



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



President's Message *By Bert Stipelcovich*

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Fellow Chapter Members:

Even though we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, things are getting better.

Welcome to Wave 2!

Here is the latest guidance from the TMN state program office regarding face-to-face activities:

- *Wave 1 – Beginning May 18*
 - *No gatherings until Wave 2 is in place.*
- *Wave 2 – Beginning June 1*
 - *Group meetings of 10 or fewer people only if social distancing can be practiced. Wearing masks is encouraged when in public spaces.*
- *Wave 3 – Beginning July 1*
 - *Group meetings of 25% capacity of space or fewer people only if social distancing can be practiced.*
 - *All volunteers may be at work site but should practice social distancing. Wearing masks is encouraged when in public spaces.*

We are required to follow the Texas A&M AgriLife [Return to Service Guidelines](#). In addition, we must adhere to all federal, state, and local requirements.

Seabourne Nature Fest — 2020 Edition

We held our first Seabourne Nature Fest meeting via Zoom. We had a great discussion and reached consensus on a survey that was sent out to all active members of our chapter. Expect an email early next week that summarizes the survey results. To fest or not to fest. That is the question.

TMN Chapter Presidents Meeting

On May 26, the TMN state program office hosted a meeting of all chapter presidents across the state. The majority of the discussion centered around our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, chapter presidents described how their chapters are responding. Many have canceled spring classes, and some have already decided to cancel their fall classes. In strong contrast, our chapter graduated 19 members in our spring class and plan to move forward with a full fall class. I could not be prouder to represent such a positive, determined, and resourceful group.

Continue to stay safe. As always, contact me with any questions, concerns, and suggestions.

All the best, Bert Stipelcovich 713-540-2378

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

Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome. Thanks.

***Lynn Trenta,
Courier Editor***



State Representative's Message *By Jean Stipelcovich*

Fellow Chapter Members:

I represented our chapter at the first-of-the-year State Representatives meeting on May 28. Here are some of the key takeaways.

"What Nature Means to Me" Project

- *So far, the state has received 29 video and 12 written submissions.*
- *Submissions will be highlighted via social media over the coming weeks.*
- *The deadline has been extended for an indeterminate amount of time.*
- *Here is the website link: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/nature-reflections/>*

Social Media Takeover

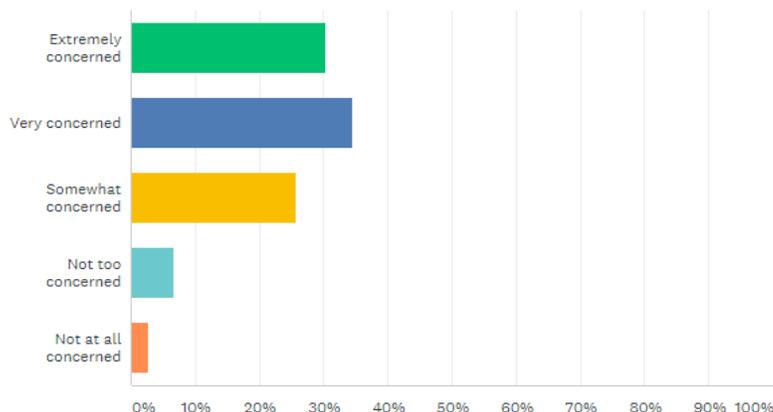
- *Chapters are signing up to control the content of the TMN state Facebook account.*
- *Some ideas proposed include:*
 - *Lessons learned*
 - *Tips & tricks*
 - *Positive affirmations*
 - *Knowledge scrolling*
 - *Virtual hikes*
 - *Robbin Mallett, Communications Director, has begun working with her team on our takeover.*

Annual Meeting Survey

- *Completed on May 30*
- *1,340 responses*
- *Here is a snapshot of responses to one question:*

How concerned are you about the impact of COVID-19 affecting the Annual Meeting?

Answered: 1,249 Skipped: 9



- *Decision date for the state is June 10th with an announcement planned for June 15th.*

Continued on next page----

State Representative's Message (continued)

IDEAS: Volunteer Service at a Distance

- The state has created a website to collect ideas for volunteers service projects (VSP) at <https://txmn.org/volunteer-service-at-a-distance/>
- Please contact our VSP Director Johanna DeYoung with your ideas.

Fall Training Survey

- The state will send out a survey to all Class Directors and follow up with a Zoom meeting
- Our Fall Class Director is Carol Hawkins

Thanks, Jean Stipelcovich 281-467-6254

The Membership Minute By Bob Naeger, Membership Director

Congratulations to the following members who recently achieved certifications and milestones:

Initial Certification

- Angela LeDoux
- Kevin Kolk

2020 Recertification (15 members recertified so far)

- Jade Helms
- Bill Johnson
- Katie Sallean
- Wen Sherrill



The recertification pin for 2020 is the American Bumble Bee! The pins are on order. We will distribute them when received.



500 Hour Milestone

- Erik Wolf
- David Goff



Congratulations to the Spring Class of 2020!

Many thanks to Shannon Westveer for conducting our training class and to the class of 19 for completing the course!

Cullinan Park/Birding Fort Bend Chapter Program *By Robbin Mallett*

At the May 7th meeting, Communications Director and avid birder, Robbin Mallett, gave the monthly presentation via Zoom. Thanks to the fifty chapter members who tuned in for an overview of Cullinan Park followed by tips on birding Fort Bend County.

Robbin, who joined the board of the Cullinan Park Conservancy in January 2020, gave an overview of the history and development of the massive 754-acre regional nature park.

For the park's first 30 years, the only significant improvements were the boardwalk – built with a grant from TPWD, a pavilion, picnic tables and a parking lot with less than 50 spaces. The park was too far from Houston, so it wasn't a priority and was fairly neglected.

But the City of Sugar Land—led by former Mayor James Thompson - recognized the value of all that untouched nature and went to great lengths to pursue a deal with Houston. In 2015, an Inter-local Agreement was hammered out between the City of Houston, Houston Parks Board, City of Sugar Land and the Cullinan Park Conservancy. And in the last few years, the park has experienced a renewal and revival. In January of 2016, the City of Sugar Land annexed the Park, and now the City provides park maintenance and frequent police patrol.

The Cullinan Park Conservancy which was founded in 2010 and incorporated as a 501(c)3 in 2013, has grown in size and scope and began adding Sugar Land residents in 2016. Conservancy members work closely with the City of Sugar Land and are responsible for the promotion, enhancement and protection of the park. Because park improvements are very costly, the Conservancy is taking a phased approach. They have already given the City over \$1 million for Phase 1 park improvements, including:

- *A Restroom - the most critical improvement and the most costly - since there was no water or electricity on site.*
- *Clearing of existing trails & understory clearing*
- *Construction of a new .33 mile accessible concrete trail which leads to an overlook on the east side of White Lake*
- *Addition of new benches and interpretive signs*

The board has raised additional funds and is now working on planning for Phase 2 Improvements. First priorities are:

- *Additional Miles of Trail – received a TPWD grant*
- *LEAP Area – Learn, Explore & Play – wetland/woodland theme*
- *Additional Parking – the parking lot is often full on weekends*



Cullinan Park and Birding Fort Bend *By Robbin Mallett (Continued)*

Further out, the Conservancy is looking for:

- Improved Kayak/Canoe Launch
- More Nature Observation – bird blind or feeder areas
- Neighborhood Gateways
- Additional entryway enhancements



If you visit Cullinan and get a great photo, be sure to enter it in the Cullinan Photo Contest which Robbin coordinates. The entry period will be June 1-Aug 31. You can enter up to five photos. There are four categories – wildlife, landscape, flora & photographer's choice. Details are on the Cullinan website.

If you're new or want to get started birding, Audubon has a guide to Beginning Birding you can read on their website at <https://www.audubon.org/birding/how-to-start-birding>

To summarize, you just need to 1) Gear Up – get a pair of binoculars and a field guide or birding app. 2) Do Your Homework about birding etiquette & safety. 3) Know Where to Go. 4) Hit the Field – get out there & practice spotting & IDing birds. And 5) Join the Club – by which they mean meet & network with other birders and you are doing that by being a part of the Coastal Prairie Chapter.

Since we are still following Social Distancing guidelines, Robbin gave some tips on birding close to home at each of the Top Eight Hotspots in Fort Bend based on eBird statistics. There are 3 in Sugar Land, 2 out in the Brazos Bend area, 2 in Katy/Fulshear and 1 in Rosenberg:

1. Brazos Bend State Park (297 species)
2. Cullinan Park (254 species)
3. RiverPark Nature Trails (235 Species)
4. Davis Estates Road (228 Species)
5. Seabourne Creek Park (207 Species)
6. Cross Creek Ranch Wetlands (191 Species)
7. Sugar Land Memorial Park (188 Species)
8. Bessie's Creek (163 Species)

Finally, Robbin recommended checking out a few of her favorite Birding Resources.

- Birding Resources
- Apps: eBird, Merlin Bird ID, Hotspots
- Facebook Pages: Birds of Texas, Birding the Upper Texas Coast, What's This Bird
- Websites
- Audubon Joy of Birding – audubon.org
- Gulf Coast Bird Observatory – gcbo.org
- Ornithology Group - [/ornithologygroup.com](http://ornithologygroup.com)
- American Birding Assoc. – aba.org
- For Migration Forecasting: Birdcast.info & Windy.com



June Chapter Meeting is “Monarch Flyway”

By Deborah January-Bevers, Houston Wilderness President

Deborah January-Bevers will talk about the monarch flyway and will give us ideas on what can be done to protect vital native habitat along the flyway. Please note that due to COVID-19 restrictions, this program will be presented via Zoom to TMNCPC members only. All members will receive an email in advance of the meeting which will provide the information needed to access the Zoom meeting.

The Texas Monarch Flyway Strategy (Texas MFS) is a statewide effort to restore, increase and enhance Monarch habitat across four major regions in the state – all of which serve as critical links in the Monarch butterfly’s journey along the Central Flyway from Canada to Mexico and back every year. The Texas MFS also serves to protect habitat for other pollinators that are crucial to local ecosystems and agriculture. The four regions included in the program are: Gulf-Houston, South Texas, North Texas and Hill Country.

Deborah has been involved with public policy around the Greater Houston region and the State of Texas for over 35 years, currently serving as President & CEO of Houston Wilderness (www.houstonwilderness.org). She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas at Austin in 1985 and her J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center. She most recently helped create and now implement the 8-county Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan (www.gulfhoustonrcp.org). She is lead author on Houston Wilderness’ Ecosystem Services Primer, 2nd Edition and speaks regularly at environmental conferences on Greater Houston’s ecological assets and regional ecosystem services case studies.

Over the years, she has worked in and around the U.S. Congress and Texas Legislature, and with various regulatory agencies, county commissioners, city mayors and council members. to improve the Greater Houston Region’s quality of life. Among other large initiatives, Deborah and the HW staff are currently working with over 100 civic, governmental and business organizations to implement the 8-county Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan (www.gulfhoustonrcp.org) to promote, protect and preserve the 10 distinct ecoregions in and the Gulf-Houston Region in three key goals: provide more protected/preserved land, double the use of nature-based infrastructure and provide annual increases in soil carbon sequestration throughout the 8-county region. She also co-authored the Houston Wilderness Ecosystem Services Primer: Problem-solving Using Ecosystem Services, and speaks regularly at environmental conferences on Greater Houston’s ecological assets and regional ecosystem services case studies.





Volunteer Service Projects Highlights

By Johanna DeYoung, TMNCPC Volunteer Service VSP Director

Anticipating additional and forthcoming VSP ideas/opportunities from the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program, I continue to appeal to you and to your imaginations to discover VSP opportunities. Upon receipt of VSP ideas from the TMN Program, I shall promptly post them. Please continue to check the website calendar, Slack, and the CPCTMN Members Only Facebook page. If you have any questions about VSP opportunities, please contact me at johanna@coastalprairie.org.

Up-and Coming

Once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, the TMNCPC will be able to conduct Seabourne Creek Nature Park Tours using the TMNCPC's eight (8) passenger golf cart! In early March 2020, Treasurer Katie Sallean secured general liability insurance coverage for members on the golf cart. Stay posted for further information.

TMNCPC Banner

The TMNCPC will soon have a retractable banner in which TMNCPC members can take and display at outreach events. Applying endless talents, time and efforts, Terri Hurley and Linda Shirley finalized, after seven (7) editions, our TMNCPC banner! BIG KUDOS to Terri and Linda for sharing their gracious talents!

April 2020 VSP Activities

The TMNCPC recorded an impressive total of 222.7 hours in the VMS Category: iNaturalist, eBird, and Other Citizen Science".

May 2020 VSP Activities

On 4/30/2020, Ms Meuth requested submissions by 5/15/2020, of responses to the following: "In this unprecedented moment of pandemic, reflect upon what nature means to you and what benefits it provides you, especially in times like these." Calling this opportunity "Nature Reflections", and allowing 0.5 hours of VSP, the TMN Program received an incredible response to this opportunity. To see and enjoy these submissions, please note the following: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/nature-reflections/>.

The VSP opportunities in May, included the Texas Invasive Species BioBlitz which ran from 5/16 to 5/23.

Preparation for the TMN Annual Meeting (October 16-18, 2020)

When: daily

Where: in the comfort of your home

Needed: Terri Hurley is looking for someone(s) to create the TMNCPC entry for the "project" competition that will be held at the TMN Annual Meeting. The TMNCPC wants to enter a submission on our signature project – SCNP, and maybe also one on Seabourne Nature Fest. Those interested can familiarize themselves with the rules and create draft plans for the TMNCPC entries. The TMNCPC has a small budget for supplies.

Additionally, those interested can work with T. Hurley planning a field trip to Seabourne Creek Nature Park and one to the Katy Prairie Conservancy for the field trip selection at the TMN Annual Meeting.

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category "Chapter Business: TMN Admin Report Hours"]



Advance Training *By Ramona Ridge, Advanced Training Director*

There are many online AT opportunities now. Please visit the [TMNCPC Website Calendar](#) or check your TMNCPC Bulletin to see what has been approved for AT.

Although these cannot be counted as AT, Ramona sent this link for IMAX films you can watch (some free) at the Houston Museum of Natural Science <http://www.hmns.org/giant-screen-theatre/wortham-giant-screen-streaming-on-your-screen/> You can contact Ramona at [:ramonaridge@swbell.net](mailto:ramonaridge@swbell.net)

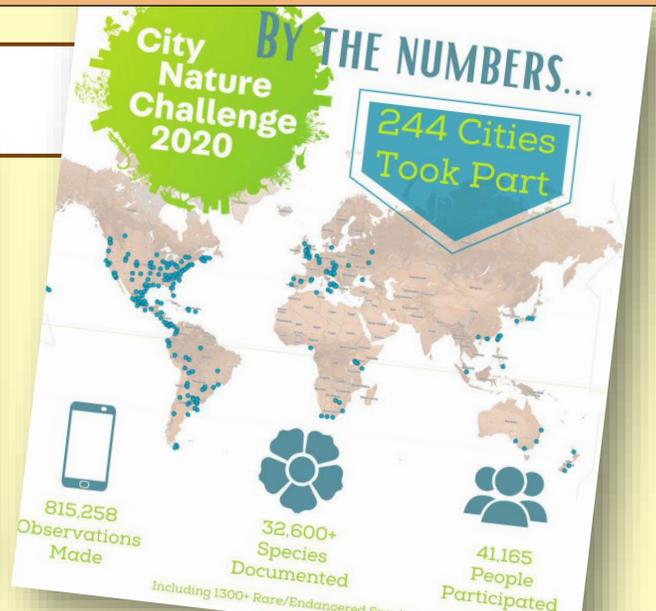
iNaturalist City Challenge

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE THROUGH THE YEARS

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Cities	2	16	68	159	244
Countries	1	1	17	28	40
Observations	19,800	125,000	441,000	963,000	815,000
Species	2,500	8,600	18,000	31,000	32,600
Observers	1,000	4,000	17,000	32,000	41,000

THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE IS AN INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATION OF BIODIVERSITY IN AND AROUND URBAN AREAS. NORMALLY CITIES COMPETE TO SEE WHO CAN MAKE THE MOST OBSERVATIONS OF NATURE, FIND THE MOST SPECIES, AND GET THE MOST PEOPLE INVOLVED. IN 2020, DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE WAS NOT A COMPETITION, AND INSTEAD FOCUSED ON THE COLLABORATIVE ASPECT OF PEOPLE AROUND THE GLOBE CONNECTING TO AND DOCUMENTING NATURE IN WHATEVER WAY THEY WERE ABLE. THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE WAS FOUNDED AND IS ORGANIZED BY THE CITIZEN/COMMUNITY SCIENCE TEAMS AT THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT CITYNATURECHALLENGE.ORG.

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE IS ORGANIZED BY:
 CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
 NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM LOS ANGELES COUNTY



Below is the message that was on the iNaturalist website before the iNaturalist challenge occurred.

The City Nature Challenge is still happening, though it will look quite different this year. We want to celebrate nature in any way we can right now, and the collaborative spirit of people all around the world connecting to their local nature, in whatever way they can, during the COVID-19 crisis - so this year's CNC is no longer a competition. See the [full collective results on the City Nature Challenge website](#), since not all cities use iNaturalist for the CNC. And be sure to visit our [COVID-19 FAQ page](#) for more information! April 2020 is the 5th anniversary of the City Nature Challenge and the 50th anniversary of Earth Day! Join us as we celebrate the nature in and around urban areas by documenting all the species we can find! [Learn more about the City Nature Challenge.](#)

Coastal Prairie Chapter Brings Two Members Together

By Carol Schwartz

Bob and Carol Schwartz, TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter fall class of 2012, have a delightful story to relate to newer members of the chapter. Back in 2012 they were Bob Schwartz and Carol Pawelek, respectively. They met in their training class that fall. Both were newly retired and anxious to start volunteering in activities that suited their main interests. Bob is an excellent birder of many, many years (actually decades!) and Carol's career was in education, most of which involved teaching Junior High Life Science.

Trainees get to know your classmates fairly well over the several weeks of classes. Well, one thing led to another, post-training, and in late 2014 Bob proposed. Carol replied in the affirmative and they were married in the Spring of 2015.

All credit goes to Coastal Prairie Chapter for making two Master Naturalists very happy!!!



Photo by Terri Hurley



American Pokeweed (*Phytolaca Americana*)

By Blair Margot

This plant is common in the southeastern United States, grows profusely this time of year and likes edge environments such as outskirts of forests, fence lines and flowerbeds. It has a simple, pinnate, ovate, smooth edged leaves that attach to the stem in an alternating pattern; and the smooth hairless stem, that slowly turns purple as it ages.

The plant is a perennial, starting life out with a green stem. It bears purple berries known as poke berries that are eaten by birds. Dropping from birds that have eaten poke berries are likely the source of your plants. Often poke is written polk so pokeweed and polkweed are the same plant as are pokeberries and polkberries.

The plant is very toxic, particularly the root. Birds are somehow immune to the berries, but ingesting only a few purple berries has been known to kill infants. The leaves can be eaten if prepared properly. The plant is quite famous in the southern part of the United States and has a reputation as once being a staple food of poor southerners. The term for eating the greens of the plant is Poke Sallet -- sallet being old english for cooked greens. Unfortunately, the song below and general usage referring to it as Poke Salad has resulted in people sometimes eating the raw greens and being poisoned by the plant. To eat the plant safely many recipes call for boiling the greens for 20 minutes, three separate times in clean water. We do not in any way though recommend eating this plant, or its berries or its roots.

Tony Joe White had a hit song in 1968 called Poke Salad Annie recorded in Muscle shoals, Alabama. The song was later recorded by Elvis Presley, Tom Jones, and several others and charted in the U.S., England, and France. Tony Joe White grew up in Louisiana, west of the Mississippi River and used to eat poke greens when he was growing up.

For a bit of fun, go to YouTube to hear the song [Tony Joe White Polk Salad Annie Original B&W](#)



The horrors of mass-produced bee houses

By Colin Purrington This is a blog with nature photography, biology-related projects, & geeky tips. From Facebook article put in by Terri Hurley



Here are some reasons why cheap mason bee houses can end up hurting bee populations. I live in Pennsylvania (USA), so some of the issues might be specific to my location. And to the species that live here, of course. Check with your local authorities for more detailed advice.

Nesting blocks, tubes, reeds are not removable

Glued nesting materials is the number one reason why most commercial bee hotels can become death traps. Because the nesting material cannot be removed and cleaned, over time there will be an increase in the population of parasitic wasps, parasitic bees, parasitic flies, [kleptoparasitic mites](#), fungi, bacteria, and viruses. And you typically won't see these dangers because the solitary bees will still use the hotel (they can't help themselves). See the photograph of the mites above that tend to build up when bees reuse the same house every year (Above @GeeBee60).

Nesting tubes cannot be opened

Even if you clean the house every year and put in fresh tubes, the tubes filled in the prior year might be filled with parasitic flies and wasps. The ONLY way to get rid of them is to pry open the tubes and examine each pupa. And you can only do this if you use paper straws (that you can unwrap) or if you use routed nesting blocks (that can be taken apart). So if you want the best accommodations for your solitary bees, opt for either of these designs.

Nesting tubes open at back

If holes aren't capped in some way at the back, parasites can easily gain entrance. Mason bees will plug the back with mud but it's best to have a wall.

Reeds or holes with large splinters

Sharp edges inside the holes can snag and tear delicate wings.

Stems blocked at front

In houses that use bamboo, sometimes many of the sections are blocked off near the front by an impenetrable node. E.g., many of the tunnels are too short to be of much use.

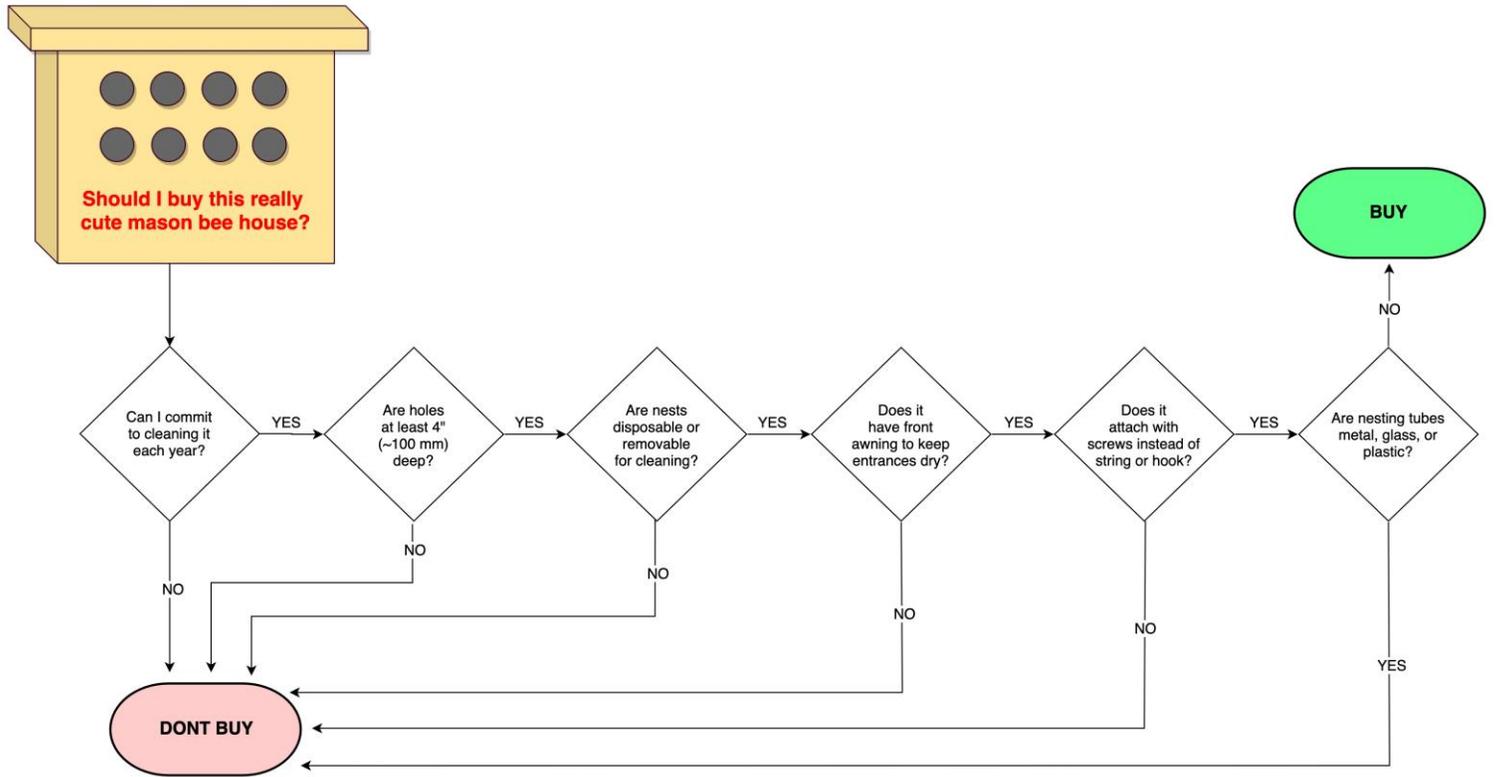
To continue reading this article go to <https://colinpurrington.com/2019/05/horrors-of-mass-produced-bee-houses/?fbclid=IwAR000Bohqm16TWN-alonryHzOeOHcywwPiXvRfFBlt4scmnHcLMb-NVbbmY>

Don't let the above discourage you from owning your dream house: here's a draft listing of [companies that make good ones](#). Or, [make your own](#). To the right is the one in my front yard.

For a good flow chart to help with your decision see the following page.



The horrors of mass-produced bee houses (Continued)



www.colinpurrington.com

The above flow chart can help you decide whether or not to buy the bee house you are thinking about buying. Go to the website to get a better look at it.

Gardening can influence and benefit your mental health

Abby Read abby.read@ag.tamu.edu May 18th 2020



Photo by Greg Ehman

Besides adding appeal to your yard, gardening significantly benefits your mental health. As the weather begins to warm up, the urge to spend more time outside gardening is steadily on the rise.

Being around plants has shown higher levels of reduced stress and anxiety, according to a [study](#) by a [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#) horticulture specialist.

Charlie Hall, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension horticulture and economics specialist, College Station, has done research to uncover all the ways gardening and plants can help better your mental health.

To continue reading this article go to https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/05/18/gardening-can-influence-and-benefit-your-mental-health/?fbclid=IwAROBABWnO3yS4RtMXClxiCEac9sESpuLRk_LI5Hr9Ix8-DOZmrbELGrDsFs



Seabourne Creek Nature Park News

Seabourne Creek Nature Park Monthly Report *By Jerry Trenta*

New guidelines from the state TMN organization and our chapter leadership have been issued. So, starting in June our regular Seabourne Volunteer Workdays will resume; every Wednesday and the 1st and 3rd Saturdays – 8:30am to ~11:00am. Volunteers must continue to practice social distancing and work independently as much as possible. Wearing masks is encouraged while at the park, especially when other volunteers or the public are nearby. Use the “Garden Closed” signs and safety cones when working in the gardens.

Over 1600 native grasses and forbs have been planted in the 2020 PRA (Prairie Restoration Area) so far this year (thanks to Carol Hawkins, David Goff and Jerry Trenta) and our nursery has over 1000 plants ‘growing up’. We are continuing to expand the nursery with more tables. The number of bumped-up plants for the year to date is approaching 3,000 (with help from Carol Hawkins & family). With the large number of plants in the nursery, we are encouraging chapter members to come by and take a few home to help spread the use of native plants in our communities. Currently available: Little Bluestem, Gulf Muhly, Longspike Tridens, Gulf Vervain, Sugarcane Plume Grass, Gulf Cost Penstemon, Rattlesnake Master, Big Bluestem.

The greenhouse repairs (replacing the broken vent control, correcting the structure failure at the front end and door repairs) have been completed. Additionally, a new misting watering system was installed.

Sal Cardenas is progressing repairs on a used John Deere mower (donated by Bert and Jean Stipelcovich) and hopes to have it in use at the park this coming month. Sal is also been doing tractor mowing work at the park and managing the maintenance of our Kubota tractor.

Garrett Englehart managed and completed our annual fish stocking of Seabourne Lake adding 1000 Blue Gill and 800 Channel Catfish to the lake along with 20 pounds of minnows. More news about this on the next page.

Invasive plant control has been ongoing in the prairie area and the pollinator area and the habitat gardens in the demo garden are being improved and maintained by Lynn Trenta, Diane Russell, Donna Pisani and Terri Hurley. The habitat pamphlets in the demo garden have had to be refilled several times in the past few months indicative of the increased number of visitors to the park and the gardens. Katie Sallean has been attending the beautiful butterfly garden as well.

You need to come and see both of the gardens and the prairie, especially the 2019 restoration area; they are amazing.



Seabourne Creek Nature Park (Continued)

Chapter Member Makes the Fort Bend Herald News!

Garrett met Wednesday, May 27th with Mike from the Brenham Fisheries for stocking of fish at Seabourne Lake. They put 800 Catfish, 1000 bluegill perch, and 10,000 Flathead minnows in the Lake. Below is the Fort Bend Herald article about this.



HERALD PHOTOS BY AVERIL GLEASON

MASTER NATURALISTS STOCK POND WITH FISH AT SEABOURNE CREEK

Texas Master Naturalists restocked the Seabourne Creek Nature Park lake with minnows, blue gill perch and channel catfish Wednesday.

According to Master Naturalist Garrett Engelhardt, pictured right, there are 20 pounds of minnows, 1,000 blue gill perch and 800 catfish swimming in the lake.

Engelhardt said the minnows help feed the bigger fish in the lake.

Master Naturalists restock the lake annually.

Master Naturalist Garrett Engelhardt and Mike Robison with Brenham Fisheries talk before placing the fish in the lake.



Photos by Garrett Engelhardt



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places

The Red-eared Slider *Photo and Text by Diane Eismont*

Did you ever have a small Red-eared Slider as a pet? I did. So, when I saw this one close to our barn, I recognized it instantly from the red blotch or stripe behind the eye and was very surprised to see it!

My first thought was that it was someone's pet as they are said to be among the most popular turtle pets in the world! But, when I checked the reptile book, I saw to my amazement that they are native throughout Texas except in the far west triangle and along the border with New Mexico!

They eat aquatic vegetation and small fish and need access to water ALL the time. They grow to 5 to 11 inches shell length at maturity. They like still waters and muddy bottoms and lots of aquatic vegetation. We do have a small ornamental pond behind the barn (although I have never seen turtles there) as well as a field pond (I have seen other types of turtles there), and we are close to the Brazos.

Note: Be sure to check out salmonella issues before getting a turtle as a pet!



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places (Continued)

April and May in Quintana, Texas *By Margo Johnson*

Annually, scores of volunteers devote the month of April and early May at Quintana Neotropic Bird Sanctuary down in Freeport to welcoming visiting birders from all over the world. They come to see neotropical migrating birds from Central and South America as they arrive on the Texas coast. The birds are stopping over to refuel after crossing the Gulf of Mexico on their way to breeding grounds in Canada and other points far north.

The staff and volunteers of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO) in Lake Jackson make the sanctuary ready to welcome the birds. To welcome the birders, many on an annual pilgrimage, some making the dreamed-about-trip-of-a-lifetime, Bill Johnson plants a bright garden at the Sanctuary entrance.

In early March we surveyed the survivors (Texas lantana, tropical milkweed and a sturdy pink perennial ??) and volunteer native plants (bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, evening primrose), which were actually doing well. New native-ish plants brightened and filled gaps (coreopsis, red salvia, blooming tropical milkweed). Bill installed a low cost/ low maintenance watering system to keep the plants alive in the shallow beds between our weekly visits. It worked great.

By the end of March, we were READY to meet and greet....then the COVID-19 shut us in and the refuge hut was closed to the scheduled daily welcoming volunteers and travelling birders were shut out. But the birds still came!! Some, like the Cerulean Warblers in greater numbers than in many years.

We kept to our weekly schedule, only with masks and social distancing. On one of the big Cerulean days, both David Goff and Garrett Engelhart were already there at Quintana to greet us and show us the stars of the Sanctuary. Greg Lavaty has shared photos of some special Quintana 2020 visitors: black billed cuckoo, Bill's fave: golden winged warbler, Margo's fave: American Redstart, and the Cerulean.

With the low volume of people visiting, the GCBO decided to experiment with reduced artificial feeding to discourage the plague of grackles and blackbirds who pushed out the smaller birds and made birding and photography noisy and unpleasant. SUCCESS!! Almost no seed was put in the pathways and oranges were only put out late after the orioles started to arrive. This greatly reduced noisy birds inside the small main refuge and allowed the visiting migrants to bathe and feed on berries and insects in relative peace. The Lincoln's sparrows and hooded warblers seemed to do just fine finding food in the pathways without help.

So 2020 was a successful spring migration for the birds at Quintana, if not the birders.



11-04-2016 15:30

Photos by Bill Johnson



11-24-2017 15:30

Photos Below by Greg Lavaty

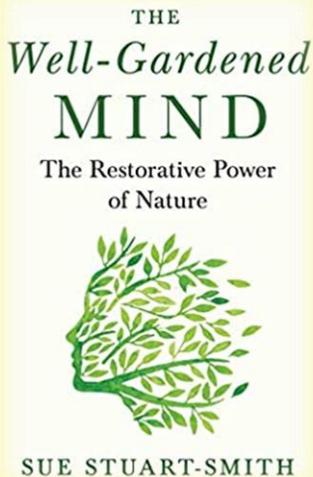


In Our Own Backyards and Other Places *(Continued)*

Ribbon Snakes in Sugar Land Memorial Park *Photos By Bob Schwartz*



The Book Corner



The Well-Gardened Mind

Sue Stuart-Smith

A distinguished psychiatrist and avid gardener offers an inspiring and consoling work about the healing effects of gardening and its ability to decrease stress and foster mental well-being in our everyday lives.

The garden is often seen as a refuge, a place to forget worldly cares, removed from the “real” life that lies outside. But when we get our hands in the earth we connect with the cycle of life in nature through which destruction and decay are followed by regrowth and renewal. Gardening is one of the quintessential nurturing activities and yet we understand so little about it. The Well-Gardened Mind provides a new perspective on the power of gardening to change people’s lives. Here, Sue Stuart-Smith investigates the many ways in which mind and garden can interact and explores how the process of tending a plot can be a way of sustaining an innermost self.

Stuart-Smith’s own love of gardening developed as she studied to become a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. From her grandfather’s return from World War I to Freud’s obsession with flowers to case histories with her own patients to progressive gardening programs in such places as Rikers Island prison in New York City, Stuart-Smith weaves thoughtful yet powerful examples to argue that gardening is much more important to our cognition than we think. Recent research is showing how green nature has direct antidepressant effects on humans. Essential and pragmatic, The Well-Gardened Mind is a book for gardeners and the perfect read for people seeking healthier mental lives.

Another Great Webinar from Bexar County Audubon

To view a Bexar County Audubon webinar titled “No Bugs, No Birds” go to <https://www.dropbox.com/s/cev4czomy7xsst4/NoBugsNoBirds.mp4?dl=0>



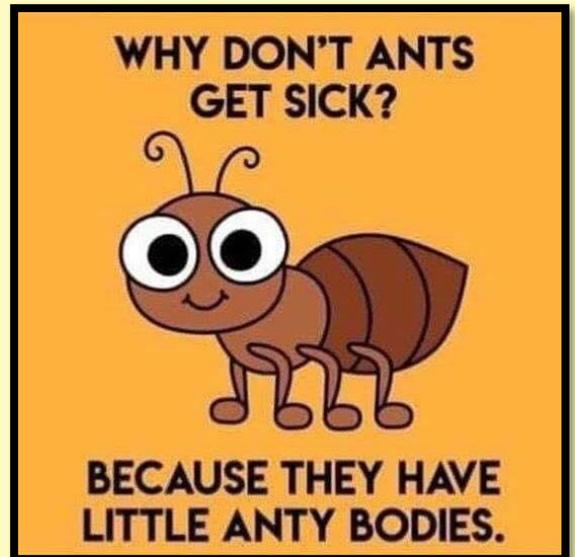
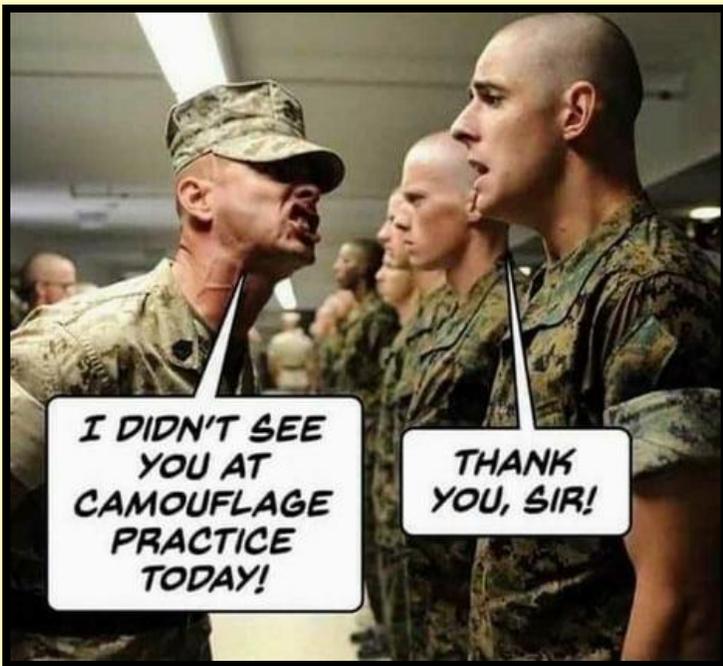
The Lighter Side



Becky Leugemors(Facebook)



Thanks to John Donaho



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See us at:

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Tips for Photographing Native Plants and Wildlife with Your Phone *By Lauren Simpson*



Lauren Simpson gave a wonderful program at the Houston Native Plant Society of Texas a while back on taking photos of nature with your cell phone.

You can access it at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lizfU6ER9CE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3aFcXbYMok_2suHxx5aNSqJUVkFJ1Pxt_ojZVnIVCvHAhfy9Vc2vKez2mq

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