

Coastal Prairie Chapter Courier

We are a group of trained volunteers who share our appreciation and knowledge of nature with the community through outreach, education and conservation/restoration projects



Chapter Field Trip is a Big Hit! *By Debby Wendt*

Table of Contents:

CPCTMN Field Trip.....	1
October Program.....	2
Blue Doughnut.....	2
Volunteer Connection.....	3
Monarch Gateway Blot...5	
Attwater Prairie Chicken.6	
Plant of the Month.....	7
Our Own Backyard.....	8
Book Corner.....	10
Lighter Side.....	11
TMN Annual Mtg.....	12

Photos: Lynn Trenta-LT, Roger Hathorn-RH, Debby Wendt-DW, Diane Russell-DR, Jessica Jubin-JJ



The Coastal Prairie Chapter had a fun field trip Sept. 16! The day started out at member Mark Morgenstern's house in Damon. Mark showed us several native Texas plants such as mountain mint and aquatic milkweed. He gave us a tour of his property and pointed out Turk's Cap, milkweed, and gama grass. We saw a baby coachwhip snake in a bush that Amber Leung and Susan Walther held for a time. We also saw butterflies such as the Gulf Fritillary. Some of the members bought plants Mark had for sale. On the way to the Nash Prairie Debby Wendt saw an alligator snapping turtle crossing the road. She stopped her car long enough to snap a picture(next page).

The 400-acre Nash Prairie is virgin prairie land that has never been mowed or grazed. The land is owned by the Nature Conservancy. We saw many natives such as rattlesnake master, goldenrod, rosinweed, sneezeweed and sensitive briar.

Chapter events and nature-related articles, photos, and items of interest to the chapter need to be sent to [Lynn](#) by the 25th of the month.

Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome. Thanks.

*Lynn Trenta,
Courier Editor*

After enjoying a delicious lunch at Jay Café in Needville, we caravanned to "All We Need Farms" run by Stacey and Jay Roussel in Guy. Stacey told us about the strict rules involved in processing the goat milk she uses to make goat pops. She gave a brief history of how her goat farm came to be and told us about her goats which are mostly Nubians. She demonstrated hand milking of one of her goats. Stacey won the Best Bite award at the 2017 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo with her goat pops. We got to sample these yummy frozen treats and were impressed that the wrapper she uses is biodegradable.

Chapter Field Trip (continued)



Chapter Program in October



October Chapter Program
Coastal Prairie Archaeology & Edible Plants
October 5, 2017
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Rosenberg Civic Center

Leslie Bush will present a program on Coastal Prairie Archaeology and Edible Plants. Social time with snacks begin at 6:30 p.m. The program begins at 7:00 pm. A Chapter general business meeting will begin at 8:00 p.m. The meeting is free and open to all interested persons.
1 hour AT: Chapter Meeting, VSP: Chapter Program

The Blue Doughnut Goes to Debby Wendt

Debby Wendt, the chapter's vice president in charge of programs, really outdid herself when she put our September chapter field trip together! It was a joy from beginning to end and participants learned about prairies and goat farms with a lot of fun along the way.

Thank you, Debby, for putting the programs and field trips together. This month you are awarded the blue doughnut!





Volunteer Connection

Native Plant Flip Cards Offered to Gardens' Volunteers



An Identification Aid for Common Native Plants of the Texas Coastal Prairies 2017 Edition
by Jerry & Lynn Trenta

- Color coded for easy navigation
- All plastic construction
- Wallet size – fits in your pocket
- Waterproof and tear resistant
- 116 species with photo and detail pages
- 118 additional species with thumbnail images

Mexican Hat
(RAC03)
Rafinesque columnifera
Family: Asteraceae (Aster)
Duration: Perennial
Height: 12 to 38 inches
Flowers: Jun – Sep
Description: Stout, 2-armed prostrate plant that grows 1/2 to 1 1/2 feet high with occasional branching, on stems that are green and smooth to slightly rough with hair. The leaves are alternate, ovate, pinnate (deeply lobed), 2-3 as long as wide. Each leaf can have 3 to 4 lobes depending on the placement... and surfaces usually have fine hair and are glaucous. Upper stem leaves are smaller with 2 to 5 pinnate lobes and a short stalk. It has solitary 2 to 3 inch high flowers on tall stalks, held well above the leaves. There are 4 to 12, 20 yellow or yellow-reddish-brown ray florets that are usually to oblique in shape and hang downward. The central cone, which elongates with age, has 200 to 400+ disc florets that have greenish-yellow to scarlet corolla that shades to brown or purple at the outside as they mature.
Seed Collection: For the flowers produce a dry achene, crushed on one side, angled on the other. But has one or two sharp projections at the base. The seed heads can be collected 2 or 3 weeks after flowers close. (alt. names: Upright Prairie Coneflower, Prairie Coneflower)

Mexican Hat
Growth Habit: Forbush
Seed Collection: Aug-Sept
~1" ~1 1/2"

Carolina Puccoon LCA13
Lithospermum carolinense

Cutleaf Evening Primrose OELA
Oenothera laevis

Prairie Heritage Festival is nearly upon us and we want the Seabourne Butterfly and Prairie Demo gardens and the Prairie Restoration Area and the Prairie Nursery to be in good shape for our signature event! A lot of work has gone into these areas in the past year with hog fences, garden restoration from hog damage, irrigation repair and improvements, new nursery plant tables, pathway additions, and other projects. We need the chapter's help during the month of October to get the gardens and restoration areas looking their best for the visitors to enjoy during the Festival.

As an added incentive to come and help, a copy of the new and improved 2017 edition of Jerry & Lynn's "An Identification Aid for Common Native Plants of the Texas Coastal Prairies" flip cards will be given to all volunteers who come out to help on any of Seabourne Volunteer Days during the month of October. The scheduled workdays for October are every Wednesday and the first and fourth Saturday of the month starting at about 8:00am and we usually work for a couple of hours.

Craft Booth Needs Many Hands at Prairie Heritage Festival

Possible Crafts for PHF

- **Egg Carton Caterpillars**
 - Kids decorate caterpillar-shaped egg cartons with pipe cleaner tentacles and fast-drying paint and markers
- **Water Run-Off Model**
 - Kids spray water on a community to watch what happens to pollutants and pesticides as they flow into waterways.
- **Bird Crafts**
 - **Feathers Keep Birds Dry**
 - Kids spray water over a cover of feathers to see how they act as protective shingles to keep birds dry
 - **Quill Writing Pens**
 - Large bird feather quills shaped to let kids see how they were used historically as pens.
 - **Birdie Clothes Pins**
 - Glue feathers and eyes onto clothes pins to make a birdie
 - **Bird Feeders**
 - Pine cones and ice cream cones are smeared with peanut butter and/or Crisco, then covered with Cheerios and bird seed and hung by yarn.
- **Leaf Rubbing Art**
 - Kids will make art pieces coloring/tracing leaves. There will be directed to an area where trees are identified so that they can try to identify the tree their leaf came from for a prize.
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If you are interested in helping, please contact [Cheryl Garcia](#)

Montessori School Prairie Garden *Diane Russell*



Diane Russell is helping the school install and maintain a prairie garden at Kids Montessori Academy in Richmond, TX. Photos were taken recently at a work day at the school. To help email [Diane](#).



Forgotten Victims of Harvey – the Pollinators By Barbara Keller-Willy,
 Director & Founder, Monarch Gateway, President, Native Prairies Association of Texas

(This is a blog written over the course of hurricane Harvey with closing completed after the hurricane.)

I am writing from Sugar Land, Fort Bend County, Texas where my home is located approximately 2 miles from the Brazos River, which is scheduled to crest at 59 feet above sea level, the highest level ever recorded. Over the course of three days, we've received a record-breaking 51.5" of rain from the category 4 hurricane Harvey and are under a voluntary evacuation order. Hospitals, grocery stores, pharmacies and restaurants are all closed. Some people in my subdivision are using kayaks and canoes to navigate their street. Coast Guard helicopters fly overhead on a regular basis. Our latest social media communication from the city stated "If you can't flush toilets, no cause for alarm – just give it time, the system will catch up as water recedes." And after watching 3 days of hurricane coverage showing others more badly affected, I was grateful for that communication. You really can't imagine the number of things we take for granted until faced with disaster. Now imagine that disaster is a 1000 year flood resulting from a hurricane going on outside while you have 389 Monarch caterpillars to feed inside...

Pre-Harvey *As I rushed to complete pre-hurricane Harvey preparations, one more task was added to my list that was different from previous storm preparations, picking up monarch caterpillars. My first call came from the leader of a partnering organization. I met to accept my first box of caterpillars in the parking lot of Gallery Furniture, which one day later would become a temporary shelter for local evacuees and an overnight hostel for the activated National Guard. I accepted my final container of monarch caterpillars at the HEB parking lot where I expected to make a quick grocery run and instead found a 50-minute wait in the pouring rain outside locked grocery store doors manned by the store manager to prevent uncontrolled crowds fighting for necessities like water, eggs and milk. People deliver caterpillars in all manner of open boxes, and so my normal 10-minute drive home became a much longer drive through traffic, high waters, windshield wipers unable to keep up with falling rain, and moving caterpillars trying to escape their box.*

Over the course of two days I collected caterpillars, farming some out to local enthusiasts until I ran out of available enthusiasts. I already had 80 caterpillars of my own I was raising for our 2017 annual Monarch Madness Festival. Some of the people asking me to adopt their cats were evacuating. Others couldn't slosh through wet yards to collect milkweed. Still others expressed fear the caterpillars would die in the rain and some were simply running out of milkweed, having misjudged the number of plants it would take to feed the quantity of caterpillars on their plants. Surprisingly, nobody feared losing their caterpillars to flood which turned out to be the greatest threat. I thought long and hard before accepting the caterpillars. Unlike some of the donors, I knew exactly how many plants it would take to feed 389 caterpillars. I also knew that many of the caterpillars I was accepting were likely born of butterflies infected with OE, a dormant protozoan carried by the monarch that is then deposited onto the egg sack and consumed by the caterpillar. Still others were likely preyed upon by tachinid flies, as it is the height of their season. The value of saving these caterpillars was about much more than the cats themselves. These caterpillars represented Houston and Sugar Land monarch enthusiasts I had a part in growing. The reality of monarch conservation is that children and adults grow to love the butterflies produced from THEIR school, park and backyard gardens that I asked them to create and that love will help this species recover. Now those monarch enthusiasts trusted me to keep the product of their work and love alive. I said yes.

For a continuation of Barbara's blog go to: <http://monarchwatch.org/blog/>

Did Hurricane Harvey Signal the Last Dance for Attwater's Prairie Chickens?

When you're teetering on the brink of extinction, it takes only one flood to wash your species off the map.



Jason Bittel 9/8/17 *Newly hatched Attwater's prairie*

USFWS--Hurricane Harvey ripped through the Houston area two weeks ago, devastating entire communities and killing at least 70 people. The unprecedented hurricane wrought an enormous amount of human suffering, the extent of which we may not know for some time, if ever.

The region's biodiversity may have taken a hit as well. An hour's drive southwest of Houston is the [Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge](#), home to the last 42 of these birds known to exist in the wild. Prairie chickens, which are noted for their elaborate mating dances, are small and nest on the ground. When a storm poured 8 to 12 inches of rain on their habitat last year, it nearly washed them off the face of the earth. For comparison, in some areas of Texas, Harvey dumped more than 51 inches of rain—the highest rainfall total of any storm in the history of the United States. The state of the wildlife refuge, however, remains unclear at this writing. “The refuge is inaccessible, and many employees are dealing with storm damage and flooding to their personal homes,” says Beth Ullenberg, a spokesperson for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region. “It may be one to two weeks before we can safely access affected lands and facilities to do damage assessments.”

The good news, Ullenberg says, is that the refuge's managers were able to evacuate all 20 of the adult Attwater's prairie chickens being held in acclimation pens. So at least some of the captive birds that were getting ready for life in the wild survived.

Those birds had been scheduled to be released September 1, according to Terry Rossignol, who manages the refuge. “We decided to gather them up and return them to the Houston Zoo for their safety. Last word from the zoo was that all are doing fine and gaining weight,” he says. Each summer between July and mid-September, the conservationists send about 300 captive-bred birds onto Texas's coastal prairie. Given the timing of the storm, more than half of those birds were already out there. Whether any of them survived the flooding is anyone's guess.

The odds are not in the prairie chickens' favor. Even without a [once-in-a-million-year storm](#), every one of these birds that lives to see its second birthday is a small miracle. On top of the perils of habitat loss, snakes and skunks pick the little chickens off at will, as do fire ants. You might think flooding would be a good thing for suppressing fire ant populations—if only they could be dealt with so easily. During floods, these resilient insects bite onto one another's arms and legs to create living armadas of antdom. Such an awe-inspiring act of nature would be celebrated if these ants weren't vicious invaders that use their flotillas to colonize new territory. Just look at these millions of fire ants coming ashore during Hurricane Harvey in Cuero, Texas.

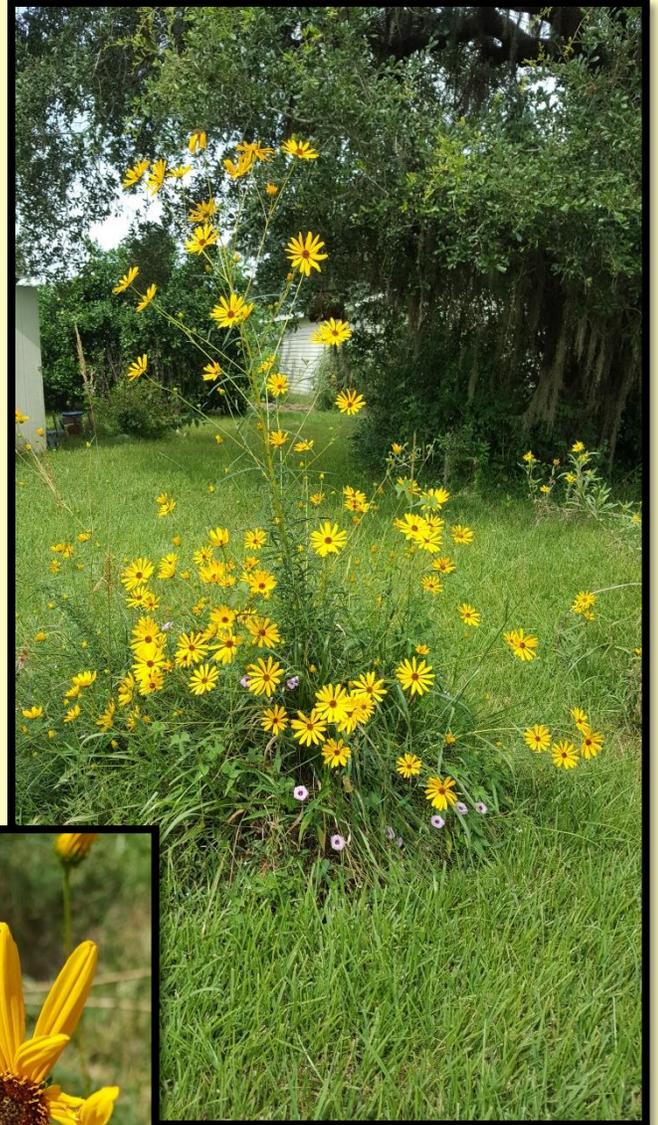
But forget the ants (if you can). For now, flooding remains the most dangerous threat to the Attwater's prairie chicken. Obviously, with a disaster of this scale, what happened to a few dozen prairie chickens is not the most important story. But the fate of the Attwater's prairie chicken does serve as an important reminder: When we allow a population's numbers to slip closer and closer to zero, it takes only one storm—or forest fire, or construction project, or disease outbreak—to send a species into oblivion.

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Plant of the Month, Swamp Sunflower *By Mark Morgenstern*

The plant of the month for October is Swamp Sunflower, Helianthus angustifolius. The Latin name means “narrow leaved”. This beauty is blooming now on local native prairies, roadsides and Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Although it has “swamp” in its name this perennial wildflower is drought tolerant once established.

This sunflower is an important nectar source and provides beneficial seeds for birds. Its easily grown from seed but at Seabourne we dig and pot pups that sprout in the spring. It reaches 3’ to 6’ tall and can be aggressive, a good characteristic for restorations. In a garden setting they can be easily controlled by simply pulling up unwanted plants.



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places

Do You have a Bird Water Dripper? By Diane Eismont

If you like to watch birds and want to make their survival easier, this item is a winner, especially in hot weather!

We put our drippers on the ground aside of a tree trunk, to drip into a concrete bird bath or plastic pot bottom. Use plastic tie wraps to fasten the dripper to a short pole or piece of rebar. Pick a tree that can use any water overflow & will provide birds a place to sit and check for predators on the ground. Adjust the water to a SLOW drip...buy a dripper with a valve to easily regulate the water flow.

Then set up a wildlife camera on a tripod & you're set to see your avian (& other) visitors taking a drink of fresh water.



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places (Continued)

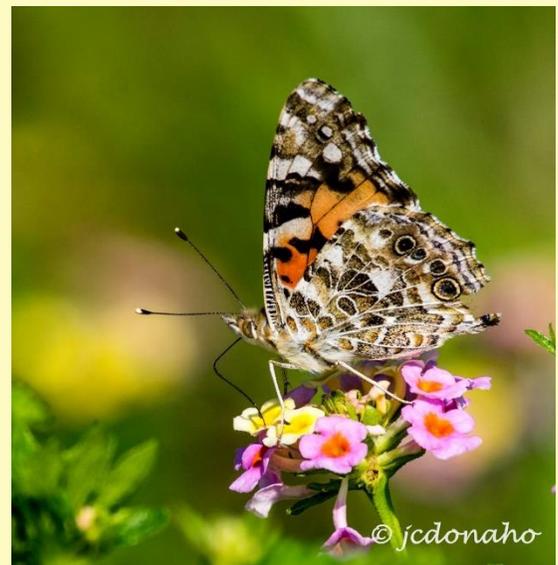
Praying Mantis and Hummingbirds *by Susan Walther*



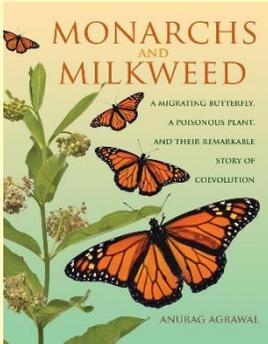
CPCTMN member Susan Walther captured this photo of a praying mantis that she had seen hanging out at her hummingbird feeder recently. The hummingbirds were quite wary of landing while he was around, and Susan relocated him after taking the pictures. A quick google search indicates that it's quite common for praying mantises to hunt and kill hummingbirds at feeders!

The Painted Lady Butterfly *by John Donaho*

The Painted Lady is the most common butterfly on earth. It is found on all continents except Antarctica. We are in the midst of what some experts believe is the largest migration of Painted Lady butterflies in 30 years. We saw hundreds feeding on wild growing lantana in the dunes at San Luis Pass in Galveston yesterday. Not much is known about Painted Ladies and their migrations. The Monarch butterfly has gained more notoriety over the years and most of the study. Painted Ladies are believed to migrate over 9,000 miles from tropical Africa to the Arctic circle taking generations to complete the trip. A big part of their success in establishing populations all over the world is the ability to use a wide variety of host plants. They don't limit themselves to milkweed. If you are near red or yellow flowers over the next few days, take a look. You may see several of these beauties.



Book Corner *Book reviewed by Jim Butcher, CPCTMN Class of 2009*



Monarchs and Milkweed
By Anurag Agrawal

A migrating butterfly, a poisonous plant, and their remarkable story of coevolution. By Anurag Agrawal.

Thanks to Harvey, I had a chance to zip through this book in 2 days. I highly recommend it to people, like myself, that understood about the life cycle and the incredible migration but wanted to know more about this miraculous animal. The book just came out and explains where the current science stands and also what we still don't know about many facets of their being. You will meet some quirky researchers, lethal enemies, and inquisitive naturalists.

The science is not too technical and the author is personable and uses many graphs and illustrations to support the narrative. For T.M.N.s doing outreach at our butterfly garden, there are many "gee whiz" anecdotes to be gained. For instance, the eggs weigh half a milligram and through childhood caterpillars grow to well more than two thousand times that mass. If an eight-pound human baby were to grow at this rate, at the end of one year, it would weigh as much as thirty-five of the largest elephants, half a million pounds. Our own Monarch maven, Dr. Diane Russell gives it an enthusiastic two thumbs up. I will leave you with the key to it all cardenolides.

The book is available at the George library. Jim Butcher

The Lighter Side



John Donaho (Facebook)

Medical Chart Humor (Taken from actual patient's charts—before HIPAA, I'm sure)

- 1. The patient refused autopsy.**
- 2. The patient has no previous history of suicides.**
- 3. Patient has left white blood cells at another hospital.**
- 4. Patient's medical history has been remarkably insignificant with**
- 5. Only a 40-pound weight gain in the past three days.**
- 6. Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.**
- 7. On the second day the knee was better and on the third day it disappeared.**
- 8. The patient is tearful and crying constantly. She also appears to be depressed.**
- 9. The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 1993.**
- 10. Discharge status: Alive, but without my permission.**
- 11. Healthy appearing decrepit 69-year old male, mentally alert, but forgetful.**
- 12. Patient had waffles for breakfast and anorexia for lunch.**
- 13. She is numb from her toes down.**
- 14. Occasional, constant infrequent headaches.**
- 15. Patient was alert and unresponsive.**
- 16. Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities.**

**CPTMN 2017
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- Seabourne Creek [Karl Baumgartner](#)

- State Representative [Carol Schwartz](#)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://txmn.org/coastal>

TMN Annual Meeting This Month!



The Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting is being held October 20-22 in Corpus Christi. The links below contain information about the following aspects of the 2017 Annual Meeting:

- [Information About Corpus](#)
- [Annual Meeting Agenda and Registration Information](#)
- [Sponsors](#)
- [Vendor Opportunities](#)
- [Texas Waters Day](#)
- [Silent Auction](#)
- [Chapter Project Fair](#)
- [Photo, Art & Media Contest](#)
- [Annual Video Contest](#)
- [Chapter Advisor Awards](#)

Check out our Facebook Page at
[TXMN Coastal Prairie Chapter Facebook](#)

To post photos and information,
email
[John Donaho](#)

Also, share our chapter Facebook
entries with your friends on your
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**COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER OF THE
TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS**

1402 Band Rd
Extension Office
Rosenberg, TX 77471—8678
Phone: 281-633-7033