

Coastal Prairie Chapter Courier

Volume 14 Issue 5 – May 2026

I am rare, and there is
value in all rarity;
therefore I am valuable.

Og Mandino
(1923-1996)



Inside This Issue:

WOW, Look at the Insects!
Focus on Endangered Species
Somewhere Between Zoom and Chigger Bites

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™
Coastal Prairie Chapter

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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COVER PHOTO

Garrett Engelhardt snapped this photo of a male Attwater Prairie Chicken during the annual lek count at Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge.

EDITOR TEAM

This issue was crafted by Co-Editor **Jodi Berls**. Have a great story for the next issue? Submit to:

#*submissions-courier* on Slack or Submissions-courier@coastalprairie.org to reach everyone on the Editor Team.

<https://txmn.org/coastal/monthly-coastal-prairie-courier/>

President's Message

Jan Poscovsky, TMNCPC President



May offers us a chance to reflect on a vibrant and impactful spring season—one that truly embodies our theme of *Growing Deeper Roots*. Looking back at March, it's remarkable to see how much our chapter accomplished, especially during the busy spring break period. From engaging hundreds of visitors at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo EXPO alongside the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, to leading Scout Bird and Nature badge activities at J.B. Harrison Long Point, our outreach efforts reached across all ages and interests.

We continued that momentum with WOW presentations at Long Acres Ranch, the Budding Out event at John Fairey Gardens, Gyotaku at Weston Lakes, and Bird WOW at Fulshear Library—just to name a few of the many ways our members connected with the community. Each of these moments represents our mission in action: sharing knowledge, inspiring stewardship, and building meaningful connections that extend far beyond a single event.

In April, we had planned to carry that energy forward with Wild About Wetlands Nature Day. Unfortunately, we made the difficult decision to cancel the event due to a large competing event, Touch-A-Truck, taking place at the Rosenberg Civic Center, which was expected to draw approximately 4,000 attendees. In the interest of safety—for both our volunteers and members of the public navigating the area—we believed canceling was the most responsible choice. While disappointing, this decision reflects our commitment to thoughtful planning and the well-being of our community. We look forward to our next Nature Day, which is scheduled for Saturday, November 7 from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM at Seabourne Creek Nature Park.

Even amid that change, April gave us an opportunity to celebrate one another during Volunteer Appreciation Month. Our Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast Social was a wonderful success—filled with conversation, shared food, iNaturalist observations, and genuine camaraderie. (See photos on Page 6.) It was a meaningful reminder that while our mission connects us to the broader community, it is also strengthened by the relationships we build within our chapter.

Continued next page

May Chapter Program: Thursday, May 7 @ 7 PM
“From Fields to Habitat” Presented by Jody Taylor & Matthew Johnson
Jan Peterson, TMNCPC Programs Director



Join the Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter for an engaging evening at the Rosenberg Civic Center on May 7, 2026 at 7:00pm! This special joint presentation with Texas A&M AgriLife Horticulture Extension Agent Joseph “Jody” Taylor and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Regional Wildlife Biologist Matthew Johnson dives into how science-based education, land management, and wildlife conservation come together across Texas.

Learn how AgriLife Extension supports landowners and volunteers through conservation programs, agricultural practices, and outreach—and discover how properties can transition from agricultural use to wildlife management for both stewardship and 1-d-1 (Ag Exemption) tax valuation benefits.

Whether you're a volunteer, landowner, or nature enthusiast, this session offers valuable insights into sustainable land use and the future of Texas wildlife.

About Our speakers:

Joseph “Jody” Taylor is the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Fort Bend County Horticulture Agent.

Matthew Johnson is the Regional Wildlife Biologist for Texas Department of Parks & Wildlife.

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

Behind the scenes and throughout the season, our members have continued their steady, dedicated service at Seabourne Creek Nature Park, Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, and Cullinan Park, including the ongoing care of Nina’s Garden. These consistent efforts are the foundation of our work—quietly strengthening the ecosystems and spaces we serve.

As we look ahead, we are also turning our attention inward to ensure we are communicating as effectively as possible. The chapter is actively working on revamping our communications plan, including a refresh of the *Courier* newsletter. As part of this process, you can expect a brief hiatus of the newsletter over the summer months

Our programs are always **FREE** and **open to the public**, held at the Rosenberg Civic Center, 3825 TX-36, Rosenberg, TX 77471.

Thanks to the TMNCPC information technology team, programs are also **streamed LIVE remotely via Zoom**. The 1-hour program begins at **7:00 PM**.

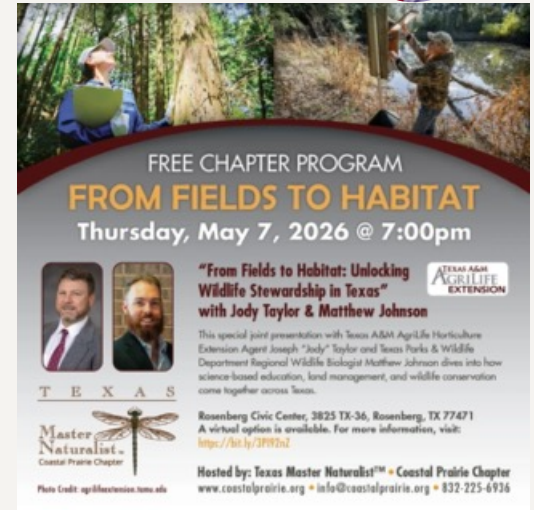
The [Texas Master Naturalist Program](#) is sponsored by [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) and [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#).

[TMNCPC members in attendance should record their Advanced Training (AT) hours under “AT: Chapter Meeting-Coastal Prairie” and the VSP hours for the following business meeting under “Chapter Business: Chapter Meeting.”]

while improvements are made. We are excited about creating a more engaging, streamlined way to keep everyone informed and connected.

Thank you for all you have contributed this spring. Your time, knowledge, and enthusiasm continue to make a meaningful difference. Together, we are not only fulfilling our mission—we are growing deeper roots in the communities and landscapes we cherish. For updates and opportunities to get involved, please visit [coastalprairie.org](#) or send me a DM on Slack.

Jan Poscovsky
 President, Coastal Prairie Chapter
 Texas Master Naturalist Program



Membership Minute

Sari Garfinkle, TMNCPC Membership Director



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



Initial Certification

Antoinette Balez - 2026 Spring
Barkat Charania - 2025 Spring

MaryAnn Ferguson - 2025 Fall
Kathy Hendricksen - 2025 Fall

Becky Martin - 2026 Spring
Vivian Schott - 2026 Spring



2025 Recertification

72 Members Recertified

Missy Allen - 2025 Fall
Ellen Bynum - 2024 Spring
Jo Cain - 2023 Fall
Harold Carlson - 2024 Spring
Cindy Chapman - 2024 Fall
Dominic Dottavio - 2022 Spring
Lisette Dottavio - 2022 Spring
Asli Dural - 2025 Fall
Mutlu Dural - 2025 Fall
Garrett Engelhardt - 2017
Daryle Esswein - 2023 Spring
Esmeralda Fisher - 2022 Spring
Susan Fortenberry - 2020 Fall
Nelson Gonzalez - 2025 Fall
Richard Guajardo - 2025 Spring
Sheri Husband - 2025 Spring
Ana Jaramillo - 2024 Spring

Amber Leung - 2015
Hoiman Low - 2021 Spring
Jesi Malowitz - 2024 Fall
Sarah Marshall - 2018
Debbie McMullen - 2017
Andrea Morgenstern - 2018
Lucy Moyer - 2021 Spring
Masood Murtuza - 2025 Spring
Bob Naeger - 2018
Jan Peterson - 2021 Spring
Aida Pita Baston - 2020 Fall
Stan Poscovsky - 2023 Fall
Dora Puente Maurer - 2025 Spring
Mary Saville - 2020 Fall
Tom Specht - 2025 Spring
Bert Stipelcovich - 2018

Jean Stipelcovich - 2018
Monica Taylor - 2023 Fall
Barry Thompson - 2023 Spring
Haleigh Thornley - 2025 Fall
Joyce Tipton - 2021 Spring
Lynn Trenta - 2011
Susan Walther - 2011
Jean Watson - 2023 Spring
Vanessa Weidman - 2024 Fall
Ute Welk - 2021 Spring
Debbie Wendt - 2014
Dennis West - 2022 Fall
Stephanie Wheatley - 2025 Fall
Tom Zaal - 2018
Pauline Zinn - 2017



250 Hour Milestone

Amado Aguilar - 2022 Fall
Rebecca Aguilar - 2022 Fall
Karen Donohue - 2025 Spring

Richard Guajardo - 2025 Spring
Nathan Heilman - 2024 Fall
Becky Jones - 2024 Spring

Pam Trimble - 2018
Chris Weidman - 2025 Fall

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Volunteer Service — May Highlights

Becky Jones, TMNCPC Volunteer Director



Before departing to serve, always check our website calendar for last minute changes, cancelations, or other information.

[TeamUp Calendar](#)

Signature Project Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP), Rosenberg: 8:00 AM - 10:30 AM Wednesdays and 1st and 3rd Saturdays each month

Signature Project Monthly Bird Hike at SCNP, Rosenberg: 8:00 AM - 10:30 AM 1st Wednesday, October-May

Public Outreach Nature Walk at SCNP, Rosenberg: 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM 3rd Sunday of the month

Public Outreach Insect Hike at SCNP, Rosenberg: 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM 4th Thursday of the month

Public Outreach Houston Museum of Natural Science at Sugar Land: 10:30 AM - 3:30 PM 2nd and 4th Saturdays; **Garden Workday** 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM 3rd Thursday of the month (SignUp Genius required)

Chapter and Board Meeting, via Zoom: 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM 3rd Wednesday of the month (see [#announcements](#) channel on Slack for Zoom JOIN link)

Attwater Prairie-Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, Eagle Lake: 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM every Friday

Coastal Prairie Conservancy Indiangrass Preserve,

Katy: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM Tuesdays, Fridays, and 2nd Saturdays of each month

Willow Fork Pollinator Garden Workday, Katy: 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM every Saturday

Lawther-Deer Park Prairie Workday, Deer Park: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM 4th Saturday of the month

John Paul Landing Weekly Bird Hike, Houston: 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM every Thursday

Harris County Precinct 4 Bird Survey Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza Park, Houston: 7:30 AM - 12:00 PM 4th Monday of the month

9 Natives Showcase Garden Workday, Houston: 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM 2nd Monday of the month

Willow Waterhole Bird Survey, Houston: 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM 3rd Saturday of the month

Bolivar Flats Ramble, Port Bolivar: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM 1st Saturday of the month

Energy Natives Nursery Workday, High Island: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM 2nd Friday of the month

Mindful Nature Walks With Tierra Ortiz-Rodriguez - Seabourne Creek Nature Park: 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM Saturday, May 2

Children's Story Time & Nature Themed Craft - Seabourne Creek Nature Park: 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM Saturday, May 2

TMN Rio Brazos Chapter - Brazos River Cleanup and Camp Out: Glen Rose, TX All day, May 15-18

Left, Vivian Schott was the first of the current training class to receive the "Dubious achievement" award (aka the "Blue Doughnut"). Nathan is so impressed with the new folks he proclaimed them the best class this year. Center, Gracia Taborda was the first-ever Chapter member to get a rain check doughnut because it started raining when the Grand Poobah attempted to



give her one the previous Wednesday. Right, Jo Cain receives the "dubious achievement award" from the Grand Poobah. She earned it by wrestling control of the SCNP bump up operations. Way to go, Jo! -- Jim Butcher

Volunteer Appreciation Social *Photos by Asli Dural*



Chapter members gathered to enjoy each other's company and celebrate their volunteering efforts at the Volunteer Appreciation Social breakfast at Seabourne Creek Nature Park in April.



Membership Minute (Cont'd)

Sari Garfinkle, TMNCPC Membership Director



500 Hour Milestone

Jo Cain - 2023 Fall
Lisette Dottavio - 2022 Spring

Diane Johnston - 2025 Spring
Dennis West - 2022 Fall



1,000 Hour Milestone

Dominic Dottavio - 2022 Spring

Pam Jackson - 2024 Spring

Jean Stipelcovich - 2018

WOW, Look at the Insects!

by Haleigh Thornley, Class of Fall 2025



When I signed up to lead the Fall 2025 class project, I was initially excited - then immediately overwhelmed. We knew our chapter needed and wanted a Workshop on Wheels (WOW) to cover insects, but trying to cram the entire topic of insects into a single suitcase was a daunting task.

And none of us wanted to disappoint anyone with a subpar WOW.

Our first challenge was figuring out what to include. We knew we couldn't include everything; this was a WOW, not an entomology course. But we wanted to make sure we included the most important information. We split up the research stage among ourselves and planned to meet to go over everything and figure out what would make the final cut. At the end of this meeting, we decided all of it was relevant and necessary. So we pivoted.

We knew we would have a tri-fold poster as a display, and we knew we didn't want it to be too wordy.



Above, Stephanie Wheatley and Jeanne Pittari point out some of the information cards in the new Insect WOW. Below, demonstrating the use of the magnifying loupe. Photos by Asli Dural



Trying to balance information and visual interest was a challenge. We also discussed the different contexts in which this WOW would/could be presented. Some of our group members had experience volunteering at Long Acres Ranch, where a WOW could be presented in stations/centers to a set group. Others volunteered at the Houston Museum of Natural Science-Sugar Land, where some folks would

stop by for a few seconds at a time, and others would stay for a simple activity. We wanted to make our WOW flexible enough to work in a variety of contexts.

Ultimately, we created our tri-fold poster display along with a handful of optional activities that could be brought out

depending on the presenters' needs. With activities covering insect mouth parts, insect communication, and insect habitats, I feel we've managed to touch on a lot of wonderful insect information in a way that's engaging to a variety of audiences. And the best part of this structure is that other activities can be added on in the future (we may or may not have a few other ideas already)!

This WOW was truly a labor of love and was a wonderful way to wrap up our training class. I'm so proud to be a Texas Master Naturalist, and I'm so incredibly proud to be a part of the Fall class of 2025! We hope you enjoy our WOW!

Focus on Endangered Species: NestFest Beach Cleanup

by Stephanie Wheatley, Class of Fall 2025



On March 10, the annual NestFest Cleanup took place in Galveston. The purpose of this event is to help create safer spaces for wildlife. Shorebirds rely on clean, undisturbed beaches to nest and raise their chicks, and sea turtles return to these same shores each year to lay their eggs. By clearing debris from these habitats, entanglement risks are reduced, nesting success is improved, and these species have a better chance to thrive.

Fellow Texas Master Naturalist Priya Padmanabhan, TMN-in-training Margaret Constance, and I were among more than 500 sea turtle and bird-loving volunteers who helped remove litter from the beaches in preparation for the forthcoming nesting season. From Bolivar to Quintana, an area spanning 14 nesting sites, volunteers carefully scoured the sand for items that people had left behind. On arriving at our selected location, Galveston State Park, we were provided with trash bags, gloves, a litter grabber tool, snacks (they really took care of us), and excellent NestFest T-shirts! Along with other similarly-armed



Priya Padmanabhan, Stephanie Wheatley, and Margaret Constance worked to make a safer, cleaner habitat for wildlife in Galveston Bay. Photo by Priya Padmanabhan

volunteers, we resembled a cluster of crabs with our "claw-grabbers" as we made our way along the beach. There was no shortage of bottle caps, plastic cups, straws, pieces of rope, dental flossers (did I mention bottle caps?), cans, wooden planks with nails, pieces of plastic, pieces of metal, and more bottle caps! All these carelessly disposed of items made it into our bags and contributed to a total of 5,200 pounds of trash collected during the event.

There were some other colorful items that had washed onto the beaches that we did not want to mess with: Portuguese men-of-war (*Physalia physalis*). They are fascinating creatures but to be admired from afar due to their painful venom! (They did not make it into our collection bags!)

This cleanup effort was a truly rewarding experience, knowing that we were contributing to a successful nesting season for turtles and shorebirds.

Focus on Endangered Species: Making a Rare Flower Count

by Jodi Berls, Class of Fall 2025



Coastal Prairie Chapter members got down on their knees in March in an effort to help preserve Texas prairie dawn (*Hymenoxys texana*), a wildflower known to exist in only six Texas counties: Harris, Fort Bend, Waller, Trinity, Gregg, and Madison.

The Texas Prairie Dawn Monitoring Project, overseen by the Coastal Prairie Conservancy, is an effort to fully count the entire Katy Prairie population of the plant, which was listed as endangered in 1986.

The plant grows in open areas with saline, sandy soil at the base of Mima mounds.

Populations counted in March are located around the periphery of the Hockley Salt Dome on private land in northwestern Harris County. The Katy Prairie is home to one of the largest populations currently known.

Plants are counted in a method known as a rolling buffalo frame count. Frames of plastic pipe 0.25 meter square are laid on the ground, and a mechanical counter is placed in each frame. Volunteers count the plants in each frame, then the number is recorded, the counter is reset, and the frame and counter are placed in the next location to be counted.

Calculations of density per meter enable a study of how habitat affects the success of the plants. Noting conditions where the plants



Texas Prairie Dawn plants are small and easily overlooked, but efforts are under way to preserve this endangered wildflower. Photos by Dennis Wayne West

grow provides information on how to help them thrive.

One goal of the project was to familiarize Texas Master Naturalists and others with the appearance of the plant so that other populations can be found and documented. The plants are small and easily overlooked: they are generally 10-15 centimeters (4-6 inches) tall, with solitary yellow flower heads



less than 1 centimeter in diameter. The leaves have rubbery, glandular blades that may be simple or lobed. They bloom from early March through April, depending on weather.

Final results from the count are not available yet, but participants reported seeing 123,156 total plants, so hopes are high for the future of this rare wildflower.



Counting the plants requires getting close to the ground to find the small blooms.

Getting to Know Our SCNP Prairie Plants - IX Identifying Our Native Passion Vines

by Susie Doe, TMNCPC Class of 2008



In North America there are 13 species of native passion vines, eight of which are native to Texas, and two of which are native to "our area" (see map). One is a *Passiflora lutea*, aka Yellow Passionflower; it has small flowers (about 1 inch across) that are yellowish-green. Its leaves are broader than wide with shallow lobing. It grows to about 15 feet long, preferring part shade (see Photo 1). To date it has not been found at Seabourne Creek Nature Park.



Photo 1. *Passiflora lutea*, yellow passionflower (by Hoiman Low – iNat obs #174970768)

The flowers of passion vines consist of 10 tepals (five sepals and five slightly subequal petals), with a corona of filaments in several series above the tepals, and topped with five stamens (with lower filaments fused) and a style with three stigmatic branches (see Figure 1).

Passiflora incarnata is commonly known as maypop for its hollow fruit that makes a popping sound when

crushed. It is also called purple passionflower, though the term "purple" is, in my opinion, a misnomer. The flowers have petals and sepals that are "white-to-pale lavender," and the corona filaments are "purple or pink, rarely pure white" (according to Correll and Johnson's *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas*). Flowers are up to 7 cm (~ 3 inches) wide.

The genus *Passiflora* consists of ~ 600 species predominantly native to the American tropics and subtropics (~ 3% of species are found in Southeast Asia/India). The early Spanish missionaries thought

Passiflora species' flower structure symbolized the "passion of Christ," as described in Figure 1. Very soon after their discovery in the New World, the passion vines became "darlings" of the European horticulturalists (being cultivated in Paris, Rome, and London as early as the 1610-20s), and naturally leading to a lot of breeding and hybridizing. Some sources estimate that there are at least 700 registered cultivars/hybrids of *Passiflora* in existence; Huruphansen.dk has a list that includes ~1300 cultivars. The *Passiflora* Society International lists 305 registered since 2003 -- 19 of these list *P. incarnata* as the female parent and 11 list it as the male parent – and then there are the hybrid crosses. All this to get bigger flowers, different color combinations, hardier plants, faster growing plants, vines with bigger or sweeter fruits, etc. Garden centers are happy to sell you any number of them!

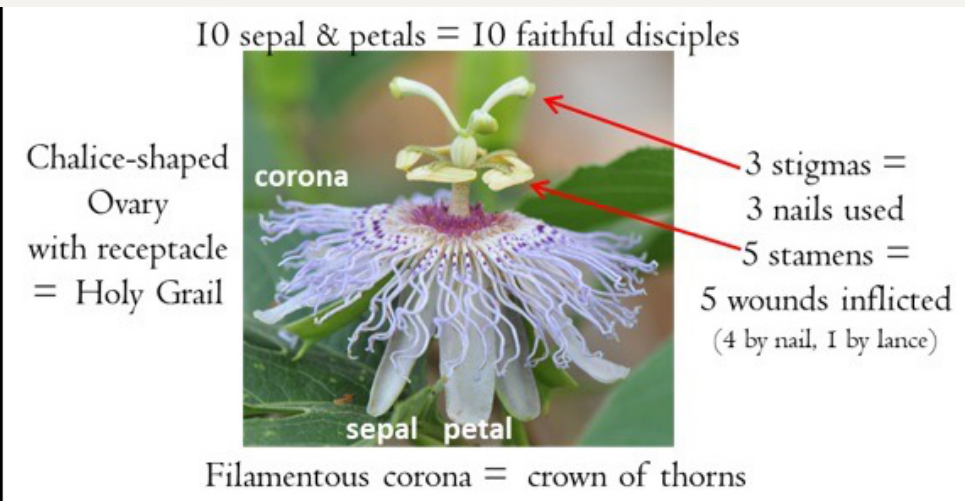


Figure 1. Native *Passiflora incarnata* – typical coloration with purple/pink corona, but pale tepals (Photo by Susie Doe)

[Continued on next page](#)

Getting to Know Our SCNP Prairie Plants - IX (Cont'd) Identifying Our Native Passion Vines

by Susie Doe, TMNCPC Class of 2008



[Continued from previous page](#)

For our restoration projects and native habitats, however, we need to be sure that we are planting the native and not a cultivar/hybrid lookalike. The leaves of native *P. incarnata* are all three-lobed throughout the plant; they are 6-15 cm along the midnerve, 5-12 cm along lateral nerves, 7-15 cm between apices of the lateral lobes, being lobed from 3/4 to 4/5 of their length...dark green above, glaucous beneath (C and J) (see Photo 2).

The tepals of *P. incarnata* are usually quite pale or with at most a wash of purple coloration (see typical coloration in Figure 1 above). If they are darker, you suspect it's not our native species.

The inner shorter corona filaments of *P. incarnata* are red-violet/pinkish, while the longer filaments are usually white toward the base, then a few darker purple spots, with the remaining longest part being purplish to blue-lavender (see Figure 1). Also note that the long filaments tend to be wavy. If the color is too dark or the filaments are straight, suspect a cultivar/hybrid or possibly a different species.

The majority of cultivars/hybrids are not inclined to become naturalized; however, in our area there is one that does. It is known as *Passiflora* "Incense" [a cross between *P. incarnata* and *P. cincinnata* (from South America)]. It can be



Photo 2. Leaf of *P. incarnata* (Susie Doe)



Photo 3-4. Flower and leaf of *P. 'Incense'* (by bluewolf75, iNat obs # 51827885)



Photo 5. *P. edulis* (public domain)
Wikipedia



Photo 6. Lobed/Unlobed leaves (by Melissa Tulig, (CC-BY-NC))

distinguished from our native plant by its much larger flowers (up to 12 cm (~ 5 inches) in diameter).

It has usually darker tepals, and a different shape of its leaves – they may be three- or five-lobed, and the indentations between the lobes are much deeper and narrower than those found in *P. incarnata*.

Many gardeners grow a South American species, *P. edulis*, for its slightly larger and sweeter fruits.

The distal leaves of this species look much like those of *P. incarnata*, but the lower leaves are often unlobed.

The corona is dark purple basally and white distally.

This species is **not** cold hardy, requiring special protection during winter months, while our *P. incarnata* is extremely resistant to cold (it may die back to the ground, but its roots survive!).

The moral of this story is: Just because your passionflower is purple doesn't mean you've got *P. incarnata*!

Somewhere Between Zoom and Chigger Bites

by Debbie Bush, Class of Spring 2026



Somewhere between Zoom lectures, chigger bites, and an unexpected number of snake encounters, Texas Master Naturalist training has quickly reshaped how I experience the outdoors. The combination of online sessions and hands-on field experiences has been a great balance, bridging what we learn in the classroom with what we observe in the field.



Kat Hunter, Kara Sagness, and DeAnna Krenek become acquainted with a scaly friend during the herpetology session. Photo by Nathan Heilman

remembered using that massive key, working through the vocabulary and figuring out each species. And then there are the snakes—we've encountered one in almost every in-person session, whether captive or in the wild. That added element of surprise has made each field day even more memorable.

Some of those field moments have been quite memorable. Dip netting at Seabourne Creek Nature Park felt like being a kid again, in the best way possible—curious, engaged, and excited to see what we might

find. In another session, identifying a plant took me right back to college and my favorite class, Plant Biology. I

One session that resonated with me was the soil talk by Shannon Westveer. I've attended plenty of lectures and field trips before, but the way she explained soil made it click for me. It shifted my perspective from something plants grow in to the foundation of entire ecosystems.

Of course, none of this happens in isolation. Our mentors and guest experts have each brought their own perspectives and enthusiasm, and it's clear they genuinely enjoy their work and sharing it.

Just as meaningful has been getting to know my fellow trainees. Everyone comes into the program with a different "why,"



The class poses for a group photo during a Zoom session.

[Continued on next page](#)

Somewhere Between Zoom and Chigger Bites (Cont'd)

by Debbie Bush, Class of Spring 2026



[Continued from previous page](#)

but we're all working toward the same goal: becoming more knowledgeable, engaged stewards of our environment.

That shared experience has made the learning even more meaningful, whether during a Slack discussion or while pointing out a cool bird on a hike.

One of the biggest changes I've noticed is how I see my own backyard. I don't just see the native plants I've installed for the birds anymore. I notice the insects that support those birds—the caterpillars that serve as food, and the ones that will eventually become butterflies and moths that continue the cycle. It's a small space, but it now feels like part of something much bigger.



Above, prairie expert Dr. Barron Rector helped trainees learn to identify plants and appreciate the role of moisture at Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Shannon Westveer. Below right, trainees made seed balls at Indiangrass Preserve. Photo by Nathan Heilman

These past weeks have gone by quickly, but they've marked the beginning of something long-lasting. So yes, it's been a whirlwind of learning and doing. And really, this is just the beginning of the journey as a Texas Master Naturalist.



The class marvels at the size of the red and black drum fish at Sea Center Texas. Photo by Vanessa Weidman

Volunteering Spotlight

Photos by various members

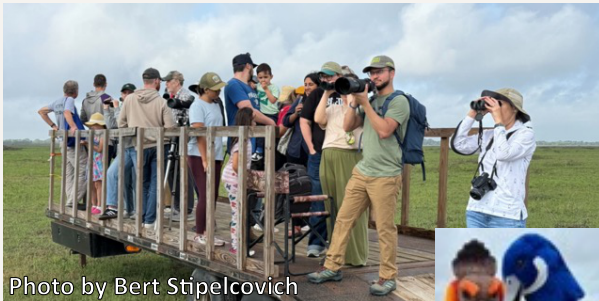


Photo by Bert Stipelcovich



Our volunteers were omnipresent at Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge's Boomin' & Bloomin' festival in April. Volunteers served as tour guides, bus drivers, and parking attendants, as well as leading bird and plant walks. Visitors got an inside look at the refuge's special equipment for maintaining habitat and transporting the prairie chickens, as well as that all-important chance to see these rare and fascinating birds.



Photo by Jean Stipelcovich



Photos by Jodi Berls



Photo by Deb McMullen



Educational opportunities abound at Long Acres Ranch, thanks to volunteers helping kids with insect netting and art projects. Photos by Lynne Woods



Photo by Tierra Ortiz-Rodriguez

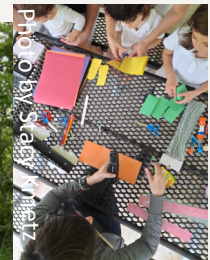


Photo by Stacy Mast

Mindful Nature Walks and Story Time for Children are back at Cullinan Park and Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Join us!

Shannon Westveer Reaches 5,000-hour Milestone (a While Ago!)

by Susie Doe, TMNCPC Class of 2008



Shannon Westveer reached her 5,000-hour milestone in August 2025. I know that she refrained from tooting her own horn—thank you to the *Courier* co-editors for giving me the honor of tooting it for her!

Shannon was always destined to be a naturalist: from her earliest days she explored the empty fields near her childhood home in Missouri City, then, as an adult, volunteered at the local elementary school's outdoor gardens. She explored nature while hiking and camping with her family, and in time caught the "prairie fairy" bug on a visit to the Katy Prairie in May 2019. That inspired her to begin building pocket prairies on her own property. When I first "met" Shannon on iNaturalist, I knew right away she'd make a great Texas Master Naturalist. "Interested in taking the training?" I asked her.

Her reply: "I'm already signed up for the Fall 2019 class!"

"I'll see you there," I said.

After completing training she jumped into chapter life by becoming the Training Director for six classes between Spring 2020 and Fall 2024. She also



Shannon has served in a variety of capacities, but she is most in her element when out in nature, observing and learning. Photos by Susie Doe



served for two years as chapter Vice President, served as co-editor of the *Courier* for the past two years, and she continues to mentor those who serve in these positions today.

Shannon is passionate about the natural world, and she shares that passion with everyone she meets. She loves learning about nature and ecology and using her advanced training opportunities to build relationships with state and county agency staff so she can "pick their brains" later when working on habitat projects. She loves attending planting parties (especially for prairie plants) and seed collecting events. She loves passing on what she's learned at outreach events, when presenting Workshops on Wheels (she

created the Soil WOW) and programs to various community organizations, including a session at the 2024 TMN Annual Meeting. She loves reporting on all things nature by writing articles for the *Courier*, posting ecology and land management information on Slack and on the chapter's blog, and even helping to produce some educational videos. She loves citizen science: bird counts, nature challenges, bioblitzes, and mothing. I especially love that she "gets it" when it comes to plants!

Congratulations, Shannon, on 5,000 hours and thanks for all the work and fun you have provided over the past years. You are a true TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST and an inspiration to us all!

ELECTED OFFICERS

- President [Jan Poscovsky](#)
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The Odes of March

*Young naturalist, listen closely near wetland shores
for tales of damsels and dragons lore
when the ides of Martius doth stealthily creep
and Odonata warriors emerge from sleep.*

*Soon first rays of warming sun
reveal tiny damsels on every frond
as water nymphs freed from chitin bonds
now the Odes exuviate in silent song.*

*Stretching free at last, from water's grasp
An ecdysis ritual among the grass
New ravenous predators take flight to air
where the Anisoptera hunger there.*

*Small invertebrates hushed in molting dread
the ravenous Zygoptera begin their shed
soon a dance of wings in jeweled might
cause midges and mayflies to scatter in fright.*

*Young tenerals escaping naiadic form
in shimmering light, winged creatures reborn
wayward beetles escape to water's edge
when the Odes of March begin their shed.*

– Lisa Sanders

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Master Naturalist™
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**TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST™
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