



# Texas Master Naturalist

# the Cyrano

The Newsletter of the Brazos Valley Chapter

## President's Corner by Betty Vermeire



I've been involved with the Texas Master Naturalist program for 18 months now. At first the training classes were a little overwhelming: they expect us to remember all that? And then frustrating, because the coursework and speakers presented about so many topics. Then I realized that we could embrace what we wanted to concentrate upon and keep an open mind to

learn about new things! When the e-mails arrive announcing the next speaker for a chapter meeting, I sometimes wonder why I should care about that topic, e.g., mechanisms of spore dispersal in fungi??? That one turned out to

be fascinating!!!

Questions have arisen that, so far, have no answers, but I still think about them: under what circumstances could that boy have grown up so that he had never seen a full moon? How can one possibly take a two-minute shower? (It takes me longer than that just to get the shampoo out of my hair...) Why are almost all of the A&M campus bats male?

Surely more questions will come up, and that is one characteristic of a good speaker and a good program. So a huge Thank You to the Training and Program Committees; you give us so much to learn and to think about. A huge Thank You to all the officers and committees, for you keep this chapter running. Thank you to all my co-chapter members for having the confidence in me to elect me President this year. Here's to a wonderful and educational 2009! And oh yes, my surname is pronounced VER' meyer.

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## Past President's Corner by Jim Waldson



I would like to thank all chapter members for helping make 2008 a successful and enjoyable year. Special thanks are due to my fellow officers and committee members that did an excellent job in organizing activities throughout the year. Our chapter trained 12 new members last year. That brings the total number trained since we began to 70. We performed over 2,000 hours of volunteer service and obtained over 400 hours of advanced training in 2008. As our chapter grows, we are making a greater impact on the community each year through our volunteer service and community outreach. As president last year, I enjoyed getting to know many of you better and am looking forward to working with you in the future.

## Kate Kelly Interviews Amanda Stronza by Kate Kelly

K: How would you describe your profession?

A: I'm an environmental anthropologist. At TAMU, I am a faculty member in the department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences, and adjunct in Anthropology. I also co-direct the Applied Biodiversity Science NSF-IGERT Program. I study interactions between people and nature, and I'm especially interested in how parks and protected areas and ecotourism destinations mediate how people perceive, use, and value nature.

K. Where have you done most of your work?

A: For the past 12 years, I've done most of my work in one village—the Native Community of Infierno—in the Peruvian Amazon. But I've worked in the Amazon regions for 16 years, including the Bolivian and Ecuadorian Amazonas. I've also worked in the Philippines, Botswana, Indonesia, Guatemala, and various other regions of the tropics.

K: How has your work in Infierno developed over the years?

A: I've been asking the same questions over the 12-year period: how does the introduction of ecotourism in this rural, indigenous community change how people live, how they interact with each other, and how they value their forests, their wildlife, their rivers, and their lakes.

In some ways, ecotourism is the first wave of globalization that has hit this village. Western societies and markets have come to this village via ecotourism. Many of the same questions that globalization scholars are asking are of interest to me, too. For example, what kinds of incentives do new markets create to conserve lands and resources? How are cultural traditions maintained or lost in the face of new markets and interactions with outsiders? Even basic questions like, how does the village look now, how is the social structure changing, and, importantly, as globalization represents increasing degradation of the forests, how is this community acting as stewards of their forest in part to protect their ecotourism operation?

K: What have you learned over the years of your study?

A: The residents number 150 families and they own the land cooperatively, so they have to work together to protect the forest and the wildlife in it. Some species have taken on more value over the years than others in relation to ecotourism. For example, the giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) used to be hunted in part because they compete with fishermen in the community's oxbow lake. Now the community monitors and protects the lake and the otters in it as part of its tourist attraction.

K: Has this created any difficulties for the community?

A: Yes. One of the biggest challenges is to learn how to become entrepreneurs, which has encouraged the residents to think about their profit as individuals. But at the same time, they own their land and resources collectively. So the contradiction between making the most of individual profits and sharing profits cooperatively has created a conflict. Community members will ask each other during meetings questions such as, "How can we continue to function like a community? Should we keep dividing profits evenly among us, or should we start contributing all of the earnings into a single communal fund? We need to be taking care of our elderly and our children, not just thinking for ourselves." Another tension has to do with the drive to development versus the drive to conservation. Some people are ready to develop more without regard to conservation, and others are more concerned about protecting their reserve. These differences can be traced to who works in ecotourism and who doesn't. The ecotourism business is a change from the past, when all members were farmers and hunters.

K: How does this community division break down?

A: At any given time, about 30 families work at the lodge; everyone else (approximately 120 families) continues to farm, hunt, fish, and harvest resources from the forest. Every year, every family earns a dividend from the lodge. The lodge generates approximately \$100,000 per year; the families divide that up and each family gets between \$500 and \$600 per year. The average household income is between \$7000 and \$9000 per year, so the

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dividend is a substantial amount. This lodge is a partnership between the community and a private Peruvian tourism company. The community signed a 20-year contract in 1996, and they split profits 60% to community, 40% to the company. The operation is managed evenly between these two groups. The lodge holds 6,000-7,000 tourists per year. This partnership has won awards from the United Nations, Conservation International, *Outside* magazine, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and others. It's been featured in the *New York Times* several times. Although it's a remote village, it features prominently on the global stage in part because it's been successful at connecting conservation with development. It lives up to the ideals of ecotourism in that it provides for the community's economic goals or needs, but it also builds stewardship for resources, such as wildlife and the forest. And it does this while generating profits for both groups.

K: At what stage is the collaboration now?

A: The collaboration is just halfway beyond its completion in 2016. By that year, the community will have gained the skills to assume full responsibility for

managing the lodge. The company provides training for the families in the form of workshops and apprenticeships. The partnership has received grants for training and capacity building. I began my research in the same month the partnership was signed. At this early stage, I played a role as a cultural broker between the company and the community, asking each side their concerns and hopes for the partnership and conveying the ideas to the other side. They speak the same language, but communicate in different ways. The company spoke about efficiency and "return on investments," while the community wanted to know "What would this mean for us?" "Who's going to win or lose from this partnership? Is it fair?" Over the years, my research has been telling the story of this partnership through ethnographic data. I live in the community every year and talk with people about their experiences with the partnership and how it's changed their lives. I gather a lot of economic data, but I'm also interested in the cultural side of this collaboration. So I'm looking at what people do and also what they value. As the project moves into its final phases, I'm looking forward to seeing the decisions the partners make. Meanwhile, I hope the lessons gained over 20 years will be of interest and use to other communities and tour operators in the world.

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## State Garden Calendar by Jo Anne Bates

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March Madness  
Mercer Arboretum  
<http://www.hcp4.net/mercer/>  
March 27 & 28, 2009

Spring Plant Sale & Garden Festival  
Lady Bird Wildflower Center  
<http://www.wildflower.org/plantsale/>  
April 10, 11 & 12, 2009

Dallas Blooms  
Dallas Arboretum  
<http://www.dallasarboretum.org/Events/Blooms.htm>  
March 7<sup>th</sup> thru April 12, 2009



## Cottonwood Branch Project by Jim Waldson

The Cottonwood Branch nature trail is a community development project of the Brazos Valley Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists (BVCTMN). It is being done in partnership with Habitat for Humanity (HfH) and the Bryan Independent School District (BISD). A designated flood plain exists at the rear of a 110-home HfH subdivision in east Bryan. It adjoins the schoolyard of Anson Jones Elementary school. The proposed nature trail will be one-third mile in length with interpretive signage, a gazebo, and a foot bridge across the creek to the elementary school. The gazebo will enable us to construct a rain-water collection system for a butterfly garden and a meeting place to give talks to neighborhood kids about nature in their community. The foot bridge will provide safe passage across the creek to the elementary school. The floodplain is a great example of the diversity of the post oak savannah. The master plan calls for the project to be completed in three phases in three years. Phase 1- Trails and interpretive signage; Phase 2-Gazebo and rain-water harvest system; Phase 3-Foot Bridge to Anson

Jones School.

This project began in 2008 with most of the year being devoted to advanced planning and development. Proposals were made to and accepted by the property owners HfH and BISD. Development permits were obtained from the City of Bryan and a master plan was formulated. A plant ID session was held to help determine the course of the trail and then the trail was staked. There have been four trailblazing sessions in which the trail was cleared, cleaned and widened. In October, a committee was formed to begin fundraising and planning. This project will be a continuing source of volunteer opportunities for Master Naturalists, from its construction, to its maintenance, to educational talks on a routine basis to the people of the neighborhood. HfH is in the process of organizing a neighborhood association, which will eventually become involved with the project. In 2008 BVCTMN has performed over 200 hours of community service through this project. We welcome your participation.

## By Popular Demand: Suet for the Birds by Kitty Anding

Editor's Note: Kitty Anding sent the following email to our group. Many members have asked that we reprint it here.

At the last class meeting of the 2008 class, I had a request for my suet recipe, so I am sending it out to everyone. I usually double the recipe and then make the doubled recipe twice each time I make it. Hope it works for you.

### Suet for the Birds

3 c. cornmeal  
1 c. cup flour  
1 c quick-cooking or old-fashioned oatmeal (not instant)  
1 c. sunflower hearts (optional)  
1 c. coconut (optional)  
1 c. crunchy peanut butter  
1 c. lard

Combine dry ingredients. Melt peanut butter and lard. I melt it in a Pyrex pitcher in the microwave for about two minutes. Mix well with the dry ingredients. I now use a hush puppy maker to shape the suet. In the



**This Yellow-rumped Warbler likes to feed on Kitty's suet while hovering, hummingbird style, beside or beneath the feeder. Photo by Manuelita Ureta.**

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Pine warblers like the suet so well they queue up for it. Photo by Manuelita Ureta.

## Buying Local from Long Bean Farm *by Nandra Perry*

I subscribed to Long Bean Farm CSA\* for all the usual “green” reasons: to support local agriculture, to reduce my family’s contribution to the various ills associated with mass-marketed produce, to strengthen our sense of connection to this landscape and its seasons, and to enjoy the health benefits of fresh, minimally processed food. I was prepared to sacrifice for these principles. I assumed that eating locally would be both expensive and time-consuming. To a certain extent, I was right. Sometimes it does take a bit longer to prepare food that comes straight from the ground. Slaw these days starts with shredding a cabbage rather than opening a bag, and greens, which we’re eating an awful lot of at present, can’t be popped into the microwave. And we are spending a little more on groceries. Our subscription is \$600 for the season (February-June), which breaks down to about \$30 per week for vegetables. Some of that cost is defrayed by our savings on meat (which we’ve cut back on) and convenience foods (which we have less room for), but it is still a significant commitment.

What I hadn’t counted on, however, was how much fun it would be to eat this way. We pick up our vegetables every Thursday between 4:30-5:30pm. Each week the contents of our three to five bags are a little different. So far, we’ve had beets, collards, several varieties of cabbage, chard, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, red and green lettuce, mustard greens, and more herbs than I can count (some of which I’d never heard of). As soon

past I have used a cookie scoop to make the mixture into balls. Before that I pressed the mixture into rectangular plastic molds and then dumped them out to harden. It could be left in a mass with just enough taken out to press into each hole of the feeder as needed.

If the birds don’t seem to notice it, don’t despair. When I first started, I hung some suet balls off the back porch. They hung there for many months and accumulated black, gritty mold. One day I looked out and the chickadees were pecking away at it. I put some fresh out and they have gobbled it up ever since. All my birds love it, especially the cardinals and bluejays. It brings in red-bellied and downy woodpeckers that I wouldn’t have otherwise.

Hope you enjoy yours.

as we get home, my five-year-old daughter, Ruby, and I open our packages. We sort and wash and sample. This doesn’t happen when we unload our conventional groceries. Like most five-year-olds, Ruby has never begged for pre-packaged carrots. However, there’s something about knowing that it comes from Ms. Vicki’s garden that peaks her curiosity. Whatever it is, she wants to taste it. Actually, that goes for all of us. Over the past few weeks, I’ve given collards another chance (excellent if not overcooked), and my husband, Britt (who never cooks), has created a mean chard-and-carrot stir fry and we’ve all learned to like beets. When an unfamiliar or “difficult” vegetable makes an appearance, we strategize together about how in the world to eat it. And eat it we do, because letting Vicki’s vegetables go bad is not an option. After all, we paid her for them, and she picked them for us. It’s personal. That is the unexpected pay-off we’ve gotten for our “extra” time and money. Good food, preparing it and eating it, is becoming less my job and more of a shared pleasure, sometimes even a game. What can we put with the mustard greens? How would dill taste in slaw? Will beets really turn rice purple? Who knew vegetables could be this much fun?

\*CSA = community supported agriculture

<http://www.longbeanfarm.com/forms/Long%20Bean%20Farm%20Contract%202009%20Season.pdf>



## Eating Locavorically by Kate Kelly

If you subscribe to the “betterdays” listserve sponsored by the Brazos Progressives ([www.brazosprogressives.org](http://www.brazosprogressives.org)), you know about the “locavores” field trips to local farms. These trips visit vendors of locally grown produce, meat, and dairy products and include tours of the growing fields, animals, and in some cases, production facilities. Kids are invited and they love these outings. The locavores have visited three farms recently—Sand Creek Farm, operated by Ben and Alysha Godfrey, where you can order vegetables, meats, milk, cheese and more; Wateroak Farm, run by Mark and Pam Burrows, where you can order dairy products and vegetables and more; and Leaning Tree Farm, home to Lois and Garlin Vaughn (whom you may have met at our local BV Farmer’s Market) who also feature vegetables, seasonal fruits, jams and jellies, canned goods, etc.. Each of these farms welcomes visitors and sells fresh fruits and vegetables, canned goods,

herbs, and other tasty items like home-ground flour, ice cream, and meats and cheeses.



**Heather Duchscher  
of Locavores.**

The mission of the Brazos Locavores is “to connect with local producers in the Brazos Valley and support a lifestyle of mindful eating. The group gathers for monthly field trips to farms, orchards, and dairies within 100 miles of Bryan-College Station, meeting local producers, touring their facilities, learning more about why eating locally is the way to go, and meeting others who are interested in living a local lifestyle.” **The next trip is scheduled to visit Leaning Tree Farm on Sunday March 15.** The farm is located in Millican, about a 30-minute drive from here. Contact Heather

Duchscher if you want to go along. For more information, go to:

<http://brazosgrows.org/category/brazos-locavores/> or contact Heather Duchscher directly at [heather@duchscher.com](mailto:heather@duchscher.com).

## What Is This?

Several members have suggested that *The Cyrano* have a section where curious minds can request help from others to identify insects, plants, etc.. We inaugurate our *What Is This?* section with an entry from Jackie Palmer. Let us know if you or someone you know can identify the mushroom in the photo.



### Help Encourage Fun Contributions to *The Cyrano* by Voting!

Texas Master Naturalists are invited to vote for the best article in this issue of *The Cyrano*. The author getting the most votes will receive a heart-felt round of applause at our next meeting. Also, we will feature a flattering picture of the winner on our next issue. Please send your vote by May 15 to Kate Kelly at [katherinekel@gmail.com](mailto:katherinekel@gmail.com).

*The Editors*



## Pigeon Population Control at Texas A&M: The Natural Way

by Jimmie Killingsworth, photograph by Jackie Palmer

Starting in January, I began to catch sight of a cooper's hawk (I think) near a live oak outside the Northside Parking Garage on the Texas A&M campus, barely yards away from busy University Avenue. The first time I saw it on the way to get my car and go home after work, the hawk surprised me by flying out of the tree with a dead pigeon nearly as big as itself in its talons. A couple of days later, I saw it (or its near kin) on the ground beneath the tree, eagerly digging into another pigeon. This time I went up to the second level of the garage and watched for quite a while. Most people passed by on the sidewalk without looking over the low wall to see "Animal Planet" live in Aggieland. Finally a young guy did a double-take and got out his cell-phone camera to make a picture. The hawk nervously endured the photo op for a moment, then spooked and carried its partially shredded prey up to another nearby tree, losing itself in the leaves.

I kept watching the place each time I passed by. By now, feathers were strewn all around the tree, though there didn't seem to be a nest, only a favored branch with downy feathers stuck like strange white lichens up and down a diagonal length of about ten feet.

Then came the lucky day when I remembered that Jackie had noticed on the way to work that she had forgotten to take her camera out of her purse. That afternoon I was walking back to the Blocker Building after a coffee break at Starbucks, and I saw the hawk



with a kill, perfectly framed on the butchering branch of the live oak. I stepped aside so it wouldn't see me watching, and called Jackie on my cell phone. Within a few minutes she was there and managed to snap a couple of shots before the splendid bird flew off with the pigeon's carcass in its talons.

## Books! Books! Books! by Jo Anne Bates

The Brazos Valley Naturalist Book Club met at Manuelita Ureta's home February 17. Although this group was started as part of the TMN chapter, we invite all with an interest in the natural world. We meet on the third Tuesday of every month. The February book was *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv. We agreed with the author that children of today are not "out in the woods" as much as previous generations. What to do about this trend is the problem. We, as naturalists, should encourage a way back to nature for the future of our planet. Who will be the stewards of our naturalist environment if not our children?

The book for March is *Return to Wild America: A Year-long Search of the Continent's Natural Soul* by Scott Weiden-saul. If you cannot spend a year exploring America, this could be the next best thing. The next meeting has been changed to March 24 due to the conflict with Spring Break. Betty Vermeire is the discussion leader for this book. Jo Anne Bates is hosting the meeting at her home, 2611 Rustling Oaks, Bryan.



## TMN Members' Spotlight



### Molly Harris

My first memories of nature are the summers I spent at my grandmother's house, located in a tiny town just west of Columbus, Ohio. My grandmother took great pride in the 115 rose bushes she had planted in raised beds, watered by soaker hoses, and fertilized with her compost pile. Not bad for the 1950's. In addition to garden-

ing, she also introduced me to the best place she knew for observing birds—a large city cemetery where we spent hours recording the birds and other species we observed. I continued my education while growing up first as the daughter, and later as the wife, of Army officers. Between the moves with my parents and my husband, I have either lived or vacationed in every section of the country except the Dakotas. This made me appreciate the multiple differences I saw in the landscapes, soil colors, plants, and animals within each region. My husband and I instilled this same appreciation in our son, Kyle, by taking him camping every year and stressing that during our time in the woods, we were "guests" in somebody else's house and had to act accordingly. My favorite camping photos of Kyle shows him nose to nose with a large iridescent green dragonfly.

My formal education includes a B.A. and M.A. (English literature, Ohio University) and an M.L.S. (Library Science, University of Rhode Island). I met my husband, Butch, while we were students at Ohio University. However, we keep that part of our background quiet since we have long felt we were naturalized citizens of Texas. Butch graduated from the TAMU School of Veterinary Medicine in 1980 and began his 28-year military career as a biological research veterinarian in Boston, MA, where I also began my career as a professional librarian. With specialties in cataloging and research, it was natural for

me to earn my Master Naturalist volunteer hours by cataloging the materials in the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection library.

When Butch retired from the Army, we came "home" to Aggieland where we built a log house situated on five and one-half acres. Since I was determined to become a steward of the land, I took the Master Composter course to learn composting, the Master Naturalist course to learn what plants, birds, mammals, etc. live here, and the Master Gardener course to learn what native Texas plants I can use to attract bats, birds, butterflies, and other wild creatures. My ultimate goals are to have our property certified as a Texas Wildlife Habitat and to pass on my love of nature and gardening to my two grandchildren.



### Mary Dabney Wilson

Spring in Virginia can be quite cold. One Saturday morning before dawn, something prompted me to arise and steal out of my house while everyone else slept. I had a purpose that led me to the woods where all the neighborhood boys and I would build

our forts and play our cowboys and Indians games. I went to watch the dawn come in the midst of the last-of-winter woods. It was cold and barely beginning to be light. I found a log to sit on and waited. Shivering, I watched as the sun began to splinter through the trunks of the leafless trees in the east. There, close by my log, I began to focus on some small saplings with leaf buds swelling. I carefully reached out to touch them, to sense the power of their leaf potential with the spring to come.

Later, as a teen, I was privileged to attend the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs' Nature Camp in the Blue

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Ridge mountains near Vesuvius, Virginia. This two-week camp focused on academics of nature. This was no recreational camp, though we had some recreational activities. Our energies were directed to nature by scheduled outdoor classes and field trips. For this first time away from home, I was exposed to such subjects as herpetology, botany, geology, entomology, ornithology, etc. Some classes were taught by University of Virginia professors. We were expected to complete notebooks on these subjects which would be judged at the end of the two weeks. That first year, I had been homesick and miserable, but on the last night before my parents would retrieve me, the awards were announced and I was shocked that my notebook won second place. As a prize, I received a book on meteorology, *Our Changing Climate*, which I still own. My attitude toward the camp changed then and there, and I begged to return each summer for four years.

The natural world has always tugged at me and outdoor experiences constitute some of my most vivid and cherished memories. Pursuing Texas Master Naturalist certification was a natural step for my semi-retirement because there is still so much to learn.



### Jean Paul

I was born June 12, 1934 at LeVallois-Perret, Paris, France. My parents were U.S. citizens living abroad, hence my U.S. citizenship is derivative of that fact. I was named after my father, John, but they elected to adopt the French spelling, "Jean", because the French had so much trouble pronouncing my dad's name, and at that time, we had no idea how long

we would continue living abroad. The deepening worldwide Depression and Hitler's rise to power prompted our return when I was fourteen months old.

We settled in Miami Beach, Florida, where dad's fam-

ily had relocated during the early years of the "Florida Boom," and in the fall of 1940, at age six, I was enrolled in first grade at Central Beach Elementary where I attended through third grade. In 1941, our entry into WWII totally disrupted my childhood. Miami Beach went on full air-raid alert with heavy curtains on all windows, painted-over headlamps, wardens patrolling the streets, ration books, and the government's seizure of luxury beach hotels as barracks for training the officer corps for the new wartime army. My mother and father joined the civilian wartime work force, and after about one year of training in aircraft maintenance and repair, they were transferred to a newly-constructed mega-base for aircraft repairs located on previous peanut fields in middle Georgia at a place called Warner Robins, after the nearby base.

I lived with my grandmother for the following school year, then I joined my parents in Georgia, where we lived in a succession of government housing projects. I graduated from Warner Robins High School in 1952 and entered Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, that fall quarter. In 1953, my dad was transferred to a base in Texas, where I joined the family after I finished my first year of college. I transferred to Texas Technological College in 1954, and earned a B.A. in U.S. History in 1957 and a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force. I was not going to be called up for active duty for about a year after graduation, so I took a graduate assistantship at Tech completing requirements for my M.A. in History just before reporting to active duty in October, 1958. I went to officer's pre-flight training at Lackland A.F.B., San Antonio, Texas, and then to primary pilot training at Spence Air Base in Moultrie, Georgia.

While I was back in Texas on Christmas leave from Spence Air Base, we learned that my dad was dying of cancer and that he and my mother and sister were to be relocated to Miami, Florida, where the remnants of my mother's family were going to help with dad's final illness. I was granted emergency leave to relocate my family while I was "washed back" two classes in my pilot training program. Dad died the following April and I graduated from primary pilot training in August when I was transferred to Basic pilot training at Laredo A.F.B., Laredo, Texas.

I had struggled through conventional aircraft in primary, but the speed of jet aircraft spelled doom for me in the pilot training program. No wings for me. I was transferred from pilot training to become an academic instruc-

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### From Page 9

tor at the new Officer Training School then in organization at Lackland AFB, where I taught college graduates to prepare them to join the officer corps. I received orders for Air Force Air Intelligence School at Lowry AFB, Colorado, and, after whirlwind preparations which included my hurry-up wedding to Sisi, we relocated to begin a new career together. From Intelligence School, we were transferred to a unit in Wiesbaden, Germany, where we began raising our family. Melissa was born in February, 1966, and John in February, 1967. From Germany, we were sent to Offutt AFB Nebraska for the first of two tours of duty there. At Offutt, I was assigned to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS) with the express mission of preparing the integrated national nuclear war plan. From Offutt, I was assigned consecutively to Takhli and Korat Royal Thai Air Bases, where I directed Air Intelligence operations in support of F-105, EB-66, F-4, and RC-121 aircraft, all to further the Vietnam war effort. Sisi and our three children (Peter joined the family in May, 1968) relocated temporarily to live with her parents in Laredo while I did my Southeast Asia stint. From the sweltering heat of Southeast Asia, we were sent to Oslo, Norway, where I worked as Chief of the Target Intelligence Branch at this NATO Headquarters (AFNORTH) for the next four years. From Norway, it was back to Offutt AFB, Nebraska, to complete the years until retirement, during which I earned an MPA degree from the University of Oklahoma before entering Creighton University School of

Law. I received the JD Degree in 1981, and we relocated to Laredo, Texas, where I joined the family law firm. In 1984, when our daughter graduated from high school and was accepted at Texas A&M, we shook the Laredo dust from our feet and resettled in a rural subdivision in Brazos County with a College Station zip code.

Here, after a long period of languishment, my interests in gardening and natural science returned. As a child, I had been exposed to the writings of Ernest Seton Thomas, William Hornaday, and other naturalists. Later, as a Boy Scout in Georgia on my way to earning Eagle, I earned nearly every nature-related badge in the Scout Handbook. When my two boys entered Cub Scouting, I jumped right in. As they moved through their Scouting experiences in Nebraska, Laredo, and College Station, where they both earned their Eagle Scout badges, I rekindled my interests in gardening and nature. Sisi and I had maintained kitchen gardens during both our tours of duty in Nebraska, supplementing our family's diet with our own home-grown produce. We continued the gardening effort even after our children graduated from Texas A&M. Sisi and I became Texas Certified Master Gardeners, and when I learned a Master Naturalist group was forming, I joined up to become a charter member of our local chapter. Our property here in eastern Brazos County has been designated a wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

Finis.

## Our Final Images



Jackie Palmer photographed this Groucho Marx impersonator at Lake Buchanan.

During the January 2009 business meeting, members of the class of 2007 received the diplomas and pins documenting they are now certified Texas Master Naturalists.



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