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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**

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

TWRC Wildlife Center Program *By Diane Russell*



Thanks to Diane Russell for the photos!

Victoria Hepburn has volunteered with Texas Wildlife Rescue Center (TWRC) since 2013 and is now their Outreach and Events Coordinator and Education Director. She was accompanied by four “Animal Ambassadors” to tell us about their lives.

TWRC is an emergency care center for wildlife and provides additional home rehabilitation with trained volunteers for longer term care. They specialize in and rescue many hundreds of baby birds, squirrels and opossums every year. Here are some important facts we learned from Victoria.

She began by specifically addressing what to do in the rather common situation where a baby bird has fallen from its nest to the ground. If there are no obvious dangers, such as ants, cats, hawks, etc., just keep an eye out but leave it, and the parents will come feed it. If you are able, it’s OK to put it back in its nest - it’s a myth that the parents will detect human scent and avoid the babies. Another cool solution is to make a little temporary nest using any small container that can be hung nearby from the tree for the baby.

Keeping wildlife in your home for more than two days is illegal, so if you can’t leave a bird outside, bring it into the Center, avoiding loud talking or music. Don’t try to give baby birds food or water as they aspirate easily.

Next Victoria brought out her Animal Ambassadors. On the next page are a few highlights of her talk.

Continued on next page

TWRC Wildlife Center Program (continued)

1. Eastern Hognose Snake (No Photo)

They can puff out their necks to resemble cobras and even harmlessly lunge in a similar manner if threatened. They will throw themselves on their backs to play dead if the threat continues.

2. Bull Snake

Great for keeping down rodent populations

3. Screech Owl

Most common owl in Houston. A box on the south or west side of a tree 12-20 feet off the ground may well bring a pair to your yard. They are so well-camouflaged they can't be detected from any angle

4. Opossum

The only marsupial found in North America, this mammal lives only about two years. They are "good neighbors", eating rodents, rotting fruit and vegetables, tree roaches and ticks, and are highly instrumental in keeping Lyme disease at bay in this state. They are very clean, get along well with cats, and don't dig or destroy things around your home. If you find a dead opossum on the road, check for a pouch, because if there are babies they can live there for up to 72 hours.

Victoria reminded everyone that all snakes, venomous and non-venomous, are extremely beneficial to the environment because they are so effective at insect and rodent control. Instead of killing them, drive them away if they're in your yard - they are shy and want to avoid humans at all costs. (Reviewer's Note - this may be a tall order for the people I know who are terrified to find them on their back porch and are worried about their kids or pets.)

TWRC is a non-profit, largely depending on individual donations and volunteers for their operation. All are encouraged to support this great organization.



FEBRUARY CHAPTER PROGRAM—Thursday, February 1st
Being Media Savvy, discussion led by Jaime Gonzalez of the Katy Prairie Conservancy. Location: the Rosenberg Civic Center next to SCNP. Social time at 6:30; Program at 7; brief chapter meeting afterward. [AT: Chapter Meeting-Coastal Prairie for program; VSP for meeting & drive time.]

Cradle of Texas TMN Trip By Karl Baumgartner

Last Saturday fifteen CPCTMN members trekked to Brazoria County to our sister organization, Cradle of Texas (COT) Chapter. For some of us, it was our second visit--in July 2009 twenty-one CPCTMN members visited COT with the same objective--to enjoy seeing and learning how other chapters operated.

Cradle of Texas members made a wonderful presentation of the coastline environment. The day was divided into six sessions, with a well-informed chapter member presenting each subject.

Topics included a broad cross-section of the Coastal ecosystem including including the following (seen with photos):



Snakes



Shoreline Ecology

Cradle of Texas TMN Trip (continued)



Reptiles



Alligators

Chapter President Kristine Rogers noted that the Chapter's activities are centered around AT (Advance Training), and VSP (Volunteer Service Programs).

VSP PROGRAMS

Programs are varied and continuous. At a local park, members serve as interpretive trail guides, manning five educational stations for schoolchildren Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the school year. At another park they work on Citizen Science Projects with the Wildlife Biologist. They are starting a project to visit elementary schools with GCCO. They have just finished a local park project providing updated Interpretive Trail Guideposts along walking trails throughout the park. One member offers Birds of Prey presentations to libraries and schools and has achieved over 10,000 hours of VSP credit.

AT PROGRAMS

Permeate the chapter at all levels. At the monthly meeting the AT Director outlines to the members upcoming volunteer projects and AT activities. Many go hand-in-hand—if a member chooses to volunteer to man a station on an interpretive trail, he can first obtain AT hours as preparation. Chapter meetings are held monthly from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00. With 110 members, about 70 attend the monthly meeting. Meetings are characterized by broad member participation.

Opossums: Unsung Heroes in the Fight Against Ticks and Lyme Disease

Sent in by Diane Russell

[Jane Kirchner](#) | [June 13, 2017](#)

With the huge rise in deer tick populations and the spread of Lyme disease, many friends of wildlife are welcoming opossums into their yards. Why? Scientists have learned that [opossums act like little vacuum cleaners when it comes to ticks](#) – with a single opossum hoovering up and killing as many as 4,000 ticks per week. Opossums are extraordinarily good groomers it turns out – we never would have thought that ahead of time – but they kill the vast majority – more than 95% percent of the ticks that try to feed on them. So, these opossums are walking around the forest floor, hoovering up ticks right and left, killing over 90% of these things, and so they are really protecting our health. – Rick Ostfeld, Senior Scientist, Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies

More Possum Benefits

Opossums, sometimes referred to just as possums, are a benefit to ecosystems and a healthy environment beyond eradicating ticks. They will catch and eat cockroaches, rats and mice – in addition to consuming dead animals of all types (also known as carrion). [Gardeners appreciate opossums' appetite for snails, slugs and for cleaning up over-ripe fruit and berries](#). And, since they are immune to the venom of poisonous serpents, opossums also eat rattlesnakes.

Evening Shift

Adult opossums are solitary and nocturnal—active at night—and generally live in burrows and cavities that they find ready-made rather than create themselves. They seek shelter underground, in trees or anywhere in between. When frightened or harmed, opossums suddenly freeze and lie still as death. They have no control over this response, which could be said to paralyze them with fear or have evolved because almost any predator can outrun them. If left unharmed, a catatonic opossum will recover in roughly one to four hours.

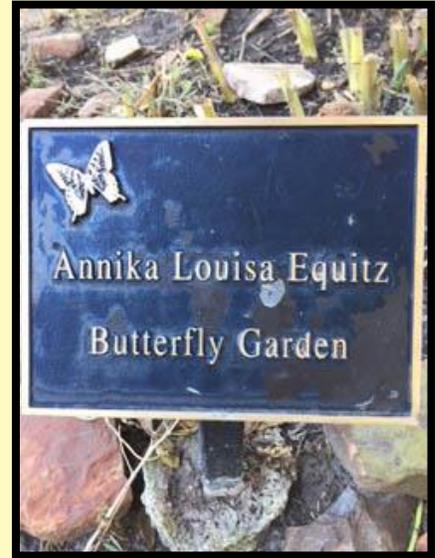
This amazing species is North America's only marsupial (pouched mammal). When the so-called Great American Interchange occurred with the closing of Central America around 3 million years ago, the opossum was pretty much the only marsupial from South America that successfully moved to and survived in the north.

Here at the National Wildlife Federation we celebrate and appreciate the opossum!



Cunningham Creek Park Butterfly Garden Restoration *By Linda Lourim*

In mid-November, I was approached by Brooks Smith, Director of Parks and Recreation for the New Territory Residential Community Association (NTRCA), with a request to submit a design to restore the neglected butterfly garden at the Cunningham Creek Park. The site had once been a butterfly garden, as evidenced by the small bronze plaque in the corner, “Annika Louisa Equitz Butterfly Garden.” However, the current condition is poor – huge elephant ears on one side, some flame acanthus bushes, three very tall bottlebrush trees generating dappled shade, lots of bare ground, and no irrigation. The site is a semicircle about 20’ radius, beds 9’ deep, with a nice rectangular boulder seat in the center. Though there is no irrigation, the elephant ears thrive from lawn sprinkler overspray.



My research included Internet searches as well as review of my many books. However, the best source of local information is an excellent document I found online from Fort Bend Master Gardeners – “Attracting Butterflies to Your Garden in Fort Bend County.” (Links at end of article) It shows butterflies that are common in Fort Bend County, and the nectar and host plants they like best. As the list is extensive, I first selected plants that were nectar choices of the most butterflies, and then focused on 10 butterflies that used most of these nectar plants. I then included their host plants. The goal is to have lots of butterflies.

The project binder I submitted had the following tabs: site layout, butterflies, plants, and signage. The site layout showed direction, shade, and characteristics – damp/sunny, damp/partial, dry/sunny, dry/partial – and where I’d put the plants. The butterfly section showed preferred plants (nectar/host) by butterfly, and included photos of the focus butterflies. The plant section showed the plant photos and information from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center database. I also included the bloom periods, colors, and water needs to show there was something blooming all year.

Continued on the next page---

Cunningham Creek Park Butterfly Garden Restoration (Continued)

The focus was on native plants, and I included a list of local native plant sources. The signage section included photos of sample recommended signs: pesticide free zone, monarch lifecycle, prairie butterflies with photos and names, plant ID labels. We want the garden to be an educational, as well as relaxing, spot, and don't want concerned residents spraying insects or killing plant-munching caterpillars!

I submitted the binder to Mr. Smith in December and we had a productive, hour-long meeting. He's very knowledgeable, and plans to include more native plants in New Territory's public spaces. He's reviewing my recommendations, and plans to begin the restoration activity in early 2018, using the contracted NTRCA landscaping company.

Links don't not work well so copy and paste:

<https://www.fbmq.org/pdf/ButterflyPlant.pdf>

<https://www.fbmq.org/entomology/>

On second link above, choose first link at bottom of page under "butterflies"



Plant of the Month, Groundsel (*Packera tampicana*) By Mark Morgenstern

The plant of the month is groundsel or butterweed. The scientific name is Packera tampicana. The name changed recently according to ITIS, Integrated Taxonomic Information System, but many books and the Brazos Bend plant list have not been updated to reflect this change.

This is the first bloomer of the spring. This photo (R) was taken on Friday the 26th. The aster family member is an annual that grows from 12 to 18 inches tall. They will cover both sides of the road at Brazos Bend State Park. It covers some lawns in my Pecan Bend Subdivision and they won't mow until it starts to fade. Bloom time is February to June, according to wildflower.org, but it usually doesn't last that long in our area.

Visit the park to see this beautiful wildflower!



Organic Gardening Products By Mark Morgenstern



Mark and his wife, Andrea, have 2 new organic products they've been using at their home. The first is Dr. Earth Weed and Grass Killer from Home Depot. "We just started using this and it seems to work well. At Seabourne Creek we tested it on the gravel plant area where there are no tables. Results to follow.

The next one is a fire ant killer that we have been using for a few years. We consider this product a must-have around vegetable gardens and fruit trees. Organic One Insecticide is made from silicon dioxide from diatomaceous earth and pyrethrins, a flower extract. I placed live termites in some and they were dead in a few minutes. Also, it works wet or dry! Can be purchased online at Amazon.com or stevenstractor.com."

In Our Own Backyards and Other Places

The American Goldfinch Loves Thistle Socks *By Diane Eismont*

If you would like to see the Goldfinch as a winter visitor in your yard, try hanging a "thistle sock" (or two) near your bird feeders.

Goldfinch appear at my place the end of December and stay for the winter. They eat from feeders, but prefer to pick thistle seeds out of these loosely woven mesh bags (which you can refill). You will see the male's feathers turn a very bright yellow as Spring approaches.



The Long Acres Ranch Nature Center *Photo by Bob Schwartz*

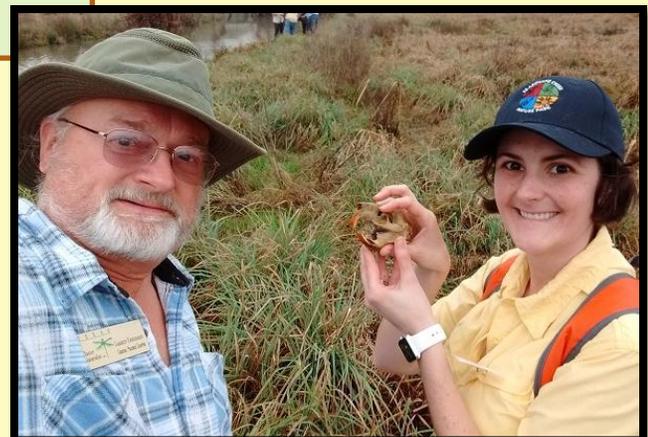


Class of 2017 Seabourne Arboretum Project *By Pauline Zinn*

The Class of 17 Arboretum committee has been busy lately. On Saturday, January 27, there was no better time to plant trees and shrubs in Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Conditions were perfect: overcast, mild weather, soft soil from rain the previous night and the rain held off until we finished the project. Two Boy Scouts and three leaders from Troop 309 came out to plant 21 trees and shrubs supervised by the Arboretum committee (Carol, Kelli, Pauline, Garrett, Kevin as well as Jim). This was a perfect opportunity for the scouts (and us!) as they needed ~3 hours of work on a conservation project. The scouts worked hard and did a great job. Thank you Troop 309!

These trees are either replacements for the ones that didn't survive or some additional specimens. Now we need to nurture all these newly planted trees: a cherry laurel, a parsley hawthorn, 2 black gums, 2 rusty blackhaw viburnums, redbuds, 7 oaks (live, white, willow, overcup) and 5 bald cypresses. The cypresses went down by the creek. That is where Kelli found a perfectly intact nutria skull, complete with sizable orange front teeth.

About the signage - Thanks to the availability of Karl's work crew all but one of the remaining signs have been cemented in place (50 out of 51). This includes about seven of them in the fencerow by the demo garden. Look for the Possum Haw, Parsley Hawthorn, Red Cedar, Redbud and Hercules Club. An interpretive sign is also in development.





Many Thanks to Wayne and Vicki Poorman *By Lynn Trenta and Carol Schwartz*

We thank Wayne and Vickie so much for leading the Seabourne Bird Hikes for many years! They put Seabourne on the map, literally! (The TX Coastal Birding Map) The bird hikes have also been listed on the Rosenberg calendar for several years now. It is remarkable that we have had so many people from the community, as well as our chapter, come out for the hikes. The hikes have served as a successful recruiting tool for the Coastal Prairie Chapter over the years as well.

Becoming a state destination birding spot on the TX Coastal Birding Trail is amazing! The wetlands did attract more birds to Seabourne, but the diligent recording and organizing of the bird hikes was ultimately responsible for our bird list reaching 201. Wayne's photos have always been so beautiful and documented many species in Seabourne (See more of Wayne's Photos on the chapter website txmn.org/coastal)



Photos by Wayne Poorman

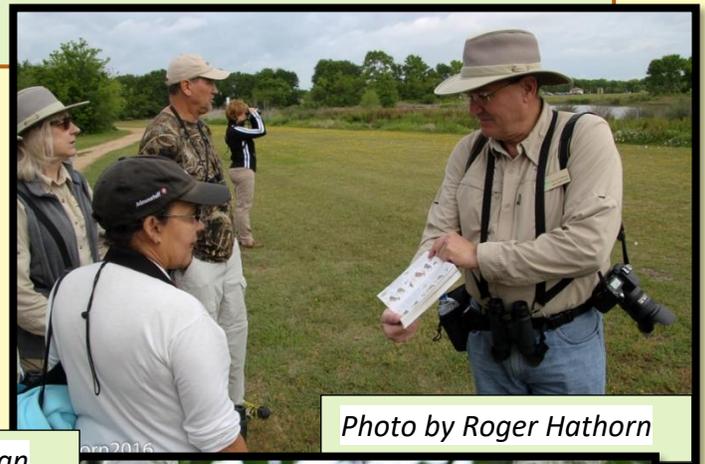
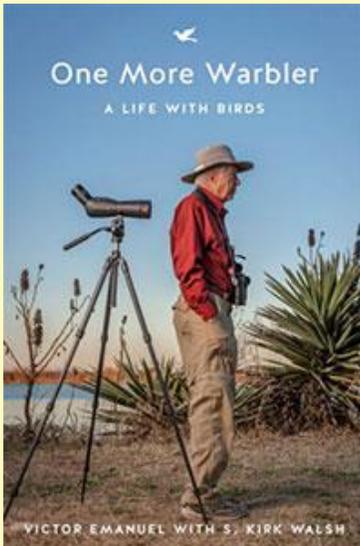


Photo by Roger Hathorn



Book Corner



One More Warbler: A Life with Birds

By Victor Emanuel with
S. Kirk Walsh

Victor Emanuel is widely considered one of America's leading birders. He has observed more than six thousand species during travels that have taken him to every continent. He founded the largest company in the world specializing in birding tours and one of the most respected ones in ecotourism. Emanuel has received some of birding's highest honors, including the Roger Tory Peterson Award from the American Birding Association and the Arthur A. Allen Award from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. He also started the first birding camps for young people, which he considers one of his greatest achievements.

In One More Warbler, Emanuel recalls a lifetime of birding adventures--from his childhood sighting of a male Cardinal that ignited his passion for birds to a once-in-a-lifetime journey to Asia to observe all eight species of cranes of that continent. He tells fascinating stories of meeting his mentors who taught him about birds, nature, and conservation, and later, his close circle of friends--Ted Parker, Peter Matthiessen, George Plimpton, Roger Tory Peterson, and others--who he frequently birded and traveled with around the world. Emanuel writes about the sighting of an Eskimo Curlew, thought to be extinct, on Galveston Island; setting an all-time national record during the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count; attempting to see the Imperial Woodpecker in northwestern Mexico; and birding on the far-flung island of Attu on the Aleutian chain. Over the years, Emanuel became a dedicated mentor himself, teaching hundreds of young people the joys and enrichment of birding. "Birds changed my life," says Emanuel, and his stories make clear how a deep connection to the natural world can change everyone's life.

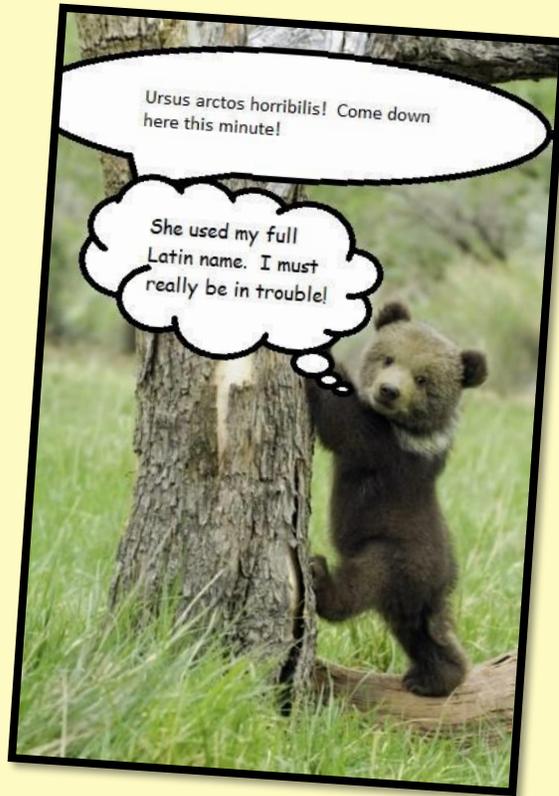
Bob and Carol Schwartz New Hosts for Bird Hikes

Carol and Bob Schwartz will now be leading the monthly bird hikes out at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Bob has extensive experience birding and has often participated in the hikes, bringing his valuable scope for us to look through.

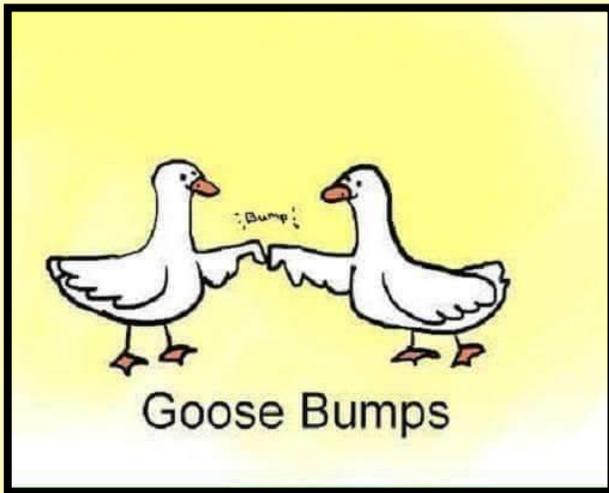
Thank you, Carol and Bob! We look forward to this year's bird hikes.



The Lighter Side



Thanks to John Donaho (Facebook)



National Wildlife Photo Contest Open

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://txmn.org/coastal>



The National Wildlife® Photo Contest, which began more than four decades ago, celebrates the power of photography to advance conservation and connect both photographers and viewers with wildlife and the outdoors. The most compelling nature images can help protect wildlife in profound ways.

*Each and every person who enters photographs in National Wildlife's photo contest not only honors their own work, but also helps support the conservation mission of the National Wildlife Federation, which is dedicated to saving wildlife species and their habitats. A selection of the winning photographs and honorable mentions will be published in the December-January 2019 issue of National Wildlife magazine. All **winning images** and **honorable mentions** will be published on the National Wildlife Federation's website.*

*You can further support this mission by becoming a member of the National Wildlife Federation, which entitles you to receive **National Wildlife** magazine as a benefit of membership. For more information on how to join and get the magazine, [click here](#).*

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 Facebook Page

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