Coastal Prairie Chapter Courier

March 2024 — Volume 12 Issue 3



"There is no time like spring,
when life's alive in everything."

Christina Rosetti

Inside This Issue

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The Texas Master Naturalist Program's mission is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

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ON THE COVER

Clockwise from top: Carpenter bee on beebalm by Caroline Kane; snowy egrets by Ute Welk; calligrapher fly on spiderwort by Caroline Kane; swamp rabbit by Caroline Kane; and American alligator (juvenile) by Kylee Roberts.

EDITOR TEAM

March's issue was crafted by Co-Editor, **Raji Mahesh**

Have a great story for April's issue? Submit by **March 25th** to:

Shannon Westveer
Shannon@CoastalPrairie.org
Raji Mahesh

Raji@CoastalPrairie.org

President's Message

by Susan Walther, TMNCPC President



March! What a wonderful word in this part of Texas as we welcome one of the most beautiful months to be outdoors and enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of nature coming alive again. It's also the peak of the spring busy season for us as Master Naturalists! I hope you will all take part in some of our upcoming activities and remember my 2024 New Years Challenge to try something new.

Our Spring 2024 Training course runs from March 2 to May 18 and still needs volunteers for many of the training sessions. It's a great way to meet our new members!

Seabourne Creek Nature Park has something for everyone on our Wednesday and 1st and 3rd Saturday workdays. Our 2024 keynote project is a new floating dock on the west side of the wetlands, with information signs about the importance of wetland ecosystems and the types of birds that can be found. Other upcoming activities are clean-up and organization in the nursery and bump-up area, new crushed granite pathways in the Houston Wilderness Area, and new tree signs in the Arboretum. And of course, there is always plenty to do in the Native Plant and Butterfly gardens and the prairie areas.

J. B. Harrison Long Point Ranch needs volunteer help for multiple youth programs during spring break week: Scout Merit Badge Workshops on March 12 and March 14, a 4-H Outdoor Skills Day on March 16, and TWA Land, Water & Wildlife Expedition on March 19.

Our <u>Nature Day event</u> on Saturday April 6 will be at the Seabourne Creek Nature Park Woodlands/Bird Sanctuary area and is one of our largest outreach events at the park this year. Be sure to mention this free, family-friendly event to your friends and family! Rosenberg's annual FISH-tastic Children's Fishing Tournament is the same day at the park and is another great volunteer opportunity for us.

In addition to all these options for volunteer work, there is no lack of fantastic training and learning offers either. See our website calendar, Slack, and our weekly bulletin to stay up-to-date.

See you outside!

March Program: Thursday, March 7th, 7 PM Secrets of the Night - Exploring the Lives of Nocturnal Insects By Mary Spolyar



By Jan Peterson, TMNCPC Programs Director

Most Master Naturalists probably know a lot about prairie plants and their associated insect life during the daytime. How much do people know about insect nightlife? Master Naturalist, **Mary Spolyar** will introduce us to nocturnal insect species at three Houstonarea prairies: Lawther-Deer Park, Nash Prairie Preserve and Texas City Prairie Preserve. She will show us who comes to the light when the sun goes down, from colorful microleafhoppers to mantidflies (which are not flies!) and very long-horned beetles to fabulous sphinx moths. It's a kaleidoscope of life in the prairie night.

Mary Spolyar is a Texas Master Naturalist of the Gulf Coast Chapter and a plant knowledge instructor for the Native Landscape Certification Program (NLCP) classes offered by the Native Plant Society of Texas Houston Chapter. She enjoys volunteering for Houston Audubon's Natives Nursery for which she visits local prairie remnants to collect seeds and helps to grow out native plants. A native Houstonian, she loves being outdoors, observing life and stalking small creatures with her cell phone camera. You can find her on iNaturalist as "rednat."



Mary Spolyar holding a toebiter while blacklighting

March's program is free and open to the public.
Please join us at the Rosenberg Civic Center, 3825
TX-36, Rosenberg, TX 77471, on Thursday, March 7,
2024. The program is also available through Zoom.
Registration is needed for attendance through
Zoom. More details are available in the Chapter program webpage. The 1-hour program begins at
7:00 PM.

The <u>Texas Master Naturalist</u> program is sponsored by <u>Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</u> and <u>Texas</u> A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Slack Tip — *Customize the Navigation Bar*

<u>MEMBERS ONLY</u>. The Navigation Bar on the outer edge of the Side Bar helps you navigate the different tabs. This can be customized to hold only the preferred tabs.

- 1. Click on your profile picture
- 2. Click on Preferences
- 3. Click on Navigation and select the Tabs you wish to be displayed. The other tabs will appear when you hover over More in the sidebar.



Membership Minute

By Jan and Kevin Kolk, TMNCPC Membership Co-Directors





Congratulations! to our numerous certification and milestone achievers. Way to go!

2024 Recertification!



(15 members recertified)

Jan Kolk —2020 Spring
Lisa Sanders — 2023 Spring
Susan Walther — 2011
Kerry Padilla — 2022 Spring
Joyce Tipton — 2021 Spring
Lynne Woods — 2022 Fall
Lucy Moyer — 2021 Spring
Lynn Trenta — 2011
Shree Nath — 2022 Fall
Carrie Dolezal — 2023 Spring
Rodney Walther — 2023 Spring
Bert Stipelcovich — 2018

500 Hour Milestone



Jean Stipelcovich — 2018

1000 Hour Milestone



Jan Poscovsky — 2022 Fall

2500 Hour Milestone



Bill Johnson — 2010



Caroline Kane being presented the blue donut by the Grand Poobah. Photo credit :Randolph Watson

Donut Lives

The latest presentation of the blue donut was at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. The victim was Caroline Kane from the Class of Fall 2023. She was awarded the blue donut by the inimitable Grand Poobah for wearing the right colors to claim it!

Caroline Kane, in addition to working in the garden and in the prairie, is also leading the efforts in designing and placing the new signage around the Seabourne Creek Nature Park and in designing the chapter's Facebook and Instagram event flyers.

Volunteer Service — March Highlights

By Jan Poscovsky, TMNCPC Volunteer Service Projects Director



Before arriving to serve, check our website calendar for last minute changes, cancelations, or other information at https://txmn.org/coastal/events/month/2024-03

Signature Project Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP), Rosenberg: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM, Wednesdays and 1st and 3rd Saturdays which fall on 3/2, 3/6, 3/13, 3/16, 3/20, and 3/27

Signature Project Monthly Bird Hike at SCNP, Rosenberg: 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM, 1st Wednesday which falls on 3/6

Public Outreach Monthly Nature Walk at SCNP, Rosenberg: 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM, 3rd Sunday which falls on 3/17

Public Outreach Houston Museum of Natural Science at Sugar Land:

10:30 AM - 3:30 PM, 2nd and 4th Saturdays which fall on 3/9 and 3/23

Public Outreach Missouri City Green Edible Earth Fest, Missouri City: 9:00 AM— 12:00 PM Saturday, 3/23. 4433 Cartwright Road Missouri City TX Oyster Creek Trail

Public Outreach Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, TPWD Booth: 8:30 AM – 7:00 PM, 2/27 through 3/2. Members must register through SignUpGenius

Coastal Prairie Conservancy Indiangrass

Preserve, Katy: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM, Tuesdays, Fridays, and 2nd Saturdays of each month which fall on 3/1, 3/5, 3/8, 3/9, 3/12, 3/15, 3/19, 3/22, 3/26 and 3/29

Harris County Precinct 4 Bird Survey at Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza Park, Houston: 7:30 AM – 12:00 PM, 4th Monday which falls on 3/25

Kleb Woods Nature Center Ecological Surveys: 9:00 AM-11:00 AM, Tuesday 3/26

James B, Harrison- Long Point Ranch, Richmond: 9:00 AM — 3:30 PM Tuesday 3/12, Boy Scouts of America Bird Study Merit Badge

8:30 AM — 3:30 PM Thursday 3/14, Boy Scouts of America Nature Merit Badge

8:30 AM – 3:00 PM Saturday 3/16, Fort Bend County 4H Outdoor Skills Day

8:00 AM – 2:00 PM Tuesday 3/19, Texas Wildlife Association Land, Water, and Wildlife Expeditions. Members must register via SignUp Genius.

Chapter Meeting and Board Meeting, virtually via Zoom: 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM, 3rd Wednesday of each month which falls on 3/20 (registration required)

JOIN US!

The public is always invited to participate in our fun and educational monthly hikes and walks. We invite you to get out and meet TMNCPC members as we commune with nature. Check out the <u>calendar</u> to find the dates and times for our Bird Hikes, Plant Walks, Nature Walks and Insect Hikes.

REMINDER

<u>MEMBERS ONLY</u>. If you are requested to organize an event within another chapter's boundary, please use common courtesy and work together with the leaders of that chapter.

Arthropod Archives: What's in a Name?

By Sari Garfinkle, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2023



I love nature because the gifts it has to give are infinite. Every walk is an adventure, a lesson in expecting the unexpected.

Consider this. One day I was out walking and a scorpionfly caught my eye. Out came the camera to document date and location. The scorpionfly landed on a dewberry vine; a shiny green insect, all of 5mm long, sat on an adjacent leaf. Without the scorpionfly, it would have remained invisible. Intrigued, I scanned the surrounding area and discovered more of the mystery insects on the vine.

They had the usual insect body plan: head, thorax, and abdomen, with three pairs of legs and two

pairs of wings attached to the thorax. They also had elytra, the stiff, hardened forewings characteristic of Order Coleoptera. Members of Order Coleoptera, more commonly known as beetles, use their membranous hind wings to fly; the elytra cover and protect those delicate structures.

I knew it was a beetle, but what kind?
Beetles come in myriad shapes and sizes: ladybugs, longhorn beetles, weevils, and everything in between. To the uninitiated (that would be me), many look identical.

Longhorn Beetle (*Eburia sp.*), elytra open and membranous wings extended

Determining which of the approximately 400,000 known beetle species I had seen was going to pose a major challenge.



6 of 13— Back to TOC

Mystery insect and Nuptial Scorpionfly (*Panorpa nuptialis*)

What's more, it might have been one of the many species undiscovered and yet to be described. No way was I going to identify this beetle on my own.

I'd taken lots of pictures in hopes of getting a few with sufficient field marks for ID. It isn't easy to photograph tiny, shiny moving objects made up of even tinier moving parts, especially from a distance. I downloaded the best photos to a citizen science site, iNaturalist.org. Unless the ID is obvious, my preference is to start with a less specific label—beetles, for example, or a particular group of beetles. With a little luck, the submission will catch an expert's eye. This one did, and all the way to species: Lysathia ludoviciana, the

Pale-legged Flea Beetle.

Members of Genus *Lysathia* are also known as Parrot's Feather Leaf Beetles. Common names often have interesting stories behind them, and this one was no exception.



Ashy Gray Lady Beetle
(Olla v-nigrum)
All photos by Sari Garfinkle

Parrot's Feather is an aquatic plant from South America that's sold internationally as aquarium vegetation. In its native habitat, natural biocontrol keeps it in check. Introduced into other environments, it is highly invasive, forming dense mats that clog waterways and reduce biodiversity.

Arthropod Archives: What's in a Name?

By Sari Garfinkle, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2023



Continued from previous page

Over time Parrot's Feather has spread through parts of Europe, Africa, and North America. Since it has both submerged and emergent forms, herbicides are

largely ineffective and can further damage the local ecology.
Mechanical removal favors its growth and spread.

Lysathia are the shining heroes of this story.
When in their native habitat, an undescribed, yet-to-benamed Lysathia species from South America checks Parrot Feather growth. Researchers set up

a controlled environment and demonstrated that its larvae are obligate on (eat only) Parrot's Feather. It poses no threat to other ecosystems. Once proven safe, specimens were collected and introduced to

affected bodies of water in South Africa and elsewhere. Over the next few years, Parrot's Feather mats collapsed. Success!

Other Lysathia species also enjoy Parrot's Feather.
Research shows that they are less host-specific and could disrupt habitats into which they're introduced, so they stay put. My Lysathia, L. ludoviciana, is native to the Southeastern United States. Its larvae feed preferentially on both native and nonnative species of Ludwigia (Water Primrose) which can

become an aquatic nuisance by clogging our ponds and

waterways. They also delight in Parrot's Feather.

There is so much to love about this teeny, tiny, shiny beetle and its cousins. And I would never have known, had it not been for the scorpionfly and the experts on iNaturalist.



Pale-legged Flea Beetle (Lysathia ludoviciana)

Speaking of feathers..



The benches around the bird blind went missing. It was feared that they were stolen. They were however found to be on top of the blind. The benches are very heavy. How they were moved is a mystery. Penelope may know more than she is letting!

WATER OAK

Seabourne Creek Nature Park

By Randolph Watson, SCNP Co-Director

February was another busy month at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. In this issue, I shine a spotlight on the new tree species signs in the Arboretum, our planned signage activities for 2024, and review the activities we worked on in February.

Arboretum Signage Installation

Jerry Trenta and Sal Cardenas installed 24 new tree species signs in the Arboretum. The signs were delivered last fall. Since then, we

have been preparing the mounting materials and waiting for fair weather and good ground conditions to plant the signs. These signs are a wonderful addition to the Arboretum. They look professionally done,

and they are built to last *Water Oak sign in the Arboretum* 10 years.

Designing, creating, and installing these signs was a large team effort. Thank you to Terri Hurley, Susie Doe, Becky Richards, Jamie Fairchild, Cindy Starks, Lisa Sanders, Phil Ward, Janis Hodgson, Elaine Whiteley, Jean Watson, Sal, and Jerry.

Park Signage – 2024

We continue to focus on new signage around the Park this year. Our signs are an important part of the chapter's education outreach strategy: present when visitors need them; context for what they see; and point them to our website for more detailed information and resources.

Caroline Kane is leading our design efforts this year. She has years of professional experience in graphics design, and she has already helped us with several outreach signs around the park. One of her priorities is the new wetland pond signage that will be installed

as part of the wetlands dock project. This signage will highlight the importance of wetlands and the essential services they provide to healthy ecosystems.

Terri Hurley is leading our new signage project in the Native Plants Garden. As she states, "Attractive signage is crucial as it serves to help our visitors understand the benefits and diverse types of native flora that can be put in their own home gardens. The signage will provide informative content about the native plants featured in the garden. Visitors will learn about the role of these plants in supporting local wildlife, including butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees. Signs also build an appreciation for the local ecosystem and promote environmental awareness."

Similarly, we are updating the signs in the Butterfly

Garden under the guidance of team lead <u>Katie</u> <u>Sallean</u>. They are weather worn and showing their age, made all the more obvious because of their proximity to the spiffy new Arboretum tree signs.



Arboretum tree and Lynn Trenta with the signs.

Kerry Padilla, Terri Hurley, Janis Leavitt,
and Lynn Trenta with the signs.

Photos credit: Randolph Watson

We plan to

create and install more new tree species signs around the Arboretum this year. We are looking for volunteers to help with the creation of content for these signs. If you are interested in learning more, contact Randolph Watson or one of the leads above.

Continued, next Page

Seabourne Creek Nature Park

By Randolph Watson, SCNP Co-Director

Continued from previous Page

February Park Activities

Chapter members were busy in February. I cannot do justice in this short article to all members who have given their time at SCNP. Below is a small sample of what we've accomplished.

Infrastructure: The Infrastructure team repaired equipment and facilities around the park. Jerry, Sal,

Rodney Walther, Tom Zaal, and Garrett Engelhardt kept busy repairing a leak in the Nursery's sprinkler system, patching a leaky roof, filling holes and crevices, and fixing animal habitats and feeders.



Jerry Trenta repairing a leaky pipe

Nursery: Jo Cain was busy in her new role coordinating efforts in the Nursery. Jo, Mary Saville, Janis Hodgson, James Stepp, and others cleared the Nursery, the green house, and the bump-up area and prepared them for the upcoming growing season.

Overseeding: Wanda Roof, Kerry Padilla, Caroline Kane, and Nancy Jones spread 50lbs of native grass and forb seeds in Prairie Section B.

Outreach and Citizen Science: Our outreach efforts at SCNP



Jo placing seeds in starter cells



Kerry Padilla overseeding the prairie

continue to grow in popularity. Jan
Poscovsky, John Few, the Kolks, and other
members led or supported our monthly nature hike,
insect walk, and bird hike. These activities help us



Insect Hike with Lynne Woods, Shannon Westveer, Kerry Padilla, and Sari Garfinkle

learn more about the Coastal Prairie ecosystem and share this knowledge with the public. They also help us collect data that can be used to monitor the well-being of the park.

Other Areas: Many volunteers dedicated time to the seasonal gardening and maintenance activities in our other habitats: the Butterfly Garden, the Native Plant Gardens, the Arboretum, the Houston Wilderness Area, and the Bird Viewing Area. Because of their consistent efforts, these habitats continue to thrive, provide shelter and food for many species of animals, and draw area residents and visitors to the park.

In Closing

March is here, and with it comes perfect weather for being outside. We are about to kick off several projects in March and April including Nature Day. Check Slack, the Courier, or your emails for more information. Our regularly scheduled workdays are every Wednesday and the first and third Saturdays. I look forward to seeing you at Seabourne.

How Kids Learn

By Lynne Woods, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2022



A year ago, I walked into my granddaughter's

Montessori School, told the Director about the Texas Master Naturalist program, and asked her if she would like us to engage the kids in nature programming. She said, "Yes!" and also, "Can you go to my other three schools too?" I said "Yes," and since then, I have engaged about 250 kids in three programs, learning about butterflies, birds, and

amphibians.



Lynne Woods and Debby Wendt with the children. Photos credit Lynne Woods

Now Debby Wendt has joined me, and we are currently sharing the "Skins and Skulls" WOW (Mammals of Ft. Bend County) with kids and teachers at all four schools. The children now run up to me when they see me in the halls, give me hugs, and ask me when I'm coming back. They are terribly excited about each program. Their favorite questions are, "Is it real," "Will it hurt me?" and "Can I touch it?"

For some of them it is their first introduction to



nature, while a few could almost teach about animals themselves. Kids have such a hunger to learn; and for city kids, there is so little opportunity for them to get outside. That, I think, is the key: get them outside where they are free to roam and discover for themselves. Mothing events are perfect examples: kids find a moth on the sheet and

bring it to the grown-up for fun and learning...then the moth is let go. "Is it real?" Yes. "Will it hurt me?" No. "This is fun!"

Thank you to everyone who offers their time and love of nature to children. The Nature Days programs held at Seabourne, the family nature hikes, the days at JB Harrison, and all the neighborhood outdoor events help kids to learn that nature is fun, not scary, and that they love to be out in it.



Book Drive

If you have any nature books, especially ones for children, could you please donate to the Rippert Education Station at the Seabourne Butterfly Garden? Bring them to either the March or April in-person chapter meetings or Slack or email Katie Sallean. *Thank you!*

A Day of Avian Wonder

By Jan Poscovsky, SCNP Outreach



Coastal Prairie chapter has cultivated a deep connection with Seabourne Creek Nature Park that aligns with our mission — to promote education, outreach, and to provide dedicated service towards the responsible management of natural resources. Through this partnership we strive to introduce the public to the many wonders of the park.

Last year, we introduced Nature Days, mini festivals, with each special event focusing on one specific section under our care within the park. Scheduled between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM on predetermined Saturdays, each mini-fest offers engaging activities, creative crafts, and informative presentations tailored to each unique area.

Our next Nature Day will be held in the Woodlands/Bird Sanctuary on April 6, 2024. We extend a warm invitation for all nature enthusiasts to join us.

Nature Day - Saturday, April 6, 2024, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Embark on a journey of avian wonder at Seabourne Nature Park's Nature Day! Experience the tranquility and majesty of our captivating bird sanctuary, where nature's melodies fill the air. Immerse yourself in a day of exploration and connect with the natural world. Engage in a variety of activities designed for bird enthusiasts of all ages, including:

- Hourly guided birdwatching tours. Join experienced guides and observe a diverse array of bird species in their natural habitat.
- Educational talks. Learn fascinating facts about birding and how to use binoculars and scopes.
 Meet the bird ambassadors from the Wildlife Center of Texas.
- Family-friendly activities. Enjoy scavenger hunts, bird-themed crafts, and interactive games that will delight children and adults alike.



Eclipse information and activities. The first 50
eclipse station visitors will receive eclipse
viewing glasses in time for the April 8th total
eclipse.

We have activities for the entire family, including face painting, henna hand art, bird origami, and scavenger hunts. Attendees will have the opportunity to listen to 20- to 40-minute presentations by Master Naturalists (see the Speaker Schedule below). Native wildflower seeds will also be distributed to all attendees while supplies last.

Speaker Schedule:

10:15 AM: "Basic Birding 101 " Mark Scheuerman

11:15 AM: "Through the Lens": A Close-Up on Birding Binoculars and Scopes" Bob and Carol Schwartz

12:15 PM: "Peaceful Coexistence" Monica Taylor and Randolph and Jean Watson

The Lighter Side

By TMNCPC Various Members

Ode-de-nada TMNoptera

What curious places we find TMNs of buggy kind with phone apps and macro lens they study insect abdomens. Is it 7 pairs or 8? the great insect legs debate whether arachnids or coleoptera or diverse hymenoptera even arthropods extraordinaire won't give a TMN a scare. Rather unique among their kind, their naturalist pose refined stooping, bending, and doubled over in decaying leaves and clover when orthopteras come to ground ahh Grasshopper, that's where a TMN is

found!

By Lisa Sanders



Shared by Debby Wendt



Shared by Sari Garfinkle



Shared by Shannon Westveer

Elected Officers

President Susan Walther
Vice President Joyce Tipton
Secretary Kerry Padilla
Treasurer Carrie Dolezal

Board of Directors

Past-President Terri Hurley Membership Jan and Kevin Kolk **Programs** Jan Peterson Communications Tom Zaal **Volunteers** Jan Poscovsky Adv. Training **Lisa Sanders** New Class Spring Lauren DeShazo New Class Rep. Wanda Roof Info. Tech. **Bert Stipelcovich State Rep Hoiman Low** Seabourne Creek Jerry Trenta and Randolph Watson

TPWD / AgriLife Chapter Advisors

Prgm. Coordinator Brandy Rader

Fort Bend Ag Agent John Few

Not Getting Invites?



<u>MEMBERS ONLY</u>: Open SignUps are always listed on the last page

of the Weekly Bulletin. Check here for more tips:

https://txmn.org/coastal/sign-up-genius/

Chapter Photos Repository



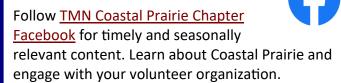
MEMBERS
ONLY:
SmugMug is the new

home for chapter photos, kept and shared by membership.

Share Your Nature Fun

Post a comic to the Members Only Facebook, on #*random* on Slack or let the Co-Editors know in another way. We are a fun bunch who love to laugh while we learn.

Facebook—Like us!



<u>MEMBERS ONLY</u> To join the <u>private Facebook</u> <u>Group</u>, send a request and wait for TMNCPC Admin to respond.

TEXAS A&M GRILIFE EXTENSION





TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST[™] COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER

1402 Band Road Fort Bend AgriLife Extension Office Rosenberg, TX 77471-8678

Phone: (832) 225-6936

Visit Us **On-line**: <u>www.CoastalPrairie.org</u> **Email**: Info@CoastalPrairie.org