



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*

Fellow Chapter Members:

Optimism about things beginning to return to normal have been tempered due to the recent spike in active COVID-19 cases across the state. Guidance from state and local officials requires us to take a cautious approach going forward.

Wave 2 and Holding

Plans to move to Wave 3 on July 1 have been postponed. We will remain at Wave 2 until at least August 1:

- *Wave 2 – Effective June 1 – August 1*
 - *Group meetings of 10 or fewer people only if social distancing can be practiced. Face coverings are highly recommended — or required if local authorities have enacted such a policy.*

As you know, we are required to follow the Texas A&M AgriLife [Return to Service Guidelines](#), which are being updated. In addition, we must adhere to all federal, state, and local requirements. I will follow up with an email to all chapter members providing more details as they become available.

Seabourne Nature Fest — 2020 Edition

The results of the SNF survey were reviewed at the last board meeting. Based on the data — and an abundance of caution for the safety of our members and the public — the board voted unanimously to cancel this year's Nature Fest and to hold the next SNF in November next year. While we are all disappointed, it is the right thing to do.

TMN Chapter Presidents Meeting

On June 29, Michelle Haggerty (State Program Coordinator) and Mary Pearl Meuth (Assistant Program Coordinator), hosted a meeting of all chapter presidents across the state. The majority of the discussion centered around our continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, chapter presidents described how their chapters are responding. We are one of only 13 of the state's 49 chapters (27%) that will hold a Fall Training Class. I continue to be proud to represent such a positive, determined, and resourceful group.

Also discussed were a diversity and inclusion initiative, as well as new details about the virtual Annual Meeting to be held Wednesday through Saturday, October 14 – 17. More details will follow.

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

All the best, Bert Stipelcovich 713-540-2378

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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***

The Membership Minute *By Bob Naeger, Membership Director*

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

Initial Certification

- *Jan Kolk*

2020 Recertification (22 members recertified so far)

- *Kevin Kolk*
- *Jan Kolk*

The recertification pin for 2020 is the American Bumble Bee!

2500 Hour Milestone

- *Jerry Trenta*



All pins that have been earned this year have been mailed to the recipients. We will continue to mail pins as they are earned until we are able to resume in-person meetings.



Grow the Chapter: The Adaptable, Flexible Zoomin' 2020 Grads *By Shannon Westveer, New Class Co-Director (Spring)*

Just before the winter break began, our president challenged me to put together a Spring Training Class for TMN CPC. We need to 'grow the chapter,' Bert told me. Having only just graduated a couple months before as a TMN CPC myself, certified, re-certified, built a prairie in my yard, began the long and arduous process of learning insect and plant relations ... I really, really wanted to say NO. But as the seeds of conservation for native prairies had been planted deep within my heart, how could I not say YES?

YES!! Spring 2020 TMN CPC Training was born December 20, 2019. And the planning began.

Winter break came and went. The chapter went 'live' in early January with a schedule of dates and times, cost, and requirements, and rather quickly, several people signed up to attend. Six more weeks were spent securing venues during the busiest time of the year (Gulf Coast bird migration, 'FeatherFest,' 'Boom and Bloom' ... otherwise Spring Flings) finding speakers who were also not otherwise engaged, and making sure 20-25 adults would get their money's worth in becoming a Texas Master Naturalist™ of the Coastal Prairie Chapter. One of our presenters died unexpectedly. But by the time Spring 2020 TMN Training kicked off February 18 – the first spring class anyone could recently remember – 23 eager participants were all present, engaged, and ready to learn.

The first five classes and field trips were an absolute delight; weather was cooperative and being outside was a welcomed distraction from our daily lives. Then COVID-19 arrived spring break, and all bets were off. The entire schedule would be scrapped, re-imagined. We began distance-learning via Zoom, WebEx, and MS Teams from the comfort of our homes, and 4 of the participants dropped from a now tech-heavy program. The rest of the class took it all in stride, and with the convenience of remote-presentations, new speakers joined the ranks of the CPC.

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Grow the Chapter: The Adaptable, Flexible Zoomin' 2020 Grads (continued)

What began as a lesson in frustration and adaptation with technology resulted in 19 TMN CPC's – 'Zoomers,' we call them! – with 40 hours of initial training, many also with 8 hours advanced training. On May 23, Texas A&M's Dr. Barron Rector sent off the class in good grassy form, and the Spring 2020 Class had officially concluded!

On June 18, Mary Pearl Meuth and Michelle Haggerty called a statewide chapter meeting (via Zoom) for New Class Directors to compare and contrast successes and failures with moving to an on-line forum mid-stream.

Here are the highlights from that meeting (taken via the chat box):

- 1. Most chapters did not even offer a Spring TMN Training Class.*
- 2. Of the Spring TMN Training classes scheduled for 2020, many were canceled and did not resume due to COVID-19. Their Fall TMN Training Classes have been postponed as well.*
- 3. Of the nearly 50 Chapters in Texas, only 4 (or 5) chapters successfully completed Spring Training with a component of remote learning after COVID-19.*
- 4. Coastal Prairie Chapter – against all odds, rising above the others – grew the chapter.*

That said, please be sure and welcome your NEW!! fellow TMN CPC members-in-training. (Listed alphabetically.)

- Kristi Bagby*
- Paula Dittrick*
- Garrett Drage*
- Sandy Gardner*
- Elizabeth Greene (from Fall 2019)*
- Nancy Jones*
- Pam Jones*
- Jan and Kevin Kolk (both have initial certified and re-certified for 2020!)*
- Cheryl Marti*
- Ron Masters*
- Amy Phan*
- John Rouane, Jr.*
- Robert and Ronda Ruffridge*
- Karen Sabrsula-Long*
- Cyndi Scott*
- John Vindekilde*
- Noel Zinn*

It has been a wonderful, fabulous ride with you all. I am certainly happy to do it again next year. Y'all be sure to be active members of your community, your chapter, and to be a steward to your environment. Nature needs each and every one of us.

PS – COVID-19, you are most certainly not welcome to attend next year. Many, many thanks to Bert, Carol, and Mac for all your love, knowledge, and unending support. I appreciate you the most!



Past-president Jerry Trenta Reaches 2500 Hours! *By Lynn Trenta, Courier Editor*

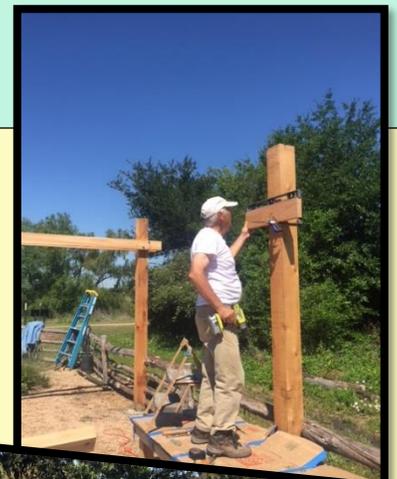
This month, Jerry Trenta, Past TMNCPC President and Seabourne Director, reached his 2500-hour milestone! This is a well-deserved achievement. He has been active at Seabourne for 5 years, Seabourne Director for 3 years and served as chapter president last year. Congratulations, Jerry!

Jerry has achieved so much in his years as a chapter member as well as before joining the chapter. Some of the projects he designed and managed are, among others:

- *The beautiful hog fence, picnic tables and pergola in the Seabourne Demo Garden.*
- *The irrigation at the garden, the nursery, and the prairie restoration project.*
- *Signs and pamphlet holders for the plants and gardens for several years as well.*
- *The prairie restoration project for which he created a more streamlined process, worked with the city to add irrigation to the prairie area, enabling easy and fast planting into the prairie. This year he has begun propagating and bumping up plants for the prairie project as well, taking home plants to bump up at his home.*
- *The nursery table construction and the wetlands floating dock. The dock was constructed piece by piece in his home garage, disassembled and then brought down to Seabourne for reassembling and installation.*
- *Repairing the damage after the shed break-ins and making the area secure.*
- *Directing work with the LDS volunteers in the prairie and other projects, including the dock removal and construction.*
- *Organizing the Exxon-Mobil group that earns grant money for the chapter through their volunteering efforts.*
- *Seabourne self-guided tour pamphlet.*
- *Any many more.....*

Kudos to Jerry for all of his hard work and dedication to the chapter and Seabourne. I don't think it will be long until he is reaching his 4000-hour milestone.

We are lucky to have such a valuable chapter member!



Houston Wilderness June Chapter Program

By Lynn Trenta, Courier Editor, et al.



At the June 4th meeting, Deborah January-Bevers, Houston Wilderness President, talked to us via zoom about the Monarch Flyway project and what Houston Wilderness does to promote pollinators and protect land.

Among other large initiatives, Deborah and the Houston Wilderness 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.

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. 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.

Monarch Flyway monitors selects pollinator areas that they have supported through grants administered by Houston Wilderness in our area and will be conducting training sessions in the future on how to monitor pollinators in these areas.

Seabourne Houston Wilderness Pollinator Area

Our chapter obtained a Houston Wilderness grant from the City of Rosenberg last August for a pollinator area at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. We planted around 650 plants and are in the process of removing invasive plants and adding more pollinator plants. We plan to plant seeds in the Fall. For more information about helping with this project at Seabourne, contact [Lynn Trenta](#).



Photo by Lynn Trenta



Photo by Robbin Mallett

July Chapter Meeting is “Building Pocket Prairies”

By Lan Shen, KPC Seed Collection Manager, Deer Park Prairie Coordinator

Conservationist Lan Shen will show us how to build our own pocket prairie. A pocket prairie or prairie garden is a smaller site, typically 1/4 acre or larger, which has been planted with native grasses, sedges, and wildflowers. It reflects the original grassland vegetation dominant in our area prior to European settlement. It is a low-maintenance landscape that encourages a diversity of plant and animal species.

Learn how to transform an unused nook of your lawn quickly, easily, and affordably into a dynamic, native pocket prairie garden that is naturally beautiful, full of life and invaluable to the creatures that share your yard as their home. A larger pocket prairie in your yard can help reduce water runoff during storms.

Lan is on staff at Katy Prairie Conservancy as the seed collection manager and Great Grow Out Coordinator. She also is a continually active volunteer at many local prairie organizations and serves as the Deer Park Prairie Coordinator with the Houston Chapter of the Native Prairie Association of Texas and is active in the Coastal Prairie Partnership.

This program will be offered through zoom and will be on July 2nd from 6:00 to 8:00pm. Members will be receiving access by email.



Advanced 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, which you will receive by email. You can also check it out on the website under Members Information 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 ramonaridege@swbell.net



Volunteer Service Projects Highlights

By Johanna DeYoung, TMNCPC Volunteer Service VSP Director

On 6/26/2020, with the recent surge of COVID-19 cases, Texas Governor Greg Abbott called the Texas COVID-19 situation a "public health disaster". In addressing this tragedy, he issued Executive Order GA-28, outlining restrictions to be in effect: Implement social distancing and good hygiene, and "Individuals are encouraged to wear appropriate face coverings..."

The TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter (TMNCPC) continues to be under the directives issued by Mary Pearl Meuth, TMN Program Assistant State Coordinator, on 3/31/2020. Until Ms. Meuth lifts these directives, please refrain from doing non-essential VSP activities at Seabourne.

If there is an essential activity within Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP) you feel is necessary, please contact Jerry Trenta, Seabourne Director, ([713-898-4782](tel:713-898-4782)/jerrytrenta@txtrentas.com) prior to going to SCNP. Until further notice, the SCNP Volunteer Days are on pause.

Anticipating additional and forthcoming VSP ideas/opportunities from the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program, I, once again, 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.

Preparation for the TMN Virtual Annual Meeting (October 14-17, 2020)

This year, each presenter has the opportunity to reach a greater audience both in and out of Texas with our new virtual platform. Don't miss out on your chance to share your knowledge and ideas with both Texas Master Naturalists and community members alike!

Click the link below to submit your proposal today!

DEADLINE July 3rd at 5pm. For more Information go to https://www.cvent.com/c/abstracts/39bc6141-6a3e-429a-80c0-5ad7556cbe02?fbclid=IwAR28a_q8Xh6Hbmvv47_m99Zrltzt98ckX9ujJuDH3PEbAEGCVhFv2BW4syQ

When: Now

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.

Additionally, those interested can work with Terri Hurley planning a virtual field trip to SCNP and one to the Katy Prairie Conservancy for the virtual field trip selection at the TMN Annual Meeting.

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



Pocket Prairie: Helping Our Neighbors, Healing Our Minds

Text and Photos By Shannon Westveer, TMNCPC New Class Co-director

Memorial Day weekend along the Gulf Coast marks the beginning of summer in Texas. In 2019, school came to a conclusive end and with it, so did my spring volunteering at the elementary school gardens. As the school's leadership did not want to move forward with a more natural approach for gardening, my time was looking to free up for the summer. Any restoration effort would have to begin at home.

When I stepped onto the Katy Prairie for the first time that weekend. I knew was a goner. It was love at first sight with coastal prairie. (I would later that year become a Texas Master Naturalist.) My husband, Scott, was also with me, and he too was wowed and enamored with the variety of grasses, flowers, and life in this natural refuge. How could we have lived decades in Houston and not have known of this important ecological heritage?

"What do you think?" Scott asked on the drive home. "Can we build a prairie of sorts ... in our yard?" It was a halfway baited question, meant to rile me up, to test how committed I might be to such an endeavor. "Turf grass is over-rated," he finished, as if a foregone conclusion. He had me at 'prairie;' my mind had already worked out the details before we pulled into the drive.

With beer and tape measure in hand, we walked through my prairie visions outside, calculating and planning on the whiteboard to complete the plan. We then headed to the hardware store for plastic sheeting, and as with all good nature projects, the day ended with a good scalping of the turf to be killed, followed by a campout by the creek. Sleeping with the frog chorus and waking with the birdsong marks a new beginning. Memorial Day 2019, a pocket prairie would be born.

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The beginning, after solarizing and mulching (May 2019)



Prairie 'popping' (March 2020)

Pocket Prairie: Helping Our Neighbors, Healing Our Minds *(Continued)*

It did not take much to get 7,000 square feet ready for restoration; Katy Prairie Conservancy offered many resources to help. The real work was done by the sun's rays and summer heat (death of turf grass, 9 weeks) followed by the microbial and soil fauna healing period (thick layer of wetted carbon, 8 weeks). All 40 yards of mulch – two trucks full – were free for the asking. A couple of unusually cool afternoons and a wheelbarrow got the job done.

Priority planting would be the sunniest first half where the grasses would grow, to allow sufficient establishment of root systems before the summer. All five grasses of the imperiled coastal prairie were present: Big and Little Bluestems, Switchgrass, Yellow Indiangrass, Eastern Gamagrass. Purchased as 1-gal starts, they were planted October 1st and November 1st, along with a variety of forb perennials. Each workday ended with seeding 2-ft diameter 'crater pockets' throughout the prairie and in between, just enough mulch moved aside to allow germination with the bare soil. A thick layer of mulch remaining would discourage previously established St. Augustine and Bermuda from making a comeback.

Come February, all the annual wildflowers on the edges arrived right on schedule! But those planted in the prairie were beginning to show too. Salvia and Physostegia were the first to 'pop,' beckoning all the carpenter and bumblebee species in the area. Judging by the numbers, they simply could not believe their eyes and tongues! Slowly the other flowers matured: Gallardia, Coreopsis, Monarda, Rudbeckia, Helianthus, Vervain, Conoclinium, Pluchea. For all the tiny and varied bee and wasp and fly and beetle species in the area, it was as if a neon sign flashed. COME. AND. EAT.

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Leaf-cutter bee and Gallardia (April 2020)



Mama Bluebird ... babies fledging (April 2020)

Pocket Prairie: Helping Our Neighbors, Healing Our Minds *(Continued)*

When COVID-19 hit mid-March, the prairie would be our salvation. Stuck at home like many others, we wandered regularly around and through it, watching and logging all the newly found life that had arrived. We learned that each species had different foraging techniques, and we learned to recognize them by those habits. Who knew there could be so many dragonflies and damselflies? They love the prairie too! Like icing on the proverbial cake, bluebirds chose to raise their family on the bounty of the prairie. Nature's pace paired with a notable absence of human cacophony made outdoors the place to be, and for the weeks that followed, that solitude and being part of nature calmed us to our evolutionary core. Everyone should have a prairie to ease their worries and fears. And while we should all strive more to help each other in difficult times, we should not discount the tiniest of those neighbors who now need us more than ever.

Memorial weekend 2020 marks the anniversary of a pocket prairie. What better way to celebrate than with a renewed restoration effort: 1,500 square feet more of coastal prairie to enjoy (and that much less to mow). Some in the coastal prairie circles say to start small, but at least start. For the health of our environment, for the animals that have always been here who need our stewardship, for our very mental and physical health, I say start where you are, with what you have where you can ... and don't ever stop.

For more information, visit: <https://dirtnkids.wordpress.com/dirt-play/pocket-prairie/>



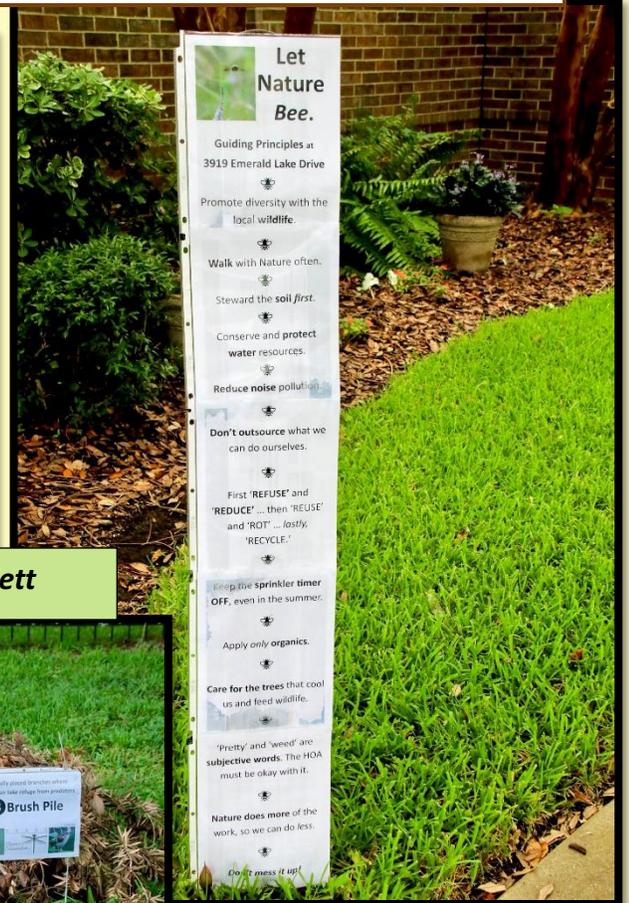
Pocket prairie, full bloom (May



One of twin fawns in prairie cover (May 2020)

Chapter Member's Yard Wows Quail Valley Garden Tour Visitors

By Shannon Westveer, TMNCPC Training Co-director



Photos by Robbin Mallett



Tucked within the Sienna development, Scott and Shannon Westveer's property hosts hundreds of wildlife species along Oyster Creek. The woodland riparian, and prairie habitats provide refuge for all. It is lightly managed by the owners rather than outsourcing the work, helping nature to thrive in a human-made ecosystem. Crepe myrtles and Ligustrum are left to reach full height and summer bloom, never topped or hedged, lowering the summer energy bill and providing food and shelter for bees and birds as well. Equipped only with a push mower and hand or electric tools, a healthy soil ecosystem comes first. No need for chemicals, fertilizers, or watering schedules here. Mature oak trees (bur, live, Shumard) and native pecans provide all the carbon for mulching, composting, and retaining turf moisture in the summer heat. Walking paths created for people invite daily reflection within nature; a bird bath is more entertaining to watch than any TV or phone screen. Don't forget your binoculars! Fruiting trees (fig, peach, pear, plum) beckon female deer to raise their fawns in the backyard, bedding them down within wildflowers where they are safely hidden from predators. They are happy to coexist with us each spring Other babies – wrens on the back porch, cardinals in the hedge, herons along the creek, bluebirds in the next box, owls and hawks in the trees – are reared annually with all the insects the yard provides for their babies. Like the owners, they all know fabulous real estate when they find it.

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you" Frank Lloyd Wright



Grab Your Cameras. It's Photo Contest Time!

By Robbin Mallett, TMNCPC Communications Director

I'm a board member of two non-profits. Ironically, they have the same abbreviation – CPC. In addition to serving as Communications Director of the Coastal Prairie Chapter (CPC), I am a board member of the Cullinan Park Conservancy (CPC).

One of my current projects is coordinating the 2020 Cullinan Park Photo Contest. I know our chapter has more than a few excellent photographers, so I want to encourage all the camera buffs to enter your best shots taken at Cullinan. You don't have to be a pro. We've even had winning shots taken with a cell phone. Sometimes all it takes is seeing something unique. I'd love to see Cullinan from the perspective of Texas Master Naturalists. Show us aspects of nature the average park-goer might not notice – insects, reptiles, native plants, fungi, animal behavior or any special features of the park's habitat. If you haven't been to the park yet, this is a great reason to visit.

We had two winners related to our chapter last year – Pauline Zinn placed first in the Photographer's Choice category and Jo Willars' daughter, Hannah, won first in the Youth Wildlife category. I'd love to see more winners from the chapter this year. The contest is blind judged by a panel of skilled local photographers.

You can submit up to five total photos in any of four categories: wildlife, flora (trees, flowers, plants), landscape and photographer's choice. To encourage young photographers, there is also an "18 and under" category so youth and teens can be judged with their peers. There is no fee to participate, and the photos may have been taken at any time of year at Joseph S. and Lucie H. Cullinan Park, just north of Sugar Land Regional Airport on Highway 6 in Sugar Land. The Deadline to enter is August 31, 2020. For rules and entry details, please visit <https://www.cullinainparkconservancy.org/Contest>.

You might also comb through your nature photos or get out and get shooting at Seabourne Creek or anywhere in Texas. I'm also planning to hold an internal Coastal Prairie Chapter Photo Contest this summer that will lead up to the statewide Virtual Annual Conference. It will follow the same categories and rules as the Conference contest, so details will be announced as soon as they are available. So, I hope you'll get out and capture the beauty that surrounds us. Nature photography is a wonderful way to inspire others to learn and care more about our world and the wildlife we share it with.



ENTER YOUR BEST SHOTS!

Cullinan Park Photo Contest 2020

Entry Period: June 1 - August 31

**See Full Details & Rules at:
cullinainparkconservancy.org**



Age Groups: Adult & Youth (18 & Under)

Categories: Wildlife, Landscape, Flora, Photographer's Choice

Photos Must Be Taken at Cullinan Park - 12414 Highway 6 S, Sugar Land



Seabourne Creek Nature Park Monthly Report

By Jerry Trenta, TMNCPC Seabourne Director

June saw a return of the Seabourne Volunteer Days (with masks and social distancing) and a lot was accomplished this month:

A large tree limb that had fallen across the bird blind pond was removed by a work party including Bill Johnson, Garrett Engelhardt, Kevin Engelhardt, Bob Naeger and John Rouane. The debris was set aside and the pond area cleared. Blair Margot also came by and repaired the drip connection above the pond.

Wednesday June 17 was by far the busiest volunteer day this year. A group of five volunteers was working in the Butterfly Garden; a group of seven volunteers was at work in the Demo Garden and later 4 of this group worked in the Pollinator Area; a group of four, including a couple of 12 year-old eagle scout candidates, bumped up 151 plants in the bump-up area and a group of six volunteers did yeoman work in painting the two equipment sheds and the tractor shelter a "minted lemon" light green coating. A fantastic job by all.

Additionally, the 31 volunteer hours worked by the six ExxonMobil Retirees and Spouses that day were submitted as an ExxonMobil Team Involvement Program \$500 Grant request. It has since been approved for payment by ExxonMobil. This is our second ExxonMobil Team VIP Grant this year.

774 plants were bumped-up in June either at the park or at Carol Hawkins backyard. Year-to-date bump-ups total 3,583. June plantings in the Prairie Restoration area totaled 694 and a year-to-date total of 2,351. The difference between the two totals shows that we have over one thousand plants growing out on the nursery tables. The greenhouse is also beginning to fill again thanks to seed trays added by Mark Morgenstern and Jerry Trenta.

Sadly, we are putting the Seabourne Volunteer Workdays on pause again starting with July 1, due to the sharp rise in Covid-19 cases in the area. Individual work tasks can still be done, such as bird feed maintenance, bump-ups or separations, plantings, and mowing if it is being done by individuals or couples working alone. Contact Jerry Trenta for any currently available tasks that can be set up on your schedule.



Jerry & Lynn Trenta Jamie Fairchild Margo & Blair Margot Rick Adams
ExxonMobil Team Members



Eagle Scout Candidates
 and mom - Irene Huseman

Photos by Robbin Mallett

In Our Own Backyards and Other Places**The Gray Tree Frog** *Photo and Text by Diane Eismont*

Have you ever seen a Gray Treefrog? They are native to the eastern half of Texas and are found in wooded areas along creeks and rivers. This one is on a 3/4 -inch PVC pipe about 3 and a half feet high marking a water line. They normally live in trees or shrubs and need water access. We have 3 concrete bird drippers nearby and are about a quarter mile from the Brazos. They are said to be primarily nocturnal & most likely to be seen during breeding season. I took these photos about 5 PM on 5/10/20.

They are about 2 inches long (1¼ "x 2 ¾"). Identification can be made by a dark-edged light spot under the eye, legs with dark bands and large dark blotches on the back. They have large pads on top of long toes. They eat crickets, moths, flies, earthworms, ants, grasshoppers and beetles.



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places *(Continued)***Reporting from the Hurley Early Birds Backyard**

Photos and Text by Terri Hurley, TMNCPC Vice President

About ten years ago, my son and husband built a simple but very productive natural-looking pond under the wax myrtle trees in our backyard along Oyster Creek. They also installed a mister that continuously drips into the pond, making a nice sound that has attracted all sorts of creatures over the years. Later I added a cheap, motion-activated wild game camera focused on the pond in order to see what goes on while no one's watching. It took a while, but eventually beautiful birds found the pond and now they come to it daily, especially during spring and fall migration. Coyotes, raccoons, armadillos, skunks, possum, ring-tailed cats, feral hogs, deer, rats, mice and even bobcats have also used the pond over the years. This is truly astonishing since we don't live out in the country, but we are close to Cullinan Park.

This past May, while checking the thousands of photos on the 32-gigabyte camera card for action, I was amazed to see a little of the circle of life play out over a series of 17 photos. It was May 20 at 7 am. In the first photo, I could see a well-hidden bobcat intensely focused on something off to the right. Over the next ten photos, he was inching forward very slowly, still staring at whatever it was that caught his attention. In the 12th photo, the bobcat was running off to the right and moving so fast that the photo was blurry. But over the next several photos, the bobcat was nowhere to be seen, so surely that was the end of the story. Not so fast! In the last photo in the series, the bobcat can be seen coming back across the pond, carrying a fat squirrel in his mouth. What excitement to see a story like this play out in my own backyard, during the day, and caught on camera!

Later, while reflecting back on this event, I remembered that at about one week before this event, there were at least 7 squirrels living the high life off the 'restaurant' we always provide for the birds. But over the course of a several days, they had dwindled down to two. Well now we know the reason why! That bobcat must have caught them. Nature is beautiful and cruel at the same time. But excitement still goes on at the pond....I'll report again when something new and interesting happens!



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places (Continued)

Reporting from the Hurley Early Birds Backyard



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

A new lizard in town – Cuban Brown Anole and its Effect on Our Native Species *Amy Barton & Chris Garza (Sent in by chapter member John Donaho)*

You've probably noticed the bright lime colored lizards scurrying along fence tops or basking in the sun on tree branches. These are our native species of anole lizards, called green anoles. You have probably also noticed the brown anoles with a diamond pattern and a ridge on their back. These are the Cuban brown anoles, an invasive species that first entered the United States a century ago. In the last 30 years, the Cuban anole population has spread from Florida and the Keys to Texas and Louisiana.

A change in our native green anole

Green anole



Since the encroachment of the Cuban brown anole, [studies](#) have shown that our native green anole has begun to show some morphological and behavioral changes. What scientists have found, and what you can probably witness at home, is that the green anole is now choosing to live higher off the ground and they have developed larger toe pads.

Interesting fact: green anoles can change their color from green to dark brown. They can be differentiated between the Cuban brown anole because they do not have the ridge or diamond pattern along their backs.

Why is our native green anole experiencing these changes?

The green anole and the Cuban brown anole both occupy the same niche, or place in the ecosystem. This means that they both live on the ground and in low lying branches, and eat the same food, insects. But the brown anoles tend to out-compete green anoles on the ground and lower boles of trees. They have even been described as being more aggressive than the native green anole. Instead of toughening up, the green anoles who used to occupy these lower spaces are now more commonly found feeding in higher, flimsier branches and leaves. This is considered a shift in behavior due to resource partitioning. In a short period of time, green anoles have evolved larger toe pads to help cling to these more precarious branches and twigs.

What can you do to help the green anole?

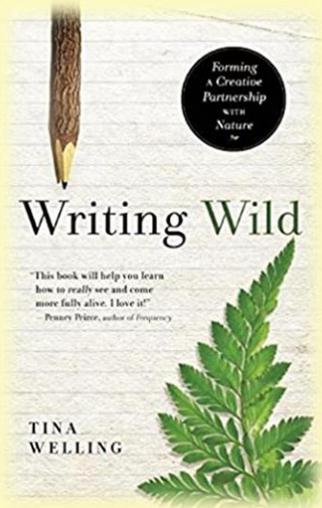
As one of our conservation staff members, Chris Garza, pointed out, the Cuban brown anole is edible! Chris even shared a recipe he found: [Cuban brown anole recipe](#)

If you're looking for a more realistic approach, you can always look to your garden and make sure you have proper green anole habitat. Since the green anole is now living higher off the ground, providing some higher levels in your garden for them to perch might give them more habitat. They can be seen in hanging pots, on fences, and in shrubs and trees.

Houston Arboretum & Nature Center



The Book Corner



Writing Wild

Tina Welling

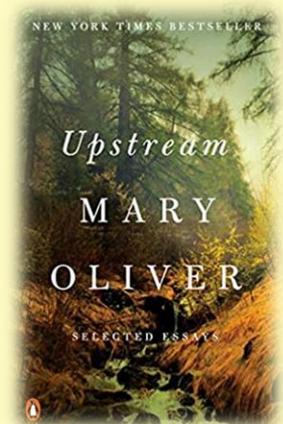
Even if we don't write about nature, Tina Welling demonstrates, nature triggers our stories. This is because "everything we know about creating, we know intuitively from the natural world." One can set the stage for creation by following these three steps: consciously naming the information gathered by the senses, describing the sensory details of one particular object, and interacting with the energy system of the universe. Welling discovered the last step while hiking and observing an intricate spiderweb shimmering in sunlight. Spiderwebs, she notes, are both "wondrous and ordinary" — ordinary in that they are made of chewed-up insects, yet wondrous in their intricacy. Welling shows writers how to make this kind of connection between the everyday and the hidden, worthy-of-attention beauty all around us. She makes the process of developing a fruitful relationship with wildness inside and out accessible to all writers and insight seekers.

The New York Times bestselling collection of essays from beloved poet, Mary Oliver.

"In the beginning I was so young and such a stranger to myself I hardly existed. I had to go out into the world and see it and hear it and react to it, before I knew at all who I was, what I was, what I wanted to be."

So begins *Upstream*, a collection of essays in which revered poet Mary Oliver reflects on her willingness, as a young child and as an adult, to lose herself within the beauty and mysteries of both the natural world and the world of literature. Emphasizing the significance of her childhood "friend" Walt Whitman, through whose work she first understood that a poem is a temple, "a place to enter, and in which to feel," and who encouraged her to vanish into the world of her writing, Oliver meditates on the forces that allowed her to create a life for herself out of work and love. As she writes, "I could not be a poet without the natural world. Someone else could. But not me. For me, the door to the woods is the door to the temple."

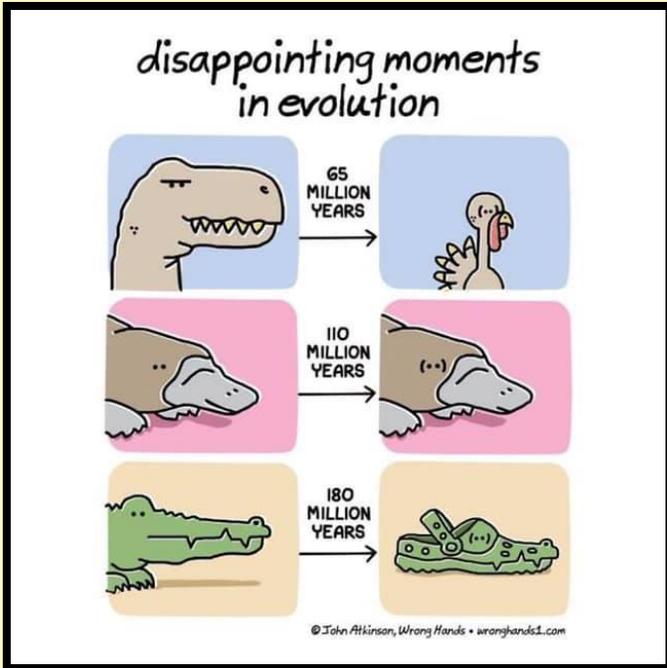
Upstream follows Oliver as she contemplates the pleasure of artistic labor, her boundless curiosity for the flora and fauna that surround her, and the responsibility she has inherited from Shelley, Wordsworth, Emerson, Poe, and Frost, the great thinkers and writers of the past, to live thoughtfully, intelligently, and to observe with passion. Throughout this collection, Oliver positions not just herself upstream but us as well as she encourages us all to keep moving, to lose ourselves in the awe of the unknown, and to give power and time to the creative and whimsical urges that live within us.



Upstream

Mary Oliver

The Lighter Side



John Donaho (Facebook)

There was a Master Naturalist who lived by a forest. As he grew older and older, he started losing his hair, until one day, on his deathbed, he was completely bald. That day, he called his children to a meeting...

He said, "Look at my hair. It used to be so magnificent, but it's completely gone now. My hair can't be saved. But look outside at the forest. It's such a lovely forest with so many trees, but sooner or later they'll all be cut down and this forest will look as bald as my head."

"What I want you to do..." the man continued. "Is, every time a tree is cut down or dies, plant a new one in my memory. Tell your descendants to do the same. It shall be our family's duty to keep this forest strong."

And, so they did. Each time the forest lost a tree, the children replanted one, and so did their children, and their children after them.

And for centuries, the forest remained as lush and pretty as it once was, all because of **one man and his re-seeding heirline.**

John Donaho



Julie Gentry (Facebook)



Neil JW (Facebook)

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Setting up a native-nativar plant study

Posted on [January 8, 2020](#) by [Jen Hayes](#) Garden Ecology



Natives vs Nativars Recent studies report an increase in consumer demand for native plants, largely due to their benefits to bees and other pollinators. This interest has provided the nursery industry with an interesting labelling opportunity. If you walk into a large garden center, you find many plant pots labelled as "native" or "pollinator friendly". Some of these plants include cultivated varieties of wild native plant species, called "nativars". While many studies confirm the value of native plants to pollinators, we do not yet understand if nativars provide the same resources to their visitors. To read more on this go to

<http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/gardenecologylab/2020/01/08/setting-up-a-native-nativar-plant-study/>

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