



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

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT (Or, old was good, and so is new.)



Another year is slipping by us, and with it, changes in the Chapter as we move into 2016. Our Board of Directors turns over, with people leaving to do other things, staying in their present board positions, or staying on with new board positions.

I wish to thank several of those who are leaving the Board. Linda Lourim, Treasurer, cracked the fiscal whip and helped us end the year for the Chapter in the black, with a positive balance! She retired this summer from her full-time job and will be traveling about the country visiting national parks. She also will remain active, coordinating our efforts in the various work areas that have evolved at Seabourne Creek Nature Park.

Georgia Messemer, Program Chair, provided us with a good lineup of speakers and worked hard to provide refreshments at all of our meetings. The graduation potluck in particular required her organizational skills, and her selection (with Donna Pisani) of the Ol' Railroad Cafe for our Christmas party gave us a night of good food, friends and laughter that indeed did feel like Christmas.

Reene Spahr, Membership Chair, worked long and hard to usher in the new Volunteer Management System as we transitioned over from our previous way of entering hours. Reene remains active in outreach activities, including the Prairie Heritage Festival craft booth. Thanks as well to Carrie Sample, also helping with Membership. She did a fine job of organizing our first mentoring program for the New Class.

Than Colvin returned this year as Training Class Chair for the second time, for which we are very grateful. We release him from this job knowing he strengthened the position, held a wonderful training class, and can have his life back again!

Chad Norvell was Publicity Chair for half of the year. He works full time work as a Ft. Bend County Sheriff, and can sometimes be sighted on TV. Just last month he was on the scene of a murder in my neighborhood (no, I didn't do it) and I yelled, "Hey, I know him!!" He also represents the Chapter with outreach in schools.

Thanks to Cyd Johnson and Julie Near for their work on Advanced Training and Volunteer Service Projects, respectively.

While those volunteers leave the Board, two others are switching positions. Sharon Smith, Secretary, moves into the Vice President's slot, which now includes Programs, and Carol Schwartz (Vice President) will represent the Chapter in a new Board Position as State Representative. She will be the Chapter's liaison with the state office, directing us as to how we can help with the annual conference and assistance with new TMN chapters, among other things.

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT (Continued)

Below is a run-down of the 2015 Board of Directors. Don't forget, Chairs are now called Directors. Next month we will publicize the rest of our team who will be in committee positions, and provide a little more background on some of our new Board members as well.

(R = returning for a second year in the position, i.e., Reruns.)

Officers:

President: Diane Russell (R)

Vice-President: Sharon Smith

Treasurer: Doug Simons

Secretary: Amber Leung

**Directors:**

Past President: Jim Butcher (R)

Membership: Jade Hems

Advanced Training: Jimmy Brannon (R)

Volunteer Service Projects: Michelle Sullivan (R)

Communications: Lynn Trenta (R)

New Class Training: Wayne Helbert (R)

New Class Representative: C.J. McDaniel

State Representative: Carol Schwartz

Advisors: David Lobpries, John Gordy, Margo McDowell

Doug Simons returns for a new stint on the Board as Treasurer after a year off. He was our President in 2014, and worked on the Board prior to that as Treasurer, AT and New Class Training. If you see Doug, please bow and scrape before him.

Wayne Helbert did an awesome job with Than Colvin in running the Training Class of 2015, and will become New Class Training Director in 2016.

Coming to join us after completing their training in 2015 are Amber Leung, Jade Hems, and C.J. McDaniel. C.J. fills the new position decreed in the updated Bylaws, requiring we have a representative from the most recent class as a voting Board member who will also assist with the New Class Training Director and be on the Financial Examination Committee.

I also want to thank all of us Reruns for rerunning. I think we all are gratified with the direction of the Chapter, and enjoy the camaraderie and challenges that being on the Board provides.

FINAL THOUGHT FOR OUR MEMBERS

Before agreeing to be President this time last year, I hesitated, worrying about many things that never came to pass. What I could not have known was that, along with the responsibilities, came tremendous satisfaction in being in a position to see how much so many of you had to offer, to learn about your talents and abilities, to see you overcoming obstacles and problems to make things happen. I'm humbled by this experience and feel lucky to be in this Chapter and to enjoy so many new friendships. It's all been worth it. I wish you a wonderful Christmas. Let's take time off to recharge our batteries and come back refreshed for the work ahead in 2016.



The 2015 Chapter in Review

- 1. The Chapter has been in existence for 11 years.*
- 2. We have almost completed switching over to a new volunteer time entry system, the Volunteer Management System, or VMS. Training in using the VMS will be available soon.*
- 3. Three major Chapter guiding documents were updated: Chapter Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocol, and Chapter Operating Handbook. They can be found in the member's section of our website.*
- 4. Our first annual Board retreat was held to give the Board an opportunity to come together as a group and discuss Chapter directions, opportunities and challenges without interfering with monthly Board meeting time.*
- 5. Our first Mentoring Program placed experienced members with new trainees for the mutual benefit of both.*
- 6. Membership meetings were held after each program to insure that everyone stayed updated and got to ask questions on a regular basis.*
- 7. We began a monthly outreach presence at Fulshear Farmer's Market.*
- 8. Two member enrichment programs with field work began, one run by Susie Doe on plant identification, and a herpetology identification program with Chris Valdez and Monty Criswell.*
- 9. The Parks and Wildlife Dove Banding Program continued.*
- 10. Seabourne Creek Park Nature Walks for the community have been initiated during all but the hottest months of the summer.*
- 11. A "Save the Night" program given by Cindy Cassidy to the Chapter resulted directly in the city of Fulshear adopting a dark sky ordinance to reduce sources of light pollution.*
- 12. The various ecosystems in Seabourne Park continue to mature, thrive and expand: the butterfly garden, prairie demo garden, wetlands, bird sanctuary and prairie. A "Prairie by the Path" was initiated, set off by a beautiful cypress fence and entry portal with signage.*
- 13. The Wednesday morning birding team has helped identify at least 189 species at Seabourne Creek Nature Park.*
- 14. Our Chapter boasts members holding municipal offices and civic leadership positions throughout Ft. Bend County. Among them are Cynthia McConathy, Ramona Ridge, Pat Mollere, Teresa Bailey, and C.J. McDaniel.*
- 15. We have a new partner in Barbara Willy's non-profit, Monarch Gateway.*
- 16. We have a new AgriLife sponsor, John Gordy*
- 17. David Lobpries has recovered from last year's stroke and is back almost 100%!*
- 18. Prairie Heritage Festival was as much of a success as possible given the chill and driving winds that blew in.*
- 19. Many outreach events were staffed by members reaching into the community to educate and inform the public, as per our mission statement.*

Diane Russell, CPCTMN President

Volunteer Management System and Membership Dues Info



By Michelle Sullivan, CPCTMN VSP/Outreach Chair

- **Membership Drive (Renewal and Chapter Dues) 2016**

*This next year's membership dues need to be received by **January 31, 2016**. This has been a flexible date in the past, but with the new online VMS (Volunteer Management System) tracking our membership and our volunteer hours, we are obligated to change. After January 31st, you will not be able to report your service hours until the renewal is paid. Please remember there are a limited number of days (45) in which to report your service after the VSP event or AT event.*

The fee to renew remains at the bargain price of \$20. How do you get it done fast? Easiest - come to the January 7 Monthly Chapter Meeting. Our new Membership Committee member, Kristi Johnson, at Kristi.n.Johnson@mac.com will be there with the Renewal Form and can accept your check or cash. Just as easy, you can download the form from the Coastal Prairie website at: <http://txmn.org/coastal/files/2010/08/2016-CPC-Membership-Form.pdf>, print at home and mail in to Kristi Johnson, 4215 Terrace Court, Missouri City, TX, 77459. A record of your renewal will be documented with a receipt, as well as in your Profile in the online VMS.

- **Have you Logged In to the VMS System?**

*All members have should have received their temporary USER ID's and temporary PASSWORD's by email to the online VMS. The upload of Historical Hours has been a little dicey and some members have used their "old style spreadsheets" to help correct some errors. Please take the time to Login at: [Login Texas Master Naturalist](#) and on the Dashboard, click on "**View my Log Book**", scroll down and across to see your hours. If you find errors, please contact our new Membership Director, Jade Hems, at jadehems@yahoo.com, with your attached "old style spreadsheet" for documentation.*

- **Background Checks thru VMS**

*TPWD Human Resources will now implement all background checks on an annual basis thru the new online VMS. All members will need to update and confirm their personal information for 2016. Login at: [Login Texas Master Naturalist](#); at your Dashboard look for "**Edit my Profile**," click there. Make sure to update your Birthdate, Texas Driver's License, Agree and Sign the Background Check Waiver in your profile. Also, take the time to update any changes to your contact information. Thanks!*

Volunteer Management System and Membership Dues Info (Continued)

- ***New Opportunities 2016***

*Have you been stumped in the online VMS because the VSP or AT opportunity are not listed in your drop down menu to Report my Service? No worries, look for the redundantly labeled “**New Opportunity: TMN New Opportunity.**” Choosing this and filling in the questions on either your VSP or AT suggestion, most likely will add your item to our Opportunities List. Try to remember when choosing Volunteer Service and/or attending Advanced Training to keep in mind the tenants of our Mission Statement, as well as, topics that relate to issues that affect Texas. We do reserve the right to NOT approve items.*

- ***VMS Classes Coming Soon!***

Are you still struggling with the online VMS? Jade Hems, Membership Director, will be hosting classes, which will count as AT Hours for those attending. With the construction at the Bud O’Shieles Center, the location and dates are TBA. After January 10, check your weekly bulletin, monthly Courier, and CPCTMN website for upcoming dates.

- ***Why We Report Hours? Well, it affects grants at TPWD/AgriLife****

The Texas Master Naturalist Program is funded through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Federal Aid grants program. For a state to be eligible to receive assistance under this particular grant, the state must provide a “match” of 25% of the grant total received. In other words, this grant pays \$0.75 for every \$0.25 that is submitted as a match. Our volunteer service hours provide this match.

The funding supports the TMN Program, its state staff and interns; the Urban Wildlife Program, the Nature Trackers Programs and the Wildscapes Program--just to name a few. Currently, the in-kind value of each hour that you report is \$23.00. Statewide, in 2014, our 45 chapters reported over 398,800 hours which amounted to more than \$9.17 MILLION in value. Prior to VMS, only a fraction of the TMN service hours reported were able to be substantiated and used to match our federal grant. The VMS system should allow us to be more compliant and enable us to capitalize on additional grant funding through this and other sources. Properly reported service hours with the correct federal categories applied can have a multiplier effect in the overall budget, so every unreported hour is a missed conservation opportunity!

In addition to matching the Federal grant, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service also reports TMN activity monthly to the state legislature and local county commissions which use those numbers to determine funding both statewide and locally. Additionally, the hours are used to support your Extension office.

*Excerpted from TMN/VMS Newsletter November, 2015

Tom Solomon Talks about Spider Lilies

Thanks to Mark Morgenstern for submitting this wonderful information from Tom.

Spider Lilies are one of the most interesting plants that I have run across and one of the easiest to germinate. I currently have roughly 2000 of them laid down. Depending on the number you want to handle, I use an aluminum pan, at least 2 inches deep with several drainage holes in the bottom. For larger numbers, I use a turkey aluminum tray.

Fill the pan almost full with well-dampened potting soil. Each green fruit is one seed which will generate one plant. Lay the seed on top of the soil and press them about $\frac{1}{4}$ deep. The Seeds can touch each other in several locations. Keep the soil moist. In about 3 to 4 weeks, you will notice what appears to be a white worm come out of the seed and burrow into the soil. You will not see every seed do this because some of them are going straight down under the seed. In an additional six weeks you will see a green plant emerge where the root entered the ground. Once you see the foliage emerge, the seed will start to deteriorate rapidly. Approximately 90% of the healthy seeds produce plants. The bulb is formed where the "worm" entered the soil. The plant will continue to prosper during the warm months but will die back in the cold weather.

As soon as I see new growth occurring in the spring, I bump them up into one gallon containers. I believe the location where the root comes out of the seed is based upon gravity. The seed falls to the ground where it lays until the root emerges. When we pick it up and reorient it on the soil, it remembers where down was. I hope this helps and that you enjoy collecting and growing this fabulous plant.

*Tom Solomon, Galveston Bay Master Naturalist
and prairie plant germination expert*



Identification and Guide Apps

i-Naturalist

There are some websites out there, as many of you know, where you can record sightings of plants and animals. One site is for i-Naturalist at: <http://www.inaturalist.org/>.

You will have to look around this site to learn how to use it. You can also add an app for this on your phone. Although guides for Texas are at: http://www.inaturalist.org/guides?place_id=18, there are no guides for our area.

i-Naturalist is worldwide, so we would have to start our own project for this to be useful for plant identification in our area. It would be a great project for someone in our chapter to develop a guide.

Project Noah

Also <http://www.projectnoah.org/mobile> Project Noah is another great app for either androids or i-phones. You take photos with your phone and put it into the system. You can either identify your photos or ask for identification of what you have photographed. Jaime Gonzalez introduced a few of us to this at a prairie seminar at Sheldon Lake State Park a while back.

e-Bird

This site, <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/> is being used by birders from our own local group, coordinated by Wayne and Vicki Poorman with expert Mark Scheuerman. This is a great way to keep track of your bird list and see what others have sighted in our area and other locations.

These are just a very few of the many identification and recording websites. What a great way to keep track of your sightings, identify unknown species, and contribute to the knowledge about plants and animals nationwide.

The eBird logo, featuring the word "eBird" in a green serif font.The Project Noah logo, featuring the words "project noah" in a brown, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a green leaf icon above the "h".

Southern Plains and Prairie Conference 2015 Videos

The Southern Plains and Prairie Conference was held November 12th, 13th with field trips taking place on the 14th. This conference conveyed a wealth of information for people interested in prairies, restoring prairies and managing land.

Now, on YouTube you can watch the different talks that took place at the conference at this website: [Southern Plains and Prairies Conference 2015 Videos](#)



If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it.

Lyndon B. Johnson

Lyndon B. Johnson

Chapter Christmas Party

Christmas cheer filled the Ol' Railroad Cafe in Rosenberg the evening of December 10th as the jolly men and ladies of CPTMN celebrated the joys of the season. Forty-seven members and guests enjoyed appetizers and wine, a bountiful buffet, and a Merry Christmas cake. A grand time was had by all.

Georgia Messemmer, Program Chair

Thanks to Georgia and Donna Pisani for arranging the party and Ron Spahr for taking pictures!!



Seabourne Happenings

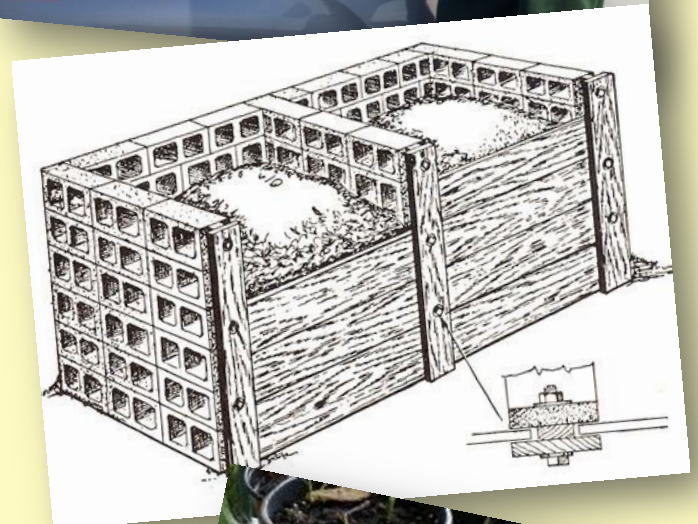
Fish Stocking at Seabourne Lake

Lea Hyman was on hand to help Mike from Brenham Fishery introduce fish into Seabourne Creek Lake a couple of weeks ago. The lake is a popular fishing hole and it is great to see our members being a part of its maintenance. Lea's wife, Sharon, took this photo.



New Compost Boxes Installation

Rick Adams and an Eagle Scout Group were out at Seabourne today building a composting system located by the row of trees north of the SCNP Prairie Demo Garden. This will be a wonderful asset to the park and create compost for several different areas. Thanks, Rick and Boy Scouts!



Prairie Clearing and Preparation

The new SCNP Prairie fence and gateway are 2 of the latest new projects for the prairie path and restoration. Huisache trees are being removed, paths being mowed, and prairie plants being germinated. Seeds have been collected from the prairie demo garden and are being germinated in the prairie restoration nursery. At the January Program, pots and seeds from the prairie garden and other sources will be distributed to chapter members who want to help grow plants for the prairie by the path project.



Edible Garden in the Planning Stages

There is an edible and medicinal plant garden in the planning stages that will be installed in the park. More information will be coming out about this project soon.

Seabourne Creek Nature Park has many wonderful projects for our chapter members to be a part of! It is also a beautiful place to photograph or just enjoy! See member's photos on the website at: txmn.org/coastal/



Photo by Bob Schwartz



Website Rearranged

There have been a few changes on the home page of the chapter website.

The Members Login and Volunteer Projects are now on the top navigation bar. The Volunteer Projects tab on the top navigation bar connects you to both Signature Projects and Types of Volunteer Projects.

There is just a listing of activities on the visible home page instead of a calendar, but you can access the calendar by clicking on the calendar tab on the top navigation bar.

If anyone has questions about the website, please contact [Lynn Trenta](#), Chapter Webmaster.

Please send in chapter activity and nature-related articles, photos, and items of interest to the chapter by January 15th to [Lynn](#). Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome.

Thanks.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Lynn Trenta, Courier Editor

CPTMN 2016 Board Members

2016 Officers

President [Diane Russell](#)
Vice President [Sharon Smith](#)
Secretary [Amber Leung](#)
Treasurer [Doug Simons](#)
Past-President [Jim Butcher](#)

2016 Committee Directors

- Programs [Sharon Smith](#)
- Communication/Publicity [Lynn Trenta](#)
- Volunteer Service Projects [Michelle Sullivan](#)
- Membership [Jade Hems](#)
- New Class [Wayne Helbert](#)
- Advanced Training- [Jimmy Brannon](#)
- New Class Representative [C.J. McDaniel](#)
- State Representative [Carol Schwartz](#)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://txmn.org/coastal/>

Check out our Facebook Page at

[**TXMN Coastal Prairie Chapter**](#)
Facebook

**COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER OF THE
TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS**

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