

Coastal Prairie Chapter Courier

December 2021 Volume 12 Issue 11



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Volunteer Opportunities Increase
Fall 2021 Class Graduates -The CPC Way
SCNP Butterfly Garden Gets an Upgrade



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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Cover

Photo by Joyce Tipton showing the CPC Fall 2021 graduation in a very special way at Brazos Bend State Park.

Please send articles and photos by the 28th of the month to Lynn Trenta, Courier Editor

Fellow Chapter Members:

A time for celebration and remembrance

December brings joy, challenges, and a time for recollection.

“December is the toughest month of the year. Others are July, January, September, April, November, May, March, June, October, August, and February.” – [Mark Twain](#) (American writer, humorist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer)

“Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty... I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well.” – [Theodore Roosevelt](#) (American politician, statesman, conservationist, naturalist, historian, and writer)

The last two years of the pandemic have presented our chapter with many new and unexpected challenges. You have risen to those challenges and exceeded all expectations. I am so proud to have been your president during these trying times.

When I became president in January last year, I had many plans to increase outreach and create new partnerships. Given the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we had to adapt our plans and move forward in new ways. We leveraged new tools — like Slack, Mailchimp, and Zoom — and taught each other along the way. We then leveraged our newfound skills and helped the state program hold its first virtual Annual Meeting last year. We worked so hard and performed so well that we earned the first and only Exemplary Service award presented to a chapter — the highest award ever given by the state program.

While some other chapters shuttered their training programs, we pushed forward with online training and put on two training classes each year. We shared our technical and practical knowledge with other chapters because it's the right thing to do. We created a Slack workspace for the state program so that chapters across the state could share best practices and help one another. When the state program needed help holding a hybrid format for this year's Annual Meeting, we stepped up and provided technical expertise and volunteers. And at next year's Annual Meeting in Houston, our chapter will be front-and-center doing what we do best — that which is important and difficult.

Our chapter embraces challenges and hard work. Whether improving ecosystems at Seabourne, restoring prairie land at the Katy Prairie Conservancy, planting for birds at Cullinan Park, creating new partnerships with the Houston Museum of Natural Science and Fort Bend County, helping a Girl Scout Troop with a bat house project, implementing new technologies, or a myriad of other activities — the Coastal Prairie Chapter moves forward to complete our mission. We are an unstoppable force, and we are growing rapidly. By this time next year, we will have over 200 members, making us one of the largest chapters in the state. I think Teddy Roosevelt would have been proud of how our chapter has thrived in adversity.

I am.

Continued on the next page--

President's Message *(Continued)*

At the end of December, I will transition out of the role of chapter president. Chapter members will elect a new set of officers at our upcoming Chapter Program Meeting on December 2. I am very confident in our transition plan and the chapter members who have stepped up to take on leadership roles. Each has my utmost confidence. And I know they will have your strong and continued support.

I will continue to work in the background on some exciting new projects to help our chapter. And I will continue to be available to help in any way that I can. More to come!

Moving forward

Our partnership with the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) in Sugar Land is expanding! We will have an increased presence on their campus soon and other avenues of cooperation are being explored. And, with Fort Bend now at yellow risk level, we plan to hold Chapter Program Meetings there as well. We are also working to create a formal partnership agreement. More information will be coming soon.

We are close to finalizing an agreement with Fort Bend County Parks and Recreation to partner in the development of Daily Park in Simonton. And our annual grant from the Rosenberg Development Corporation for our work at Seabourne is on track for approval.

We continue to grow, adapt, and most importantly — have fun!

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

All the best,

*Bert Stipelcovich
bert@coastalprairie.org
 713-540-2378*



December 2 Chapter Program and Meeting “History of the Free Brazos, Waco to the Gulf” by Bruce Bodson

THIS WILL BE A ZOOM MEETING as well as an in person meeting and advance registration required. Check the website two days before the meeting for the registration link. Members will receive an email with the registration link. After registering, you will receive another email with further details.

Members can meet in person at the Houston Museum of Natural Science in Sugar Land, but need to sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f084dabaa22a4f85-tmncpc>

The Free Brazos is one of the longest undammed river segments in Texas. From below Brazos River Lake in Waco to the mouth of the river at Freeport, the Brazos flows over 425 miles with no further man made impediments. Over much of this distance, the Free Brazos is the closest thing to true wilderness that exists. Despite being a public water, the Free Brazos is one of the least utilized and least known rivers in the state. Many people who live within the leveed floodplain of the river are unaware of its presence, or if they are aware, are afraid of it. Yet, for those of us who know and appreciate the river it is an amazing place, full of ecological diversity and historical significance. Let's explore the Free Brazos and learn a bit about this wilderness corridor in our neighborhood and how you can visit and help keep it free and accessible.

The [Texas Master Naturalist](#) program is sponsored by [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) and [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#). [TMNCPC members in attendance should record their Advanced Training hours under 'AT: Chapter Meeting-Coastal Prairie' plus the VSP hours for the business meeting under 'Chapter Business: Chapter Meeting'.]



Membership Minute *by Jan and Kevin Kolk, Membership Directors*

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

Initial Certification

- *Peyton Belunek (Fall, 2021)*
- *Scott Tufts (Fall, 2021)*
- *Donald Parkhouse (Fall, 2021)*
- *Elizabeth Greene (Spring, 2020)*

2021 Recertification (70 members recertified so far)

- *Jan Peterson*
- *Aida Pita*
- *Scott Tufts*

250 Hour Milestone

- *Scott Wagner*

How Well Do You Know Our Members?

*Couples constitute a significant portion of our membership. Here's a few. Can you match the description with the appropriate pair? **Answers on page 22***

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Accountants</i> | A. <i>Lynn/Jerry Trenta</i> |
| 2. <i>Live in Katy</i> | B. <i>Bill/Margo Johnson</i> |
| 3. <i>>8000 VSP hours combined</i> | C. <i>Kathy/Kevin Biddle</i> |
| 4. <i>Pharmacists</i> | D. <i>Julie/Barry Barentine</i> |
| 5. <i>Rice instructors</i> | E. <i>Greg/Terri Hurley</i> |
| 6. <i>Gulf Coast Bird Observatory volunteers</i> | F. <i>Joyce Tipton/ Lucy Moyer</i> |
| 7. <i>Engineers</i> | G. <i>John/Ursula Cooper</i> |

To see previous chapter programs go to the Members' Section on the chapter website.



Volunteer Service Projects Highlights *by Johanna DeYoung, Membership Director*

More good news this month!!! On 11/12/2021, Fort Bend County moved to a Yellow COVID Alert Status!

Debbie Ellis has submitted her Butterfly Workshop on Wheels (WOW) to the Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter (TMNCPC) WOW collection. Upon gathering books to accompany this WOW, it will be available in the AgriLife Office to check out for outreach opportunities. Watch for updates.

TMNCPC has a new VSP opportunity: Artist Boat Coastal Heritage Preserve: preserve maintenance such as mowing, laying down seeds, bumping up plants and removing invasive species.

As a chapter within the State TMN Program, the TMNCPC assumes and applies the highest risk level within our jurisdiction (Fort Bend, Waller and Wharton Counties), as well as, within other neighboring counties we serve.

Reminder: No more than 20 hours of VSP service outside of Fort Bend, Waller and Wharton Counties may be counted toward certification or recertification.

CURRENT STATUS

11/12/2021: Fort Bend County moved COVID-19 Risk Level from Orange "Moderate/Significant Risk" to Yellow "Low/Moderate" with the following guidance: "Attendance at Events and Entertainment - Attend events only with proper physical distancing practices in place. Opt for small to medium size events (<50 people) to avoid large group settings. Outdoor Entertainment - Continue good personal protective measure such as facial coverings and physical distancing. Consider events that are less crowded and have better controls to keep you safe, such as capped numbers of attendees and good cleaning practices."

Texas A & M AgriLife Ext .issued the following: "The following considerations should direct how the Texas Master Naturalist Program will operate for the foreseeable future. Considerations for all TMN Activities:

It is very important to know and follow all federal, state, county and local COVID guidelines/restrictions before conducting TMN Activities. Beyond these, please consider the following in planning gatherings:

- 1. Virtual meeting platform tools are useful and should remain an important consideration for meetings & events.*
- 2. For any indoor/outdoor activities that occur in-person, masks & social distancing considerations are encouraged.*

Please note regarding vaccines: Our program and agencies currently have no legal authority to develop policy based on private health information (HIPAA laws) at this time and we don't anticipate the program drafting its own policy or allowances, etc. addressing whether individuals (members or the public) with vaccines can/cannot participate in any TMN activities and where, when and how. Texas Master Naturalist members or members of the public should not be asked about their vaccination status. Chapters may encourage persons in program settings to continuing following CDC guidance. There shall be NO EFFORT (including casual comments made publicly or privately) to DISCOURAGE the use of face coverings or any COVID related safety precaution. Those who wish to wear masks and practice COVID protocols should be respected and their wishes supported." 3/2/2021: Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued Executive Order No. GA-34 noting changes in COVID-19 restrictions. These changes, which included lifting the mask mandate and opening businesses to 100%, took effect on 3/10/2021. Governor Abbott encouraged the continuation of wearing masks when maintaining a physical distance cannot be maintained.

For all VSP activities please adhere to these TMN COVID-19 Precautions: "For any indoor or outdoor activities that do occur in-person, masks and social distancing considerations are encouraged."

Fort Bend County COVID-19 Yellow Precautions: "Continue good personal protective measure such as facial coverings and physical distancing. Opt for small to medium size events (<50 people to avoid large group settings."

VSP OPPORTUNITIES

Seed Ball Making in Demo Garden at Seabourne Creek Nature Park

Join Andrea Morgenstern for a morning of seed ball making for the Brazos Bend State Park's "Holiday in the Park" event. Wednesday, Dec.1, 9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon – weather permitting – at Seabourne Creek Nature Park

Contact for additional information: Andrea Morgenstern – amorgy@gmail.com/713-408-8599

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category "SCNP-7 Habitats Public Access: TMN Report Hours"]

Volunteer Service Projects Highlights (Continued)

Brazos Bend State Park: "Holiday in the Park"

Brazos Bend State Park has invited the Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter (TMNCPC) to join them in their Winter Holiday Event, "Holiday in the Park," on Saturday, Dec. 11, from 12:00 -6:00 PM. The TMNCPC will be sharing its Skins and Skulls Workshop on Wheels (WOW) at this event and volunteers are needed.

Shifts remain available to be filled via <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f084dabaa22a4f85-brazos>.

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category "Texas State Parks: TMN Report Hours"]

Katy Prairie Conservancy – Stewardship Saturdays

Assist KPC in removing invasive species; clearing fences of vegetation; and planting Texas native plants at the Indiangrass Preserve 31975 Hebert Road Waller TX 77484, on Saturday, Dec. 11, 9:00 – 11:00 AM. All other tools are provided. Contact: 713-523-6135 ext. 4032 or info@katyprairie.org

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under: "Katy Prairie Conservancy: TMN Report Hours."]

Seabourne Volunteer Days Wednesday mornings 9:00 – 11:00 AM; and 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

For bump ups, prairie planting, nursery maintenance, and/or trail maintenance, please contact Jerry Trenta, Seabourne director (713-898-4782 jerrytrenta@txtrentas.com), For demo garden work, please contact Lynn Trenta, (832-646-4769 ltrenta50@gmail.com) For bird sanctuary work, please contact Bill Johnson, (281-734-3349 rxrelo@aol.com) For butterfly garden work, please contact Katie Sallan, (713-502-5701 katie@coastalprairie.org)

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category "SCNP-7 Habitats Public Access: TMN Report Hours"]

Seabourne Garden Group Zoom meetings/ field trips include education committee meetings (signage inc.), and program meetings offering information to members. If interested, contact [Jan Kolk](#), [Lynn Trenta](#), or [Katie Sallan](#).

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category "SCNP-7 Habitats Public Access: TMN Report Hours"]

2021 Texas Master Naturalist Virtual Volunteer Fair - Aug. 31 - Sep.1:

If you could not attend the live presentations, the recordings from the Virtual Volunteer Fair can be found at <https://txmn.tamu.edu/virtual-volunteer-fair-august-2021/#attendee>.

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category: "TMN Virtual Volunteer Service Fair: TMN Report Hours"]

Volunteer for a Spring 2022 Training Class Session

It takes a village! In an early Dec. 2021 meeting, Shannon Westveer will present on how you can get VSP hours by helping the Spring 2022 Training Class. Signup will fill up fast; there are 26 in-person slots, 14 Zoom slots, and 2 back-ups for every session. The link will be shared here first before being blasted via Signup email and the Weekly Bulletin. Stay tuned! [VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category: "Chapter Business: TMN Report Hours," then under "Chapter Administration, note "Training Classes"]

VSP WOW Training

On Dec. 8, at 2:00 PM, the TMNCPC will offer in-person training on how to set up and present the Skins and Skulls WOW at an outreach event such as a festival or other school or community event. Now that our three counties, Fort Bend, Waller, and Wharton, are opening a little more, we'll have many opportunities for outreach in 2022. All members of TMNCPC are invited to attend. We will meet at one of the AgriLife extension conference room. The Grand Poobah himself, Jim Butcher and Terri Hurley will go over how to set up the WOW on a table, the contents of the WOW, ideas about what to say about each item, the use of the script we have (which is optional), the retractable banner, our tablecloth, etc. The Signup Genius for attending this training follows:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F084DABAA22A4F85-skins>. [VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category: "Chapter Business: TMN Report Hours," then under "Chapter Administration, note "Training Classes"]

Please continue to check the website calendar and Slack for VSP updates. If there is no existing VSP description fitting a potential VSP opportunity, please request and complete an VSP Proposal Form. In turn, the VSP Committee, Terri Hurley, Charris Powers, Lynn Trenta, and Johanna DeYoung, will review the proposal to determine if it qualifies as an VSP opportunity. If you are aware of VSP opportunities, have questions about VSP opportunities, or unsure how to record an VSP opportunity, please contact Johanna DeYoung (832-689-4877 johanna@coastalprairie.org).

New TMNCPC Tradition? *by Joyce Tipton*



The Fall 2021 TMNCPC new class concluded on October 30 with a field trip to Brazos Bend State Park. To honor their accomplishment and celebrate the end of initial training, four members of the Spring 2021 class collaborated with New Class Coordinator Shannon Westveer to provide a graduation for the new members! Ute Welk, Jan Peterson, Lucy Moyer, and I had a great time putting it together. Many of the new class mentors joined the celebration to cheer on their mentees.



The Hale Lake Pavilion in the park was festooned with Congratulations Grads table clothes, banners, and spinners adding a festive touch at the conclusion of the class. Since this was the very first in-person gathering for the Class of Fall 2021 due to Covid threat level, everyone was invited to join in the "Find someone who..." activity to learn more about their classmates. They were given a game sheet and had to match people to the criteria on the sheet - such as, find someone who... is wearing boots, knows what mycorrhizae is, has two or more kids, has native plants in their yard, can pronounce our president's name, who loves Texas Master Naturalists!



Of course, no graduation is complete without "diplomas" ceremonially presented to the music of Pomp and Circumstance. As names were called, new graduates came forward to accept theirs from Shannon and receive a rousing applause. And no real celebration is complete without CAKE, appropriately adorned with a dragonfly!

Photo by
Paula Dittrick

Filled up on yummy Italian cream cake and carrot cake, mixed nuts, and fruit (I'm sure someone must have eaten fruit!), the class and mentors headed out for an interpretive hike with BBSP guides to end the day and their only in-person field trip.



The new TMNCPC tradition? Wouldn't it be a great tradition for each class to pay it forward by hosting a graduation celebration for the following class? Congratulations to the new class graduates and can't wait to continue to work with you all in the future!



Photos by Joyce Tipton





Fall 2021: Another Rockin' (Pandemic) Training Class *By Shannon Westveer*

Two training classes per year ... what could possibly go wrong? Spring wrapped up in good order late April, with a pandemic risk level in Fort Bend County moving in the right direction: from orange to green. Its schedule full of field trips would more than make up for the previous pandemic class which lacked any at all. Spring 2021 hosted by Fall 2020 was a cocktail combination, everyone benefiting from long-awaited field outings. It certainly set a high bar for this Fall Class. The course calendar came together quickly early summer with cooperation by conservation partners, especially with the new instruction leadership of Brian Koch of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and Marissa Llosa of Houston Parks Board. Posted for the public early July, there was never a need for publicizing: all 24 training class spots were filled less than two days from open enrollment: a record for our chapter. What does that say about the times? (A lot, I can tell you.)

Several Fort Bend Master Gardeners signed up, the most in a New Class. Mac McDowell, our program adviser, likely had something to do with that as their mission aligns well with ours; we even share a co-sponsor in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Another trainee would plan to certify with our chapter only to transfer out to another; training Master Naturalists is what we do, after all, no matter where in the state they intend to serve. Others had been waiting for months, up to a year; they wasted no time joining thanks to an easy-to-use on-line system crafted by talented CPC Committee members. Some trainees eeked in with early registration the day before enrollment opened to the general public. By Day 2, people were already being waitlisted.

Upon initial orientation and mentor assignment it became apparent Fall 2021 Trainees would be another enthusiastic and energetic group. Then the unexpected '4th wave' came and the news hit hard: we would have to shift to remote classes just days before Session 1 even began.

Thanks to the unyielding spirit and assistance of their previous Spring Class members, the schedule once again turned on a dime from in-person to virtual. With past training classes held during the 1st, 3rd, and now 4th waves, we were already quite familiar with Zoom and virtual field trips got created with volunteers and field advisors as if old hat. We are a chapter cohesive and cooperative. Adaptable and flexible are resounding traits. This class accepted the training with its own charisma, charm, curiosity, and grace, a boost to our ranks in their own virtual pandemic fashion.

Just in time for one last class, the pandemic risk level moved from red to orange so we would finally meet in person — outdoors! Brazos Bend State Park was the perfect venue to host the class and graduation ceremony with a beautiful day and alligators ta boot.

Fall 2021 Class: Thank you all for sticking with us. We look forward to meeting you again at chapter gatherings, outreach events, volunteering with you at Seabourne Creek Nature Park and beyond as you become the best Texas Master Naturalists you have already been trained to be. Get out there and find your stride and make your community shine right where you are. Welcome to the Coastal Prairie Chapter, Class of Fall 2021. Blue sprinkle donuts for you all!

Initially Certified:

- Peyton Belunek
- Don Parkhouse
- Scott Tufts (re-certified for 2021!)

- Trey and Kristi Fleming
- Neil Lisco
- Anita Maddox
- Mary Parkhouse

<https://txmn.org/coastal/files/2021/07/Fall-2021-Training-Schedule-v.1.0.pdf>

Completed training:

- Linda Bair
- Barry and Julie Barentine
- Charles Borsos
- Renee Brown
- Judi Ann Carlsson
- Megan Cromeens

- Randall Schmidt
- Simon Tice
- Caleb Vargas
- Phil Ward and Elaine Whiteley
- Liz Watkins
- Keith and Robin Winfree



Putting Down Roots *By Shannon Westveer*



It had been a while since I last hiked the Ann Hamilton Trail at Katy Prairie in Waller, Texas. My husband, binoculars, and backpack in tow, we sat and ate lunch after the KPC-led hike, gazing out on the grasses and wildflowers of the prairie, listening to the Dickcissels loudly singing to one another. It was right there we began the process to restore this remarkable ecosystem in our own backyard. That was Memorial Day 2019, months before becoming a Texas Master Naturalist™, a full year before my own prairie pocket would burst into life.

Only two years and four pandemic waves later, I returned to Waller County whose prairie grasses first stole my heart and breathed renewed vigor into my soul. As I queued behind a short line of cars waiting to park that morning, it was already clear that Katy Prairie Conservancy's (KPC) 'Putting Down Roots' would be a most fantastic day out.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts along with families and other interested prairie people filtered through the various outreach tables set up to welcome and engage them about the importance of the coastal prairie ecosystem. Our own Johanna DeYoung and Debbie Ellis brought the newest outreach table WoW: monarchs and butterflies. Debbie had even brought some live ambassador caterpillars from her yard for kids to see up close!

My goal was to help in whatever way KPC needed so that they could get as many plants into the ground as possible during the event. Fellow Fall Class members Kristi Fleming and Peyton Belunek joined me for a hike over to Iris Poteet's group. Two more classmates – Phil Ward and Elaine Whiteley – were already there awaiting instruction from this TMN Gulf Coast member and KPC super-volunteer.

Before we began, I informed the group, "This lady here," putting my hand on Iris' shoulder, "is directly responsible for my even becoming a Naturalist." She had quite literally put me on my Coastal Prairie path forward on my previous visit to the prairie. For the day, here we were, TMN Gulf Coast Chapter (hers) and TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter (mine) working together for the beneficial management of natural resources in our community: the State Program's very clear and common mission. Iris and I – in the words of Jaime Gonzalez – were now 'cross-pollinating' our knowledge.

According to Bethany Foshee, KPC's newest Volunteer Coordinator, 175 people joyfully worked to get 800 1-gallon native grasses and forbs into their proper homes within the prairie preserve. The weather was beautiful and cooperative, and other Katy Prairie super-volunteers from TMN CPC, Izzy Retiz, Peter Parsons, and Bob Naeger, helped as well.

Plant a little prairie!

<https://www.katyprairie.org/putting-down-roots>

<https://www.katyprairie.org/education-outreach-1>

<https://www.katyprairie.org/pocketprairies>



Debbie Ellis with her Butterfly WOW

Photos by Shannon Westveer



Invasive Species Alert---How to Get Rid of Hammerhead Worms (Texasinvasives) Sent in by Carol and Bob Schwartz, Seabourne Bird Hike Leaders



You may have noticed a spike in media attention about hammerhead worms, but these long snake-like flatworms have been around since the 80's. This predatory worm preys on earthworms, secretes chemicals through their skin that can cause skin irritations to humans, and can carry parasitic nematodes within them. All the media attention has been a great help in educating the public and encouraging people to report sightings, which increasing our data collection, and helps expand our knowledge on the worm's established geological range; however, this doesn't really help the people that are left with the worms. You should not cut the worm into pieces because each section can regenerate into a fully developed worm within a few weeks. So, what should you do if you find a hammerhead worm?

First, take a picture and report it to invasives@shsu.edu. Next, collect the worm and place it in a sealable container, such as a zip lock bag or a glass jar. ****It is important to note that when handling live flatworms please use gloves, a paper towel, or a stick, and hands should be washed in warm soapy water, and rinsed in alcohol or hand disinfectant.****

Once you have your flatworm in a container, apply salt, vinegar, or orange essence (citrus oil) directly to the worm, seal the container, and place it in the freezer for 48 hrs. The container should then be disposed of in the trash. If a glass jar was used, the container can be washed out, but will need to be disinfected with alcohol or a strong disinfectant. For more information about hammerhead flatworms, see the Texasinvasives info page [here](#).



Hammerhead worm
(*Bipalium* sp.). These worms
are typically light/honey
colored, with 1 to 5 dark
dorsal stripes, and long
snake-like bodies.
Credit: Arun T. P.

Like Putting Socks on a Rooster: A Hike in Big Bend National Park

Photos and Text by Naomi Brown

There are a million ways to die in Big Bend, National Park in far south Texas. Every living thing evolved to conserve water: plants and animals will stab, snag, poison or bite with sharp fangs in defense.

Non-living things don't care either: Sun dehydrates, rocks bend ankles, flash floods drown, altitude kills. Blood- - yours- - precious as water, a cheap commodity.

Knowing how to read a compass, map, carrying water, food, clothing, patient attitude and fitness were necessary survival skills. The rest is random luck.

Big Bend, located in far south-west Texas, is a wild, primitive place. Some plants and animals are seen nowhere else on Earth. It's worth experiencing. Now.

Hard getting to, a stone's throw to Mexico, it looks like an alien land, something creative Sci-Fi people had in a bad dream. Remote, un-forgiving, wild, un-predictable, yet; evocative of past eons, forgotten landscapes, folklore, cathedral rocks, dark skies; just the place for a trek.

I spent months preparing for Big Bend, dehydrating food, scheduling dental and medical appointments, training, making arrangements for the dogs, preparing Power of Attorney, studying terrain, buying special equipment, refreshing map and compass skills.

Waiting until it cooled to a mere 90 degrees in the desert, it was cheaper flying to El Paso, Texas, then hitching a ride south to the Bend.

It was indeed remote. I carefully examined the map, deciding on Santa Elena Canyon, Cattail Falls, Lost Mine Trail, Persimmon Gap, The Pinnacles and Lost Canyon complete with hoodoos.

The Chisos Mountains basin had a small store, flush toilets, Park rangers, cabins built by CCA, and limited essentials. There were no medical facilities. Humans were on their own. If you were injured, too bad for you.

Perhaps this is a good time to share although hiking, biking, and being in the outdoors, I am 70 years old. Not a spring chicken; yet as restless, healthy, and willing as an 18 year old. Wisdom, stubbornness, deliberate parsimony, only limitations.

Continued on the next page---



Ocotillo bloom



From Pinnacle Peak



Like Putting Socks on a Rooster: A Hike in Big Bend National Park *(Continued)*

Before leaving home, I triple checked my gear. Everything dehydrated, light to carry, necessary. Warm. Cool. Lifesaving. Credit cards, cash, water bladder, hats, head lamp. Identity and inoculation proving. First Aid kit. Only double duty clothing. Was I forgetting anything?

Deeming it too dangerous for my two small rescue dogs, I left my itinerary with Kathy, the dog boarding lady, promised return, and left for the wild. Took me two days to get to Big Bend, even though I lived in Houston, Texas. The silence was tangible. Vistas amazing. People, heavily tatted, traveled in groups, extra tires strapped on 4-wheel drive vehicles and jugs of water. Everyone looked like Steinbeck characters: Very friendly yet independent, these were my people.

I hiked up Persimmon Gap and Lost Mine, climbing slowly, envious of younger, faster couples, grateful for my pricey poles. Carefully watching my feet. Up The Pinnacles, I marveled how plants changed with increasing altitude. Madrone trees larger and blooming.

The sky was the bluest ever seen. Examining plants while resting, all were festooned with spines, hooks, poisons or very sharp; even rocks were jagged. Clothing was snagged, wool socks had burrs, toes full of sand. I watched a tarantula make her way across the path.

Staring at a single, neon red ocotillo bloom, I imagined the winged pollinator it needed and considered the fragility of natural world. It was grand!

Cattail Falls was on the other side of the desert Park. Purposefully purloined to save endangered plants and animals, it was magical. Misting, it highlighted delicate spider webs hanging from cacti and shrubs. Cattail Falls were awe inspiring.

Reminiscent of Appalachia, yet still in the Chihuahua Desert, there were huge boulders, a high waterfall, soft greenery, mosses, a microclimate harboring exotic plants and animals. Rocks were dangerously slippery, and being prudent, did not climb the entire Falls. Human words defy the rarity and weirdness and magic of the place.

The next day, I hiked Santa Elena Canyon. Staring at the high rock precipice, I marveled at Mexico's proximity, grateful for years studying Spanish, and admired the sandy, shallow Rio Grande, understanding how migrants of every species made this home.

I ventured into a damp, shady slot canyon, on the other side of the Park. If it rained... I was dead. I considered Edward Albee's Utah books. Big Bend is a wonderful Park. One worth your List.

It's remote, wild, wonderful. Pleasantly un-populated.

Come to think of it: Don't go. Too many tourists ruin the wild.



Cattails Falls



Slot Canyon



Tarantula out for a stroll



New Bird Viewing Area at Cullinan Park – TMNCPC members Helping to Design and Install! *by Terri Hurley*

There's a brand new bird sanctuary at Cullinan Park in Sugar Land. It's perfect for birding with your binoculars and it's great for bird photographers too. This new project was the brainchild of Robbin Mallet, TMNCPC member and president of the Cullinan Park Conservancy. She applied for and was granted funding for this project from Mark Scheuermann's winning team in the 2021 Great Texas Birding Classic. Robbin has worked with the city of Sugar Land, various contractors and many other entities for months to get this new amenity at the park approved and ready for installation.

The project involves creating a dedicated Bird Viewing Area (BVA) that will include two bird baths with drips, native plants and a feeding station to attract migratory and resident birds. The BVA was created in a quiet location in the park, but fairly close to parking. The bird drips will draw birds down from the treetops to drink and bathe, enabling park-goers to see them at eye level. We still have some finishing touches, signage and benches to add, but the majority of the work is complete and the plants should be in full bloom in time for spring migration.

Several of our members helped with the design and installation of the project. Terri Hurley helped with selection and sourcing of the native plants. Greg Hurley created a standing natural bird feeding tree that will soon hold hummingbird nectar feeders. Helping with the planting of the trees, shrubs and perennials were TMNCPC members Neil Lisco, Hilda and Jim Jurdi, Joyce Tipton, Greg Hurley, Susan Fortenberry and Lucy Moyer.



New Bird Viewing Area at Cullinan Park - TMNCPC Members Helping to Design and Install! *(Continued)*



Phase Two of the project will take place on December 4. Students from the [Youth in Philanthropy](#) group (sponsored by the George Foundation) will be onsite to help plant 50 more bird-attracting trees from Trees for Houston. TMNCPC members will lead and help these juniors and seniors in the tree planting and then in the afternoon we will help with a wildlife hike and perhaps a little bio-blitzing. If time allows, there will also be a trash pickup or invasive plant removal. Lunch will be provided for all volunteers. During lunch, Robbin will talk about the park and conservation. There is still space for TMNCPC members to sign up for helping with the afternoon hikes; check the [SignUp Genius](#) invite if you are interested in helping out.

There is also a need for help with future maintenance of the bird viewing area. Outreach opportunities at Cullinan will also be available soon. Keep an eye out for more information. In the meantime, please check out this new attraction at Cullinan!



Seabourne News



The Butterfly Garden at Seabourne Gets an Upgrade

by Katie Sallean, TMNCPC Treasurer and SCNP Butterfly Garden Coordinator



Members putting on new crushed granite
Photo by Garrett Engelhardt

Members have been hard at work in the butterfly garden for the past few months making upgrades to maximize the usability and functionality of the garden. An extra layer of stone pavers has been added to the garden borders to keep the weeds from encroaching on the pathways.

In addition, in the beginning of November, the grassy areas adjacent to the garden paths were paved with crushed gravel, courtesy of a dedicated group of our members! The extra paved area will give visitors additional room to picnic and aid in outreach programs.

With the additional pergola and picnic table that were installed during the summer (Eagle Scout project) and replanting of several areas within the garden beds, the butterfly garden is even more usable and enjoyable than ever for park visitors.

In late October and early November, the garden put on a great show with tons of butterflies and pollinators enjoying the blooming mistflower. The next time you are in the park, come on by the butterfly garden and check it out! Better yet, pick a sunny day and bring a picnic lunch out to the butterfly garden. You'll enjoy a lovely lunch with your butterfly friends!



Queen butterfly on mistflower



Common buckeye



Photos by Joyce Tipton

Butterflies on mistflower

Seabourne News *(continued)*



Here are some of the crew who put in the new gravel path and refreshed the paths already in place. From left to right: *Greg Hurley, Mary Parkhouse, Don Parkhouse, David Goff, Katie Sallean, and John Cooper.* Photo by Greg Hurley

Bird Hikes at Seabourne Resume!

by Carol Schwartz, Seabourne Bird Hike Co-leader



After an extended pause the popular bird hikes at SCNP were restarted on Wednesday, November 3. To our welcomed surprise a whopping 26 multi-ethnic participants arrived, binoculars and all! About a third of those participants were guests. This only served to demonstrate the popularity and eager appetite for this Coastal Prairie Chapter offering to the local community. Participants were divided into smaller groups in order to abide by the current COVID-19 group size restrictions.

The bird species count was a little on the low side for the 2 hour hike. Some of the more notable identified bird species were a Belted Kingfisher, a Philadelphia Vireo and a male Northern Harrier. However a Master Naturalist bird hiker would always take note of other non-bird species that presented itself for viewing. Such was the case when bird hike leader, Bob Schwartz, spotted a Dainty Sulphur, our smallest Sulphur, about 3/4 of an inch long. It is common in southern areas usually flying only inches above the ground.



Sulphur Butterfly



Bob leads November bird hike –Photo by Hoiman Low

Seabourne News *(continued)*

Seabourne Lake Stocked with Fish *Photos by Garrett Engelhardt*

Our chapter's Seabourne fish stocking, overseen by chapter member Garrett Engelhardt, made the local newspaper, the Fort Bend Herald! As reported in the article, 500 channel catfish, 100 largemouth bass, 1,000 bluegill perch and 30 pounds of fathead minnow from Brenham Fisheries were put into the lake, delivered by Mike Robison.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARRETT ENGLEHARDT

Seabourne Creek pond restocked with fish

The city of Rosenberg and the Coastal Prairie Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists had the pond at Seabourne Creek Nature Park restocked on Wednesday. Fish stocked were 500 channel catfish, 100 largemouth bass, 1,000 bluegill perch and 30 pounds of fathead minnows. The fish came from Brenham Fisheries and were delivered by Mike Robison.



Seabourne News (continued)

SCNP Arboretum Team Begins Tree Identification and Tree-tagging Project

by Terri Hurley



Did you know that our chapter has been planting hundreds of beautiful native trees at Seabourne for over 12 years? We first started planting trees around the perimeter of Seabourne Lake in order to convert a treeless rectangular manmade farm pond into a natural-looking, wildlife-enhancing lake. This arboretum made a huge difference in the overall look of SCNP. We are now expanding our arboretum into the Northwoods along the upper boundary of the park. While the SCNP Arboretum now contains more than 50 species of trees, there are undoubtedly many more species in other areas of the park.

Several Coastal Prairie Chapter Arboretum Team members meet once a week in the park to identify and put metal tags on these trees. We began with the easily-identified trees that were planted as part of the Apache Corporation grant. Once we are finished with these trees, we will begin to identify the bigger trees in all areas of the park. This is a very long term project with the goal being to have every tree in the park identified and tagged! Main team members to date have include Susie Doe, Janis Hodgson and Jim Steppe.

The tagging team is gathering a lot of information on each tree which will be entered into a database for further study. Data taken for each tree includes species name, common name, girth and GPS coordinates. Other information added for each tree includes typical maximum height and general characteristics. This database will soon be available to the public via our chapter's website.

Tree tagging is a fun project! A GPS coordinate finder app on the cell phone is used to take the tree's exact location with an accuracy of 15 feet or less. A DYMO Rhino Metal TapeWriter Embossing tool is used to create the tree tags. The tags are then affixed to the trees using a battery operated drill and short metal screws. This does not do damage to the trees. As the tree grows, the tags can be let out easily by simply unscrewing each tag. Plus we get to drive the nature cart!

An added benefit to this project is the ability to quickly add an observation to iNaturalist since we are at each tree already. Another citizen science opportunity we could get involved with is [TreeSnap](#). This is a trees-only database which allows the public to add trees found in their communities, on their properties and out in the wild using the TreeSnap app. Scientists will use the data collected to locate trees for research projects like studying the genetic diversity of tree species and building better tree breeding programs.

We invite you to keep an eye out for these tagged trees around the park. A map of the tagged trees will soon be made available on the website. Trees are essential to our community's health and this project is a great way to help our trees. If you are interested in helping on the Arboretum Team, contact Arboretum Directors Terri and Greg Hurley. Email Terri at terri@coastalprairie.org and Greg at greg@coastalprairie.org.



Seabourne News (continued)

More Sights at Seabourne



Top left Judi Harrington sports a fritillary butterfly on her cap, Jan Kolk gets after a Chinese Privet, Linda Bair makes headway in the bird garden, Peyton Belunek and daughter and Megan Cromeens collect prairie seeds, John Ruane and Jerry Trenta move brush, Aida Pita works in the native butterfly garden, Don Parkhouse empties the compost boxes and Nancy Jones and Terri Hurley work in the native plant garden.

In Our Own Backyard

Another Frog Leaps Into View!

Text and Photos by Diane Eismont

I was outside picking up palm fronds just after the windstorm in late October (you remember the one!) when I saw this frog - just sitting on the stem of a palm frond that had blown down.

I saw that it was a gray tree frog - the first species of frog I saw when we moved here. That one was peeking out of the top of a cut off piece of pipe that was being used to mark a waterline on our new property. That picture still hangs in our entranceway!

The gray tree frog is primarily nocturnal and lives in trees and shrubs near shallow water. It has a white spot under the eye. As you can see, it is small (only 1-2.5 inches long) and is very well camouflaged by color.

I picked up the frog in my hand and placed it on a palm tree trunk where it quickly climbed up and into the rough trunk and disappeared out of sight!



The Book Corner

Review by Jim Butcher, Class of 2008

Hello Nature lovers and fellow amateur botanists, I have the pleasure of introducing you to this newly published 210 page book. It is available at the George Memorial library listed as 581.7 Dro 2021. Dame Judi Dench writes that It's " Full of surprises- about plants, and people too."

After spending over a decade learning about the incredible variety of Coastal Prairie species, I decided to broaden my horizons and take on the world. As expected, this work lays out 80 of the most influential plants divided by geography. Each plant is accompanied by a beautiful color illustration and a bit of history along with some verbiage describing uses and characteristics. I learned an incredible amount of fascinating information in this book.

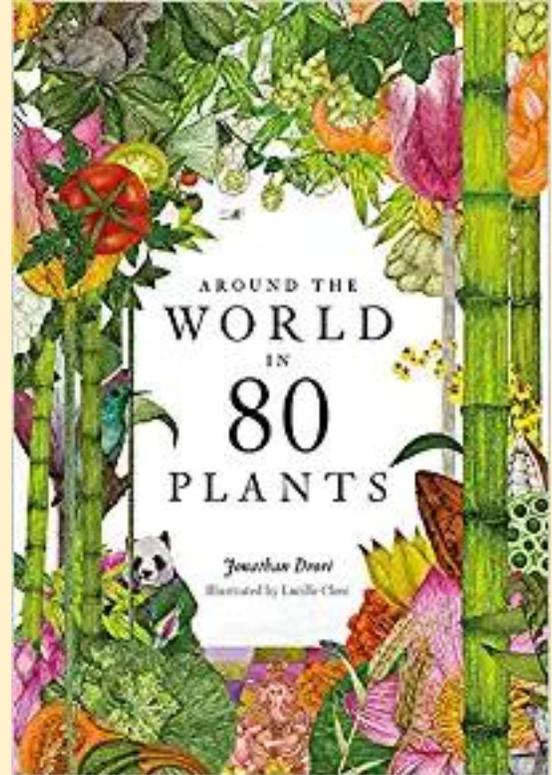
One of the "Gee Whiz" facts I read about was that 'Machinery' plants have developed the ability to sense the direction of gravity. Special cells contain microscopic grains of starch, called 'statoliths' which are constantly jiggled to ensure they always settle at the bottom. These cells effectively tell the plant which direction is properly vertical.

Another fact is that the Western Australian Christmas tree features roots that grow out horizontally up to 330 feet till they encounter another plant worthy of hijacking.

Also, Marine Phytoplankton absorb as much carbon dioxide and give off as much oxygen as all of the worlds trees and land plants combined.

Finally, Licorice contains glycyrrhizin, a substance that is 50 to 100 times sweeter than sugar.

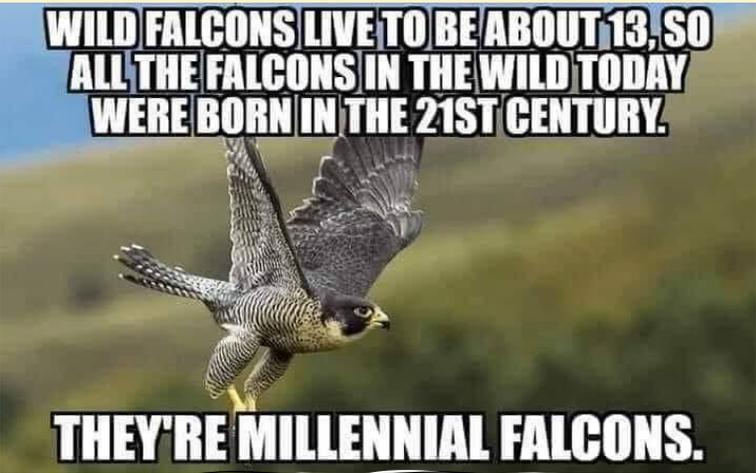
Come along on this journey and learn much more about the fascinating plants that sustain us.



Around the World in 80 Plants

By Jonathon Drori

The Lighter Side



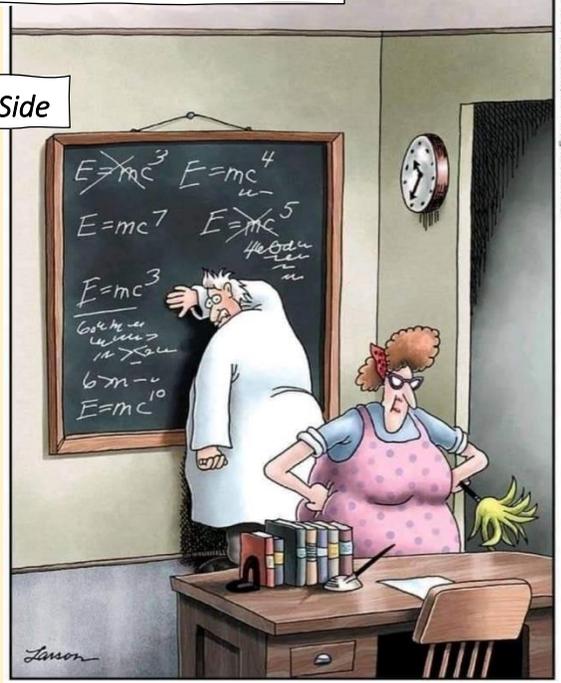
Sent in by Susan Walther



Becky Leugemors (Facebook)



English Humour & Images (Jim this is for you!)



"Now that desk looks better. Everything's squared away, yessir, squaaaaaaared away."

- Answers to Membership Quiz from Page 4:
1. Accountants—Ursula/John Cooper
 2. Live in Katy--Julie/Wayne Barentine
 3. >8000 VSP hours combined—Lynn/Jerry Trenta
 4. Pharmacists—Joyce Tipton/Lucy Moyer
 5. Rice Instructors—Kathy/Kevin Biddle
 6. Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Volunteers—Margo/Bill Johnson
 7. Engineers—Terri/Greg Hurley

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We are on the Web!

See us at:

www.coastalprairie.org

The Blood Beaver Moon

By Jean Stipelcovich, TMNCPC State Representative



Jean Stipelcovich took this photo of the blood moon this November and said on Facebook: "Well that was fun. I got up at 2:30 this morning to watch the Blood Beaver Moon move through earth's shadow. It was beautiful. It is so dark out here where we live. I wish I could have shared this starry night with y'all. (Photos taken with Nikon P1000.) As soon as the moon was on the other side of Earth's shadow, its color became normal. Incredible to watch. 😊"

Our Chapter Facebook Page is at

[TXMN Coastal Prairie Chapter Facebook](#)

To post photos and information, email

[Paula Kolmar](#) or [Robbin Mallett](#)

Also, share our chapter Facebook entries with your friends on your Facebook Page

We also have a Chapter-Only Facebook Page that allows chapter members to post items. You can join by going to the website below and clicking on "Join." The administrator will allow you access. This is for chapter members only.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1882734648662315/?ref=bookmarks>

Check out our Chapter Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/tmncpc/>

To post photos and information, email [Ramona Ridge](#)

Check out & subscribe to our Chapter's new YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfBuS0aMAOiFuiD>

COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS

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