

Coastal Prairie Chapter Courier

December 2024 — Volume 12 Issue 12



“Wherever there are birds, there is hope.” — Mehmet Murat Ildan

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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

Male house finch, *Haemorhous mexicanus*, enjoying the seeds from *Salvia coccinea*.

Photo credit: Joyce Tipton

EDITOR TEAM



The December issue was crafted by Co-Editor, **Pam Jackson**

Have a great story for the January issue? Submit by **December 22** to:

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President’s Message

by Susan Walther, TMNCPC President



“*The joy of service*” – that’s the phrase one member used to me recently to describe her involvement in our chapter. For me, Saturday November 9 was a day that truly epitomized this wonderful feeling for many of our Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie chapter members.

Several of our members were among over 100 local volunteers who helped to plant over 1,300 native plants in the Coastal Prairie Conservancy’s Indiangrass Preserve. **Wow!** This work has had a real, positive impact on that section of prairie by re-establishing the vital plants that are the foundation of our local native ecology. All the volunteers felt the exhilaration that day of working side by side with so many others. And when they come back to this area in the future, they will see the results of their work in the beauty and diversity of this renewed ecosystem and feel the satisfaction of knowing “I was a part of making this happen... I made a difference!”

On the same day, our chapter held the bi-annual Seabourne Nature Day education and outreach event at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Months of planning and service at the park by over 100 volunteers had built up to the day. The theme was Autumn in the Arboretum, featuring activities and education related to our area’s native trees. It was a day full of sun, smiles and laughter! In the butterfly garden area where most of us were stationed, we were treated all day to the sight of the butterflies, moths, and other insects that benefit from the native plants. My favorite small moment was when a young boy breathlessly told me and another volunteer about a “really scary” spider he’d found. We responded that we loved spiders and rushed over to see. It was just a small black spider, but the large caterpillar it held in its mouth formed a kind of wacky mustache and was indeed quite the sight! We congratulated the young man on his **very cool** find and thanked him for sharing it with us, and he went away excitedly telling his family.

At this event, we taught families about the different tree species in the Arboretum area using a scavenger hunt. We had volunteers stationed at trees along the route to share information about each species. I watched several entire families carefully study the trees, listening and learning together. At another station, our

Continued [next page](#)

No December Chapter Program ... TMNCPC Holiday Party December 5th @ 6:00 PM



Chapter members and a significant other are invited to celebrate the holiday season with us on December 5, at the Rosenberg Civic Center. During the event, we will commemorate our 20-year anniversary and acknowledge our many 2024 accomplishments.

To give back to our communities, this year, we will honor two wildlife rescues that are near and dear to our hearts; [The Wildlife Center of Texas](#) and [Fort Bend Wildlife Rescue](#). Links to the wish lists are in the images of each organization. There will be collection bins at each organization's table where you can drop off your items. Please donate if you are able. These two worthy rescue organizations are excited to have been selected and appreciate anything we can do to help them.

Since we have so many talented and creative cooks in our chapter, the party will be a **potluck**. The Sign Up Genius List includes how many and what kinds of items are needed. Please sign up to bring



your favorite dish to share and be sure to add your name and your plus one to the attendee list. We only have room for 120 members, so sign up soon.

Food will be ready to serve promptly at 6:00 PM The doors will open at 5:00 PM for those bringing a dish. (Dessert is being provided.)

We hope to see you there!

Susan Walther, Jan Peterson, & Jan Poscovsky



President's Message
Continued from [previous page](#)

volunteers helped visitors make an informed choice of which free tree to take home and plant themselves. My husband helped hand out the trees and he can attest that the families were truly excited to care for them in their own yards.

As the Nature Day event progressed from the organized chaos of set-up to interacting with all the visiting families to putting it all away at the end, our established chapter members worked alongside our newest trainees, and through this camaraderie we all became more like a family. I can't imagine a better team-building exercise than this day was, and I can't wait for the next Nature Day to do it again!

See you outside.

Membership Minute

By Jan and Kevin Kolk, TMNCPC Membership Co-Directors



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

2024 Recertification

(120 members recertified)

Karen Bueker 2024 Fall
Cindy Burns 2023 Fall
Cindy Chapman 2024 Fall
Jo Cosbey 2024 Fall
John Cotterell 2005
Ursula Cooper 2019
Darle Esswein 2023 Spring
Susan Fortenberry 2020 Fall
Sandra Gardner 2020 Spring
Nancy Jones 2020 Spring
Kayleigh Minin 2022 Fall
Mark Morgenstern 2011
Becky Richards 2023 Spring
Katie Sallean 2013
Cindy Scott 2020 Spring
Cindy Starks 2023 Spring
Phil Ward 2021 Fall
Vanessa Weidman 2024 Fall
Pete Weston 2022 Fall



Initial Certification

Ruth Smith 2024 Fall
Becky Jones 2024 Spring

500 Hour Milestone

Sandra Brown 2019
Ursula Cooper 2019

250 Hour Milestone

Carrie Dolezal 2023 Spring
Pam Jackson 2024 Spring
Caroline Kane 2020 Fall
Amy Miller 2024 Spring
Mary Parkhouse 2021 Fall
Stan Poscovsky 2023 Fall
Cindy Tanner 2024 Spring



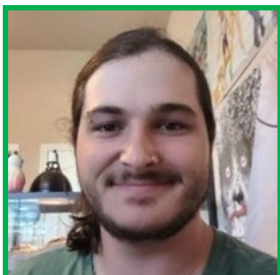
Interesting Membership Facts:

Our current members (231) have:

- given 25,783 hours of their time to the community
- spent 5,728 hours learning about nature
- shared nature with 33,085 members of the public through our outreach events
- offered TMN training to 48 new members
- earned their "Diamondback" pins (120 members)
- helped 33 members earn Initial Certification
- earned milestone pins for 250 to 5,000 volunteer hours (47 members)

And we still have another month to go before 2024 is in the books!

Fall 2024 New Class Representative



Please welcome our newest board member, Jacob Perry, as our Fall 2024 New Class Representative. The New Class Representative's role is to provide feedback to the Training Team from the perspective of a recent trainee and to serve as a liaison between the training classes and the board. A big thank you to Becky Jones for a job well done as Spring 2024 New Class Representative!

Volunteer Service — December Highlights

By Jan Poscovsky, TMNCPC Volunteer Director



Prior to attending an event, please check our website calendar for last minute changes, cancelations, and other information.

[Click Here](#)

Signature Project Seabourne Creek Nature Park

(SCNP), Rosenberg: 8:00 AM – 10:30 AM Wednesdays and 1st and 3rd Saturdays, which fall on 12/4, 12/7, 12/11, 12/18 and 12/21.

Public Outreach Monthly Bird Hike at SCNP,

Rosenberg: 8:00 AM – 10:30 AM 1st Wednesday, which falls on 12/4.

Public Outreach Monthly Plant Walk at SCNP,

Rosenberg: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM on 12/14.

Public Outreach Monthly Nature Walk at SCNP,

Rosenberg: 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM 3rd Sunday, which falls on 12/15.

Public Outreach Monthly Insect Hike at SCNP,

Rosenberg: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM 4th Thursday, which falls on 12/26.

Public Outreach Houston Museum of Natural Science

in Sugar Land: 10:30 AM – 3:30 PM Saturday 12/14 and Garden Workday 3rd Thursday from 9:00 – 11:00 AM, which falls on 12/19.

Coastal Prairie Conservancy Indiangrass Preserve,

Katy: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM Tuesdays, Fridays, and 2nd Saturdays of each month, which fall on 12/3, 12/6, 12/10, 12/13, 12/14, 12/17, 12/20, and 12/27.

Harris County Precinct 4 Bird Survey @ Archbishop

Joseph A. Fiorenza Park, Houston: 7:30 AM – 11:00 PM 4th Monday, which falls on 12/23.

John Paul Landing Weekly Bird Hike:

7:30 AM – 11:00 AM, every Thursday, which falls on 12/5, 12/12, 12/19, and 12/26.

Willow Fork Pollinator Workday:

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM every Saturday, which falls on 12/7, 12/14, 12/21, and 12/28.

Kolter Elementary School Pollinator Garden

Workday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM 2nd Saturday, which falls on 12/14.

Bolivar Flats Beach Ramble:

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM 1st Saturday, which falls on 12/7.

SPLASh TX H-E-B Richmond Market Rabbs

Bayou Cleanup: 9:00 – 11:00 AM on 12/7.

Buffalo Run Perennials Installation:

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM on Monday 12/16.

Soil WOW presentation at Long Acres

Ranch: 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM on 12/17, 12/18, and 12/19.

Lawther-Deer Park Prairie 4th Saturday

Workday (holiday date change): 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM on 12/21.

JOIN US!

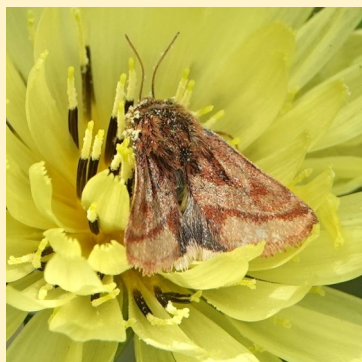
The public is always invited to participate in our fun and educational monthly hikes and walks. We invite you to get out and meet TMNCPC members as we commune with nature. Check the calendar to find the dates and times for our bird hikes, plant walks, nature walks, and insect hikes.



Arthropod Archives: Picky Eaters: *Schinia* Moths

By Sari Garfinkle, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2023

Come spring, Texas dandelions will dot lawns and parks with their cheerful yellow flowers. Look closely and you might see a hairy moth adorned in shades of tan and rusty pink sipping nectar from one of these blossoms. Or, a candy-cane striped caterpillar might catch your eye. These are the adult and larval forms of *Schinia mitis*.



Schinia mitis on Texas dandelion (*Pyrrhopappus pauciflorus*) Photo: S. Garfinkle

Members of genus *Schinia* are known as flower moths. Like armyworms, cutworms, and owlets, they belong to family Noctuidae.

Schinia species are hairy and range in size from 9mm to 19mm long. They may be brown, gray or brilliant shades of yellow, pink, or white. Most are nocturnal. A few, like *S. mitis*, are diurnal. Still others may nectar both day and night.

Most moth larvae are host-specific, meaning that they dine on plants of a particular species or genus. Adult moths tend to be less picky about where they nectar. However, flower moths take host-specificity to a much higher level. Adults nectar, mate, and lay eggs on their larval host plants.

Mated females lay their eggs at the base of a flower capsule.

Early instars feed inside the base on developing seed parts. If they outgrow their space, they'll move out of the flower and feed from the outside in.

Larvae pupate in the ground. They can be found in the leaf litter and dirt under

the host plant. Pupae of all species overwinter.

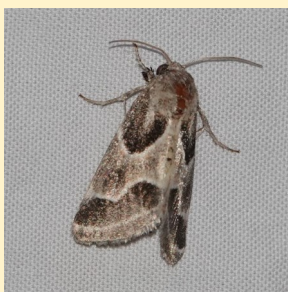
Adults emerge at around the same time as their larval hosts begin to bloom.

The association between

Schinia moth and *Schinia mitis* caterpillar head deep in a *Pyrrhopappus* bud Photo: Sari Garfinkle



strong that identifying the plant on which a *Schinia* adult or larva is found can help distinguish two similar-looking species from one another. Knowing the host plant can also narrow the search for



Ragweed flower moth (*Schinia rivulosa*) Photo: Sari Garfinkle

live specimens, especially well-hidden caterpillars.

According to Chuck Harp, a research associate at the Gillette Museum of Arthropod Diversity at Colorado State University, at least 85 *Schinia* species in the United States have been determined to be *single* species dependent. A few even confine themselves to a particular subspecies of plant. The larval host plant limits the geographic range and flight time of any given *Schinia* species.

Ten *Schinia* species have been observed in Harris, Fort Bend, Wharton, and Waller counties:

- Arcigera Flower Moth (*S. arcigera*)
- Clouded Crimson (*S. gaurae*)
- Slender Flower Moth (*S. gracilentata*)
- *S. hanga*
- *S. mitis*
- Goldenrod Flower Moth (*S. nundina*)
- Ragweed Flower Moth (*S. rivulosa*)
- Alluring Flower Moth (*S. siren*)
- Thoreau's Flower Moth (*S. thoreau*)
- Three-lined Flower Moth (*S. trifasciata*)

Picky Eaters: *Schinia* Moths (Cont'd)

By Sari Garfinkle, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2023



Continued from [previous page](#)



The gorgeous clouded crimson (*Schinia gaurae*)
Photo: Missy McAllister-Kerr

The clouded crimson is a stunning pink-and-white moth with a yellow thorax and head. Its caterpillar is bright yellow with thin black rings over wider white rings. As its scientific name (*S. gaurae*) implies, it feeds exclusively on those *Oenothera* species that were once assigned to gaura. Adults are mainly nocturnal, but may be seen around beeblossom flowers during the day. In Texas, *S. gaurae* flies from March through November.

Schinia mitis, lover of Texas dandelion, flies from March to July in Texas. Numbers peak when *Pyrrhopappus* species peak in April. Host flowers open for only a few hours in the morning, which makes *S. mitis* one of the few *Schinia* that are easy to find during the day.

The remaining local species can be observed from late summer through mid-fall.

The slender flower moth, tan-brown, specializes in *Iva* (sumpweed). By contrast, the three-lined flower moth has a broader palate, feeding on *Brickellia*, *Eupatorium*, and *Liatris*. Finally, the alluring flower moth, tan and gold, looks for *Verbesina encelioides* and *Heterotheca subaxillaris*.



Slender flower moth (*Schinia gracilentia*)
Photo: Sari Garfinkle

The goldenrod flower moth feeds on *Solidago* species. Golden markings and a black crescent on each forewing stand out against a creamy-white base. Its brilliant yellow caterpillars blend in beautifully with the goldenrod's flowers.



Goldenrod flower moth and caterpillar (*Schinia nundina*)
Photo adult: Sari Garfinkle
Photo larva: Mary Spolyar

Ragweed and Thoreau's flower moths are clothed in shades of brown. Both feed on *Ambrosia* (ragweed) species; the latter is specific to giant ragweed (*A. trifida*).

The most commonly observed *Schinia* moth in our area is the arcigera flower moth, which emerges as *Symphytotrichum* (Aster) begins to bloom in the fall. *S. arcigera* may be seen flying night and day, and is often encountered at moth lights. In addition to aster, *S. arcigera* also targets horseweed, camphorweed, and carolina sea-asters. Multiple hosts allow it to range over most of the eastern United States.



A good view of the hindwings helps to discern one *Schinia* species from another. Arcigera flower moth (*Schinia arcigera*)
Photo: Sari Garfinkle

Next spring, when the Texas dandelions bloom, remember to look for *Schinia mitis*. As the seasons progress, carefully examine the various host plants. You might just encounter their associated flower moths!

Coastal Prairie's Nature Day: A Delightful Celebration of Community and Conservation

By Jan Poscovsky, TMNCPC Class of Spring 2023



TMNCPC President, Susan Walther and Nisa Khan welcome visitors to Nature Day
Photo credit: Hoiman Low

The Coastal Prairie Chapter's Nature Day was held on Saturday, November 9, at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. This was the third scaled-down version of the popular NatureFest, and it proved to be a resounding success.



Katie Sallean teaching about trees and how they provide food and shelter for wildlife
Photo credit: Elizabeth Garrett

Initially planned to take place entirely in the park's Arboretum, the event's location was adjusted due to a record-breaking five inches of rain earlier in the week. Most activities were moved to the

Butterfly Garden, but the weather on the day of the event was delightful, allowing all planned activities to proceed smoothly.

A total of 213 visitors enjoyed a variety of engaging activities. Highlights included:

- An **educational scavenger hunt** in the Arboretum, featuring guides stationed at 10 designated trees to share fascinating facts
- An **education station** showcasing the Native Tree WOW program, face painting, and native seed distribution
- **Tree giveaways** provided by Trees for Houston, with four species distributed to attendees and the remaining trees donated to the Pollinator Pocket Prairie. Visitors were also taught how to plant and care for their chosen trees
- **Creative craft stations**, including leaf art, leaf rubbings, and rock painting, which encouraged guests to express their creativity

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Volunteers

The success of this event would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our volunteers. Special thanks go out to our dedicated Leads who

organized and managed key activities, ensuring everything ran smoothly. Their leadership and passion were instrumental in creating a memorable experience for all attendees.

We are also deeply grateful to the many other volunteers who contributed their time, energy, and expertise. From setting up stations to guiding visitors and sharing knowledge, each person played a vital role in making the day a success. Your efforts not only enriched the event but also strengthened our community's connection to nature and conservation.



Susan Brodmerkel leading the children's scavenger hunt
Photo credit: Hoiman Low

Looking Ahead:

The next Nature Day is scheduled for **Saturday, March 29**, with a focus on Seabourne Lake. This event will include activities led by our chapter's Certified Angler Education instructors, teaching attendees about aquatic life and fishing techniques. The event will also serve as a lead-up to the City of Rosenberg's "FishTastic" celebration, offering lessons on fishing and more.

Leave the Leaves

By Jaimie Fairchild, TMNCPC Class of 2012



It's that time of year when the leaves start to fall, the leaf blowers fire up, and bags upon bags of leaves are left curbside for green waste pickup. It is wonderful that some cities offer green waste pickup, and that residents are using it. Yay!! However, some of the programs are starting to drown in green waste. What to do?

Well, here's a great idea – leave the leaves!! Don't bag them up. Those leaves are golden. Use a mulching blade on your mower (or make sure your lawn service uses one – I do!). The leaves are FREE organic fertilizer for your grass. It doesn't get any easier than that to fertilize – no extra fertilizer needed.

If you have too many leaves for mulching the grass, blow them into your flowerbeds. Once again, FREE fertilizer and mulch in one. The leaves will insulate your plants, just like they do in nature. The leaves will break down naturally and provide organic fertilizer for your plants, just like they do in nature. The leaves will hold in moisture, just like mulch.

But...here is what is even BETTER: the leaves will provide habitat for overwintering butterflies, native bees, beneficial insects, toads and lizards. We all



Randall Schmidt, Aida Pita Baston, and Cyndi Scott teach children about leaving the leaves at the Houston Museum of Natural Science in Sugar Land
Photo credit: Pam Jackson

know that monarch butterflies migrate, but the majority of butterflies do not. Have you ever pondered where they go in the cold months? They are snugly waiting for spring under the leaves.

Did you know that we have at least 1100 species of native bees in Texas? NOT European honey bees – NATIVE bees. These bees are the primary pollinators of our native plants. Most are solitary bees and do not defend nests, thus are docile and rarely

sting. Seventy percent of native bees nest in the ground.

So, do your pocketbook and our native pollinators a favor – Leave the Leaves!



Making a leaf creation
Photo credit: Aida Pita Baston



Leaf insects: Photo credit: Stacy Kmetz

Spring Training Class

Registration for the [Spring 2025 training class](#) will open on January 6 and is expected to fill up fast. Please tell your interested friends and family to go to our website's Join Us page to register. We will hold another training class in the fall. We always need new mentors, so please consider helping out a new member. Mentors get training and support to help their assigned new member to succeed in initial certification and beyond.

Outreach in Our Communities

2024 Pecan Harvest Festival

By Jo Ann Cosby, TMNCPC Class of Fall 2024

The City of Richmond had its 2024 Pecan Harvest Festival (PHF) on Saturday, November 23. Weather was perfect for the event. Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter was well represented with volunteers Ruth Smith as Lead, along with Jo Ann Cosby, Dorothy Tran, Lorie Foux and Randall Schmidt. This chapter worked alongside the Master



TMNCPC members showed the Skins and Skulls WOW
Photo credit: Jo Ann Cosby

Gardeners and Texas A&M Agrilife County Extension Agent, Jody Taylor.

Many of the people that the event brought out were unaware of Seabourne Creek Nature Park in Rosenberg, but they seemed to be excited to venture out in that direction. Our chapter exhibited the Skins and Skulls WOW. The children loved feeling all the different furs and handling the skulls and feet. They were even rating which fur was the softest. The bobcat won that competition.

Several brochures were handed out to those interested in finding Seabourne Park and some attendees even showed interest in possibly joining the chapter.

Along with our event canopies and tables were artisan vendors, food trucks, a farmers market, a beer and wine garden, live music, an amateur pecan baking contest, pecan education, and a car and bike show.

Fun was had by all. The TMNCPC recorded outreach to 233 adults and 144 kids.

Putting Down Roots 2024



Coastal Prairie Conservancy's fall planting festival at the Indiangrass Preserve in Waller had more than 100 volunteers planting 1,300 native plants on the prairie.
Photo credit Shannon Westveer

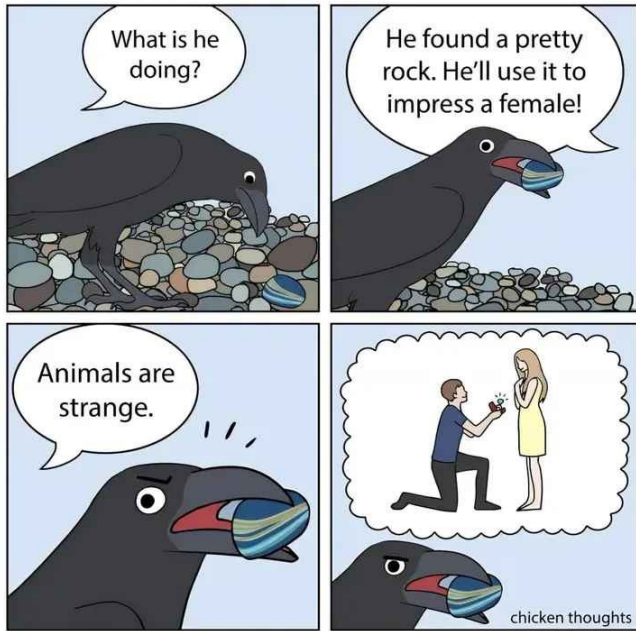
George Ranch Frontier Days



Frontier Day was filled with hands-on-activities, battle re-enactments, live entertainment, historic home tours, and cowboys. Ute Welk, Constance Rossiter, and Mary Saville talked to families about the mammals in our area.
Photo credit: Hoiman Low

The Lighter Side

By *TMNCPC Various Members*



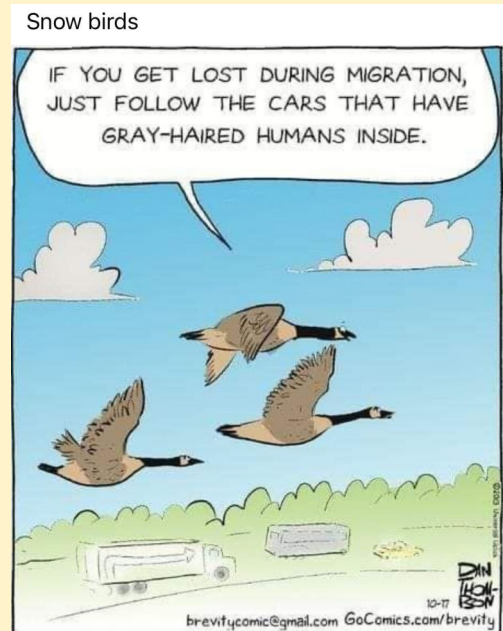
Shared by Amy Phan



Oil pastel painting of the yaupon holly in the demo garden. Painted by Amy Phan. Did you know that yaupon is North America's only native caffeinated plant?



Ruth Smith was awarded the Blue Donut for knowing which town in Texas receives the lowest recorded amount of snowfall—Corpus Christi!
Photo credit: Jan Peterson



Shared by Debbie Wendt

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	Lisa Sanders
New Class Rep.	Jacob Perry
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	TBD

Christmas Bird Count

The National Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is an annual event that brings together bird enthusiasts of all ages to contribute to one of the largest citizen science projects in the world.



Started on Christmas Day 1900 by ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, the Christmas Bird Count runs from December 14 through January 5 each year. Tens of thousands of bird enthusiasts throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, and rain to take part in the effort. The data collected over the past century helps researchers study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. All ages and skill levels are welcome.

Details and contacts for Upper Texas Coast counts can be found at [Houston Audubon](#). Sign up for these in our service area of Waller, Wharton, and Fort Bend Counties.

- Brazos Bend CBC — December 14
- Fort Bend CBC — December 17
- Cypress Creek / Katy Prairie — January 1

Facebook—Like us!



Follow [TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter Facebook](#) for timely and seasonally relevant content. Learn about Coastal Prairie and engage with your volunteer organization.

MEMBERS ONLY To join the [private Facebook Group](#), send a request and wait for TMNCPC Admin to respond.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



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