If an event is posted on the calendar, we try to include the VMS opportunity name. For a list of opportunities see the GBAC website > Report Your Hours <https://tinyurl.com/3tb2aeym>. If you need an opportunity added to the list, email gbacmembership20@gmail.com.

Annual Dues

Annual dues (\$20) are due by 1/31/2024. You can pay at the December meeting (cash, check or card)

Prairie Restoration Funny Fill-In (Part 1) by Rebekah Gano

If you have ever participated in a prairie restoration event, 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 below.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Day of the week _____ | 7. Number _____ |
| 2. Number _____ | 8. Noun _____ |
| 3. Verb+ed _____ | 9. Adverb _____ |
| 4. Adjective _____ | 10. Plural animal _____ |
| 5. Article of clothing _____ | 11. Verb _____ |
| 6. Noun _____ | 12. Verb _____ |

Prairie Restoration Funny Fill-In (Part 2) by Rebekah Gano

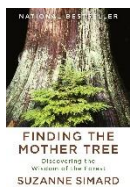
My favorite day of the week had arrived: Prairie ____ (1) ____! I wanted to get started early, before the day got too hot, so I arrived in the parking lot at ____ (2) ____ A.M. I ____ (3) ____ on my ____ (4) ____ boots and put my ____ (5) ____ on my head. To ward off the chiggers, ticks, and mosquitos, I gave myself a good coat of ____ (6) ____ spray. I was ready for the day!

I began the morning with the potting crew and successfully moved ____ (7) ____ of grasses up to bigger pots. Then I joined the transect crew out in the field, where we tallied up the plants and discovered a new

species: ____ (8) ____ grass! Finally, I ____ (9) ____ installed coneflower plants into the ground and watched a group of ____ (10) ____ ____ (11) ____ over the restoration site. I will be back to ____ (12) ____ again next week!



Heritage Book Study by Cheryl Barajas



Our December 2023 and January 2024 book discussions will be on *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* by Suzanne Simard.

This intense book will change how you view trees and their connections to one another and to other living things in the forest. Trees are not simply the source of timber or pulp, but are a complex, interdependent circle of life. Forests are social, cooperative creatures connected through underground networks. Trees communicate their vitality and vulnerabilities with communal lives not that different from our own.

Simard is a passionate writer and conveys her love of the forests through her writing. She grew up in the forests of British Columbia and writes about her struggles with the logging industry. As a child, she was cataloging trees and studying them. Her lifelong journey led her to the Mother Tree. In this book, she combines her research with

personal experiences and tells of her life's journey leading to her discovery of the Wood Wide Web, the underground mycelium network that connects all trees and plants in a forest.

After reading this book over the summer, I realized I didn't have nearly enough trees, so I planted 5 more this fall. This book is not about how we can save trees, it is about how trees can actually save us.

Please join us on December 4th and January 8th at 1pm for a glimpse into the world of trees and what they can do for us!

The Midden Deadline
for the next issue

December 27

December and January Activities

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter Meeting - Dec 7; Year-end Celebration! (No AT)
6:15 Dinner, Social Time, Elections, Awards, Fun
Wayne Johnson Community Center at Carbide Park

We Belong: A Conversation on Equity In The Outdoors
Tuesday, Dec 5 at 6pm via Zoom
Presenter: Thurman Hogan III

Heritage Book Study Group
First Monday of every month via Zoom
2 hours AT
Contact: Cheryl Barajas cherylbarajas9@gmail.com
See Pg. 7 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.

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.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service
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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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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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Slate of officers for 2023

The nominating committee (Cindy Lienen, Chris Anastas and Lynn Wright) has presented to the board the following slate of officers for 2023 which will be presented to chapter at the December meeting for a vote.

President - Gene Fisseler
Vice President - Mary Dobberstine
Treasurer - Meade LeBlanc
Secretary - Lisa Hardcastle

