

The Midden

GBAC Celebrating 10 years

Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists

December 2011

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Now We Are Ten

by Diane Humes, President 2011

Our chapter has passed a hugely significant milestone - 10 successful years - and thanks are due all around to those who have made this possible - especially our advisor, Julie Massey. She has guided and aided this chapter every step of the way, tirelessly and enthusiastically, so THANK YOU, Julie!

At the State Meeting in October, members attended from 36 of 42 chapters. We are not the oldest chapter, but few others have reached even 5 years. So, we are always breaking new ground; hopefully, others will benefit from our experiences.

One issue for our chapter is hours; we do contribute significantly to total numbers for the state organization. These hours translate to grant-matching funds valued at about \$20 per hour - not insignificant at all. And, surely the most constant theme at the President's Breakfast was lack of money, now and in the foreseeable future.

Of course, being extremely dedicated volunteers, we all work for our own personal satisfaction, but a huge way for us all to contribute to the organization is to remember to REPORT HOURS. And, this is the time to do it. **If you are close to a milestone award and wish to receive it at the December chapter meeting, please submit your hours to Jim Duron by November 16.** Otherwise, any hours accrued in 2011 must be reported in 2011; **all 2011 hours are due no later than January 5.**

We're great, but still growing. Many Happy Returns.

Next Chapter Meeting

December 1st

Annual Meeting and
Presentation

Wind Energy in Texas

by
Nelda Tuthill

Wayne Johnson
Community Center
Carbide Park

6:30



Be the change you wish to see in the world!

December and January Activities

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter Meeting - December 1st

Presenter: Nelda Tuthill, will cover Wind Energy in Texas

6:30 Social, 7:00 Presentation, 8:00 business meeting
Carbide Park

Daytime Phenomena - January 12th

Lunar Planetary Institute

7-9pm 2 Hours AT

Cost: free

Learn about rainbow, halos and glories

Presenter: Allan Treiman For more information, contact Emmeline Dodd txdodd@aol.com

Ongoing

Galveston Island State Park

Every Saturday- Beach Explorations

Every Sunday- Bay Explorations

10 am. Meet at the Welcome Center

Tours are 1 to 1 ½ hours long.

Prepare for sun and mosquitoes.

Bring water and family.

Heritage Book Study Group

First Monday of every month

Texas City Prairie Preserve

10am-Noon 2 hours AT

Contact: Elsie Smith (409)945-4731

We are currently reading:

The River of the Mother of God by Aldo Leopold

STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Project of the Year:

Prairie and Wetland Restoration

Horseshoe Marsh

The Project of the Year at Horseshoe Marsh will continue through out the year. We are restoring island habitats ravaged by Hurricane Ike. Our next work date is December 15th. If you can attend please contact Dick Benoit rbenoit@aol.com

Ongoing Activities:

Tuesdays -

- Sheldon Lakes State Park, Contact: Tom Solomon crandtr@sbcglobal.net
- Texas City Prairie Preserve, Contact: Jim Duron wishkad@yahoo.com

Wednesdays - Wetland Restoration Team, Contact:

Marissa Sipocz m-sipocz@tamu.edu

Fridays- Prairie Friday, ABNC, 9 - Noon Contact: Dick

Benoit RBenoitTEX@aol.com

EDUCATION-OUTREACH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Bay & Island Adventures - Volunteers teach six in-class hands-on modules (water, Galveston Bay, wetlands, coastal prairies, birds, Gulf of Mexico) on a once a month basis in Dickinson and Galveston Schools. Presenters and helpers are needed for eleven 4th and 5th grade classes. Contact: Sara Snell snellsw@verizon.net.

Education and Outreach Committee - Lots of work to do and we can use your help developing a speakers bureau; responding to requests for exhibit booths, fieldtrip guides and presenters, planning Camp Wild and Treasures of the Bay; and developing a library of education-outreach materials. Contact Sara Snell snellsw@verizon.net.

Partner and Associate Programs Many organizations sponsor guided walks and education programs or need volunteers to man their nature center. Go to www.gbamasternaturalist.org click on "Volunteer Opportunities," then click on "Partners, Sponsors and Associates" for the list, then click on their website for information and contact.



Prairie Ponderings by Dick Benoit

We are wrapping up another successful year in the Galveston Bay Area Prairies. Despite the continual population growth in the area an increase in awareness and prairie restoration is noted. Even as the present worst recorded drought conditions continue, progress continues.

Armand Bayou Nature Center Prairies continue progress. Another 25 acres have been reclaimed from the pervasive Chinese Tallow Tree. Another 14,000 one-gallon prairie grasses and forbs have been planted by the Prairie Friday Team, Prairie Pandemonium, and youth groups. Plans for a refurbished greenhouse, more invasive species removal, expanded plant nursery area, and a continued support of the current staffing have been made.

Sheldon Lake State Park also continues plantings with its Prairie Tuesday Team. The addition of a chapter purchased auger, mainly financed by monies supplied by a project done by Tom Solomon, has augmented planting.

Texas City Prairie Preserve has just finished a Stewardship Project of the Month, where 500 one-gallon plants were installed. Jim Duron has spearheaded the growth of thousands of plants in its nursery. Their new area leader, Aaron Tjelmeland, has been installed and his primary goal is habitat restoration for the Prairie Chicken.

Our chapter has been involved with Galveston Island State Park in prairie dune restoration 3. We are currently working with Artist Boat twice a month potting about 600 one-gallon plants per work day for students to establish in the dunes.

We are also still involved with Houston Audubon on the Horseshoe Marsh Prairie, planting about 600 one-gallon plants monthly. This has evolved to our Steward Project of the Year Two.

The prairie education aspect has continued at the Hughes School under the leadership of Sara Snell. We have also expanded to teacher's training at the Environmental Institution of Houston through courses designed by the chapter and EIH.



Wetland Wanderings by Diane Humes

Temperatures have ameliorated from the blistering summer heat and we have had delightful, refreshing rain, but Texas is still experiencing the worst drought in over 50 years. All Texans are thinking about rain and water right now and at Mo Ranch for the annual TMN meeting, keynote speaker Laura Huffman, director of the Texas

Nature Conservancy, spoke passionately about the state of Texas' water, specifically the two more important issues: freshwater protection and marine protection.

The amount of freshwater available to the state is fixed or declining, the human population is projected to increase,

possibly double, and more than half of the current water use is for food. In addition, 30% of the water used for agriculture is lost - wasted - because it is cheap.

We cannot afford to waste water! Can farmers be given incentives to use less water, modernize irrigation equipment? What will work best?

The good news is that Texas, unlike most other states, **has** a Water Plan to ensure our water supply for the next 50 years. Implementation of the plan is expected to cost \$53 billion, not including infrastructure. However, the Water Plan has 2 fatal flaws: the Plan is not funded and it has no conservation plan, although 23% of the Plan's future water supply is supposed to come from conservation.

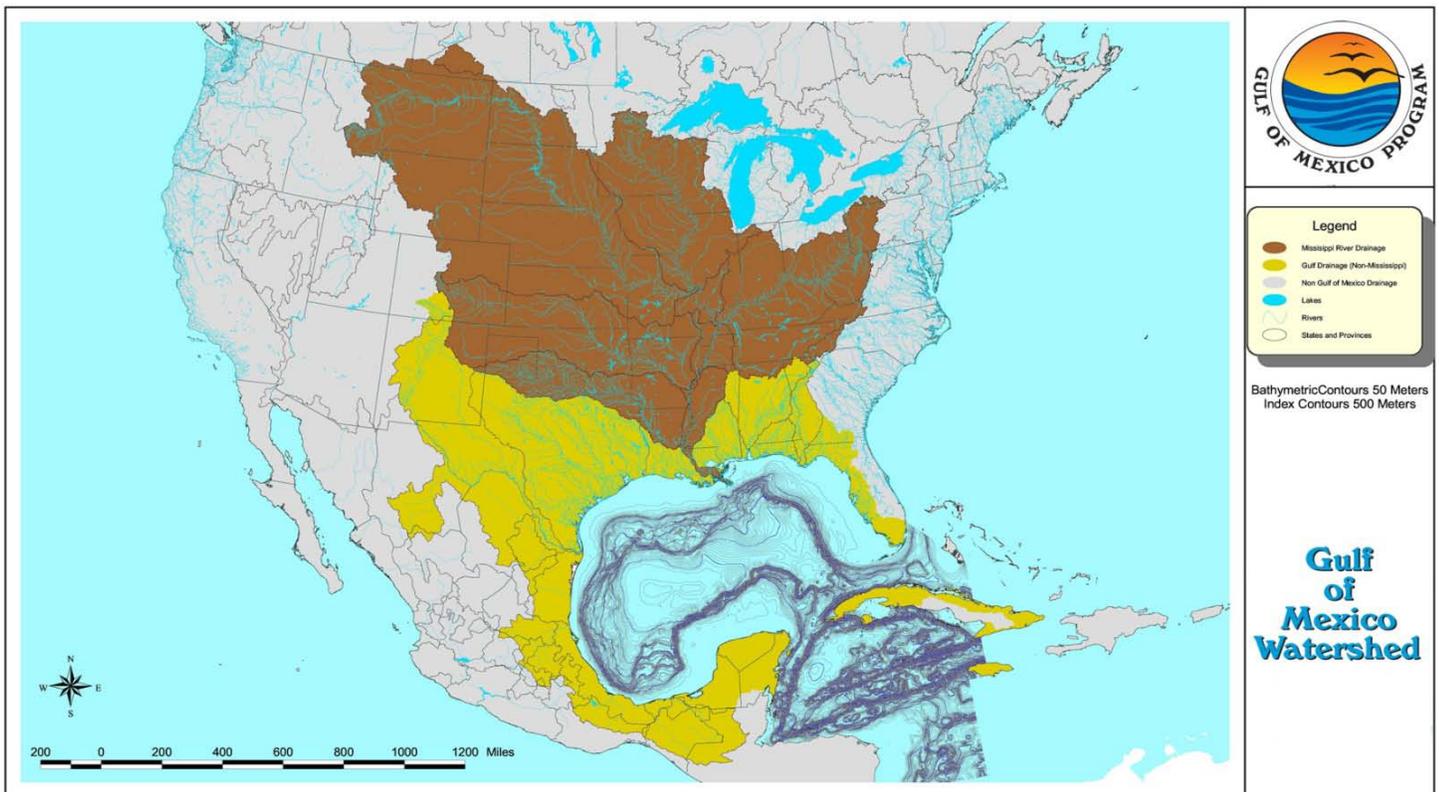
To address the conservation flaw, the Texas legislature has unanimously approved a stewardship water exemption - Proposition 8 on this November's ballot - requiring a constitutional amendment. The thinking behind the legislation is that if 95% of Texas' land on which rain falls is privately owned, then water conservation can best be achieved by providing the landowners encouragement and incentive - an

exemption for water stewardship - same as agricultural or wildlife exemption. Let's see whether it passed.

On the issue of marine protection, Ms. Huffman spoke eloquently of the need to protect the Gulf of Mexico for the good of humans and all creatures. The Gulf is near and dear to us, but perhaps less well-known to the rest of our state. It is the 9th largest water body on earth, provides 30 - 80% of U.S. seafood, and over one million jobs in tourism, and produces more than half of all oil and gas production in the U.S.

The Gulf of Mexico is **our** watershed and the drainage basin for the entire Mississippi River system, which means most of the country. Ms. Huffman described the need to preserve the biota and its great diversity by wholesale restoration of seagrasses and oysterbeds and preservation of instream flows to the bays of Texas. And, she added, "even if you live and work in Houston, TX...you can still be a conservationist".

I think she meant to say, "especially if you live and work near Galveston Bay, **you** are a conservationist!" See you in the wetlands, at Sheldon, Horseshoe Marsh, ABNC, GISP, CCISD.....



Brown - Mississippi River Drainage
 Yellow - Gulf Drainage (Non-Mississippi)

Texas Stream Team Meeting by Diane Humes

The Texas Stream Team held the Meeting of the Monitors at the Nassau Bay Hilton Hotel on September 29 - October 1, 2011. The meeting began with a series of policy sessions outlining the 2011 Basin Summary Report, the progress of the BIG - Bacterial Implementation Group - and case studies of three watershed protection plans, the pre-emptive planning strike to clean the waters before a TMDL plan is required. The big issue in our waterways is bacteria; contamination is both widespread and at high levels.

The 13-county area surrounding Houston has more than 600 wastewater treatment facilities of various sizes and efficiencies. In addition to wastewater treatment plants, potential bacterial contamination sources include wildlife, cattle, 75,000 septic systems and estimated 1.0 million dogs and 1.1 million cats. The Houston area population is currently 4 million; should the population increase as projected to 7.5 million people, we could also expect almost 2 million dogs and over 2 million cats to share our space. Pet waste contains bacteria that can wash straight down the storm drain into the bayou, in case you're interested.

Texas was the last state in the Union to require bacterial testing of wastewater facilities; the TCEQ requires testing only 4 times per year. Most streams greatly exceed the E. coli standard of 126 cfu/100ml (colony-forming units/100 ml of water) for contact recreation in "swimmable waters". In order to clean up our waters, expect more stringent standards and more frequent testing to be recommended.

According to Andrew Samson, inspirational Executive Director of the River Systems Institute, half of Texas rivers today are flowing with less than 10% of normal flow due to drought. This situation compares with the Drought of Record in the 1950's, except that today there are more wells - over 10,000 in Hays Co. alone - and far more people and most of them are "city slickers" with no direct connection to the land or water. Strategies to manage future water supplies for projected population growth will need to include water reuse, more reservoirs, and inter-basin water transfers.

The Texas Stream began in 1992 as Texas Watch, grew, and changed its name in 2008. Its monitors are the "eyes and ears" in their local watersheds. Volunteer monitor stream monitors are now collecting a legacy of baseline information about stream flows for the future. Only 50% of U.S. waters are monitored professionally; Texas has 191,000 miles of streams! Volunteer monitoring is limited only by funding and the ability to match a site with a volunteer - targeting especially "impaired" water bodies, which in our region means bacteria.

Monitors had the opportunity for advanced training and certification for monitoring E. coli, nitrogen, phosphorus, turbidity, and stream flow. This extra data collection will aid the understanding of our streams and bayous. Monitors will soon be able to log their data electronically directly with the Stream Team.



It was not all work - the weather was spectacular and many attendees opted for the sunset cruise around Clear Lake and out to Galveston Bay. Tour guide on the boat was none other than Pirate Jean Lafitte (aka Julie Massey) who regaled us with past pirate exploits around Galveston Bay. And, to show that it is indeed a small world, deckhand for the evening was Ian Jaschek, our chapter's first Junior Master Naturalist - considerably grown up since we saw him last. Good times, good fun - See you at the next Meeting of the Monitors!

10th Anniversary – Let's Party by VervaDensmore

On October 6th we met, mingled and celebrated 10-years of work, thousands of hours of caring for and teaching others about our natural world. We recalled countless memories of fun, friendship and food. We looked at our wonderful archive books and watched

slides of 10-years of generous volunteers working in prairies, shorelines, wetlands and events. It was an evening to remember.



It began with friendships renewed or continued and with good food from Olive Garden, and ended with that truly amazing cake lovingly prepared by Diane Olsen. Between these activities, 140 Master Naturalists and guests talked, sang, enjoyed a very funny skit presented by the 2011 class, played our Master Naturalist version of Jeopardy, and even managed to have a short business meeting.

It didn't happen without many hours of teamwork and planning. Special thanks go to TamberlynMaggiolino who personally copied and put together the journals that were given as party favors and was the energy behind the skit which many said was the high point of the evening.

Diane Olsen's cake paid homage to the shore, wetlands, and prairies and was truly delicious. Deborah Howard served food and organized the cutting and serving of the cake and did a dozen other jobs to make the evening run smoothly. Diane Humesand Julie Massey created the Jeopardy game and ran the evening with their usual efficient and warm style.

Thank you all. Thanksalso to our photographers of the evening, Mel Measeles and Steve Upperman and to everyone who came early to set up tables, place decorations, light candles and help create the party mood. As always, this event happened because a lot of wonderful people said 'yes I can help'. It's the Master Naturalist way.

What a group!!! Happy 10th Anniversary GBAC-TMN.

Shorebirds with Winnie^{by Gib Larson}

Twenty-two GBAC Master Naturalists and friends recently spent quality time with Winnie Burkett on the Bolivar Peninsula viewing some of the magnificent shorebirds of our Galveston Bay area. And the weather could not have been more beautiful!

Our group met at the Galveston-side ferry parking lot. We car-pooled, got on the ferry, and met Winnie on the Bolivar side. We had a short session and then headed out.

Winnie's goal was for us to see and identify ten different kinds of shorebirds. She instructed us to first look at the size of the bird, then the shape of the bill, the length of the legs and other unique characteristics, and lastly what the birds were feeding on.

She said that color wasn't as important because plumage changes during the seasons and may differ for the male and female. At this time of year, we would see a lot of white, brown, gray, and black colors, less showier than song birds which very often have bright, distinct colors.

Once we got going, we visited three sites on Bolivar Peninsula: a pond at the lighthouse, Bolivar flats, and the

north jetty. Each spot had a unique habitat and all three sites offered plenty of birds for viewing.



At the lighthouse pond, the birds were aggressively feeding, as it was still early in the morning. But as the morning progressed, there was less feeding and more loafing. Sound familiar?

At the flats along the north jetty, the tide was low, so some of the birds were still feeding, but others were loafing, particularly the skimmers and pelicans. Here, we also saw a large group of white pelicans.

Here is a list of a few of the birds we saw: willet, avocet, black-bellied plover, dowitcher, sanderling, peeps, black skimmers, pelicans, cormorant, roseate spoonbill, black-necked stilt, greater yellowlegs, long-billed curlew,

marbled godwit, ruddy turnstone, clapper rail, and several species of terns and gulls.

We finished with lunch at Winnie's house next to the north jetty. We were back on the ferry by 1:00 pm.

All agreed it was a truly great outing. Winnie definitely sharpened our skills in identifying shorebirds..

Gib Larson, CCISD Citizen of the Year by Emmeline Dodd

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Gib Larson served in the U.S. Army, earned an electrical engineering degree from the University of Minnesota, worked in the aerospace industry in both Florida and Texas, started his own business in 1984 and eventually retired in 1999. After retirement, his volunteer career skyrocketed across a number of industries. His diverse skill set and passion for helping others has earned him the 2011 Citizen of the Year Award.



Larson, a Master Naturalist, lends his talents to the Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Texas City Prairie Preserve, the Clear Lake for Texas Stream Team and the Armand Bayou Nature Center. His numerous commitments include teaching junior angler classes, providing free income tax preparation for seniors and individuals on limited income, and driving dialysis patients home after treatment for the Red Cross.

The area in which he spends a considerable amount of time on a weekly basis is the Longhorn Project. The Longhorn Project is a partnership between the Clear Creek Independent School District, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, the Texas Longhorn Breeders Association of America and NASA. Spending a minimum fifteen hours a week, Larson instructs third and seventh graders and manages all the garden projects. These include planting, weeding, harvesting and mowing the agricultural grounds in addition to the pastures that encompass the 53-acre facility. The Longhorn Project provides a place for students to learn about all aspects of science, agriculture and animal care.

Despite his busyness, he still finds time to indulge in his own hobbies which include cycling, hunting, fishing, gardening and reading as well as working out four days a week at the E.A. Smith YMCA. Married to wife Jan for 56 years, they are the proud parents of daughter Pamela Leach, son Paul Larson and grandchildren Alex, Jessica, Drew and Sarah.

Beach Out and Volunteer by TamberlynMaggiolino

On September 24, 2011, Master Naturalists teamed up with The Texas General Land Office, local businesses, school groups, and numerous other volunteers to help clean the beaches of Bolivar Peninsula.

The GLO has been successfully reaching out to the public for 25 years through their Texas Adopt-A-Beach volunteer program. Since the first cleanup in 1986, more

than 422,000 volunteers have picked up over 8,100 tons of trash from Texas beaches!

The Master Naturalists volunteered to be part of the solution on this day by collecting enough trash to fill more than fifty 39-gallon trash bags! They filled bags with everything from cigarette butts, clothing, and Styrofoam, to fishing line with rusted hooks still attached! The area that was cleaned was approximately a 300-yard

shoreline beach off of French Town Road, which is known best for its fishing, wading and launching kayaks.

On this beach cleanup day, Bolivar Peninsula had 500 volunteers who helped clean 20 miles of beaches, collecting more than 18 tons of trash! This trash and

debris, if not removed, can be very harmful and even fatal to all marine wildlife.

If you would like to participate in the next Bolivar Beach cleanup on Saturday, April 28, 2012, visit <http://texasadoptabeach.org> for more information.

2011 State Meeting at Mo Ranch by Diane Humes

On the morning of October 21, we crossed the Guadalupe River's eleven named low-water crossings - Schumacher, Hunt, Mayhugh, Lone Star, Hope, Waldemar, Friedrich, Graham, Wagon Wheel, Benson, Mo Ranch - on our journey to Mo Ranch for the 12th TMN State Meeting. Jim, Julie, Bill, Debbie, Dick, Royce, Sharon, Jerry, Diane, Allan, Sara, Marie, and Odie joined nearly 300 of our fellows from across the state for a glorious fall weekend of food, fun, friendship, learning and sharing.



Advanced Training sessions included plant ID, rainwater harvesting, hummingbirds, anthropology, climate change and the carbon cycle, among others. Sara and Julie gave presentations on "The Wonders of Galveston Bay" and "Gems of the Sea," to introduce the ocean and its myriad life forms to those from much higher and drier parts of the state. Diane and Allan spoke about "Stars of the TX Night Sky" and "Daytime Phenomena," including Jupiter and its moons and rainbows and halos.

Additional activities included canoeing, visiting friends from other chapters - former GBAC master naturalist Gail McAdoo was there from the Good Water Chapter - and celebrating Sonny Arnold's retirement. We cheered and clapped as chapter members Debbie Howard and Royce Pendergast received their 250 hour pins during the awards ceremony; Tom Solomon was honored in absentia for 5000 volunteer service hours.

Together we viewed "A Fierce Green Fire," an incredible and inspirational film about the life and work of Aldo Leopold, father of restoration ecology, wilderness preservation, and the "land ethic." Although he died in 1948, Aldo Leopold's ideas seem fresh and important to us today. He proposed restoration of the land using the same tools as its degradation - "ax, cow, plow, fire and gun." And, he stressed that humans are not separate from nature, for:

"If the individual has a warm personal understanding of land, he will perceive of his own accord that it is something more than a breadbasket. He will see land as a community of which he is only a member, albeit now the dominant one. He will see the beauty, as well as the utility of the whole, and know the two cannot be separated. We love (and make intelligent use of) what we have learned to understand."

We left Mo Ranch, tired, but re-connected with each other, with new insight about our mission of stewardship and education of our natural environment. Next year's meeting will be closer to home: Camp Allen, Navasota, TX, October 26 - 28, 2012.

Fall Teacher's Workshop by Sara Snell

The Fall Teachers' Workshop on Saturday, September 10 was the beginning of a pilot program partnering with the UHCL Environmental Institute. It was entitled Coastal Prairie 101 and it was a fun filled day of learning with

Jaime Gonzalez of the Katy Preserve Conservancy and our own Dick Benoit.

We had nineteen attendees with three of the nineteen from our 2011 Treasures of the Bay workshop. And



these three have already signed up for the next three workshops. We are hoping more of our former Treasures of the Bay participants will sign up since these are different training classes from the summer ones.

There is nothing like making seedballs!!!!

Jaime Gonzales and class members demonstrated how deep prairie grass roots penetrate the soil.

Our evaluations were over the top which definitely helps spur us on for the next three workshops which will be held on October 8 at Armand Bayou, November 5 at UHCL/ EIH and December 3 at UHCL /EIH. These classes are run like our own training classes, so if you can help with food, greeting, photography and speaker introductions, please contact Sara Snell, snellsw@verizon.net.

Rubies, Rubies, Everywhere: What's up? by Stennie Stirling Meadours

This article is reprinted from the *Bay Area Observer*, Sept 29, 2011 issue with permission of the author.

Hummingbirds are tiny flying, bejeweled, magical, mysterious creatures that fill me with a sense of awe and leave me spellbound. Their unique figure eight wing pattern enables them to fly forward, backward, sideways, up, down, upside down and hover in one place while feeding! Their body temperature is normal for birds, 104 - 111 degrees F., but can be lowered to 55 degrees F. to conserve energy when sleeping or in a torpid state. When in a torpid state their heart rate is lowered to 50 beats per minute, while awake and resting 250 beats per minute, but while flying and feeding it can soar to 1,250 beats per minute! There are 18 species of hummingbirds found in North America. Of those, the Ruby-throated hummingbird is by far the most common in the Galveston Bay Area and is the marathoner of hummingbirds.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at about 3.5-3.75 inches long and weighing about 0.11 oz. are the only North American hummingbirds known to fly over a large water mass, the Gulf of Mexico. The remaining 17 North American species migrate over land.

Around the middle of August, Ruby-throats begin to arrive along Galveston Bay area from their breeding grounds from as far north as Canada and linger for days on the Texas coast. During this time, they feed intensely, fight constantly, putting on fat, doubling or tripling their non-migrant weight, and no doubt increasing their muscle mass! The Rubies are preparing for a 600 mile non-stop nocturnal flight across the Gulf of Mexico. During the weekend of 9-24/25-2011, Kurt Johnson, a

fisherman/birder in Port Aransas, reports "many, many hummers heading to Mexico flying right along the tops of the waves, several pulling up short to examine my bright orange popping cork". Their fall journey ends about 15 - 18 hours later when they arrive on the Gulf Coast of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Talk about fuel efficiency! By the middle of October, most Ruby-throats have left and will spend the winter from Mexico to Costa Rica.



This fall, bird watchers are reporting unusually high numbers of Ruby-throats at their feeders. From Brownsville to the Galveston Bay, birders reports 10- 20 rubies building up at each of the 5 - 10 feeders they maintain. A group of Rubies will disappear within a few days; then within a day or two their numbers build up to the

previous 10-20 per feeder again. I captured this feeder frenzy image in an attempt to count the number of birds at my feeder. One ruby watcher reported that there were so many birds in the Rockport area that Rockport stores were completely out of sugar for two days! He had to drive to Aransas Pass for sugar and then bought 30 lbs.

So why so many Ruby-throats this year? Ornithologist, naturalist and birders speculate that the drought and fires have greatly reduced the naturally available hummingbird fall food sources. This lack of widespread food has concentrated the Ruby-throats into residential areas along the coast where nectar plants and feeders are being maintained.

You can still help our tiny avian trans gulf migrants fuel and fatten up for their long journey by putting up and maintaining humming bird feeders now. Hummers seem to be attracted to red feeders. Red food coloring in the sugar water is not needed and may even be harmful. A four to one, water/sugar mixture is recommended. Boil the water, while the water is still boiling add sugar, and stir until clear then let cool. Fill the feeders with about 1.5 cups of sugar water and change every three or four days. If some large feeders are filled and not consumed within about a week, the sugar water becomes sour and the feeder hard to clean.

After the middle of October when the Ruby-throats have mostly gone, it is a good idea to leave a feeder or two up all winter. Winter bird report records indicate eight species of Hummingbirds have occurred on the Upper

Texas Coast. Last winter I had, Black-chinned, Buff-breasted, Rufus, Calliope and a very likely one time sighting of a Broad-tailed Hummingbird.

In the spring from mid March to mid May, Rubies concentrate on the Gulf Coast of Yucatan, fatten up and return to the Texas coast via another, nocturnal trans Gulf flight. They don't linger on the Texas coast in the spring, however, they stay only long enough for a snack or two as they can fuel up along the way as they fly overland to their breeding grounds farther north.

StennieStirlingMeadours first became interested in birds when she moved to LaPorte in 1972 and found a Pileated Woodpecker and a Great Blue Heron in her yard and a Yellow Warbler in the screened in porch.

Guppies From Julie

What a Master Naturalist Fall!

Master Naturalists are being recognized everywhere for their dedication! In early October, the Meeting of the Monitors was held on Clear Lake. At the recognition luncheon, members of the Galveston Bay Area Chapter were recognized for their commitment, independence, and dedication.



It made me proud to be a part of this amazing chapter!

Then at the State Master Naturalist Conference in Hunt, members Debbie Howard, Royce Pendergast and Tom Solomon were recognized for their service hour accomplishments! Also, Sara Snell, Diane Humes, Allan Treiman and I conducted trainings at the conference. Diane and Allen had Master Naturalists from across the state checking out constellations and meteor showers at 4:00 a.m.!

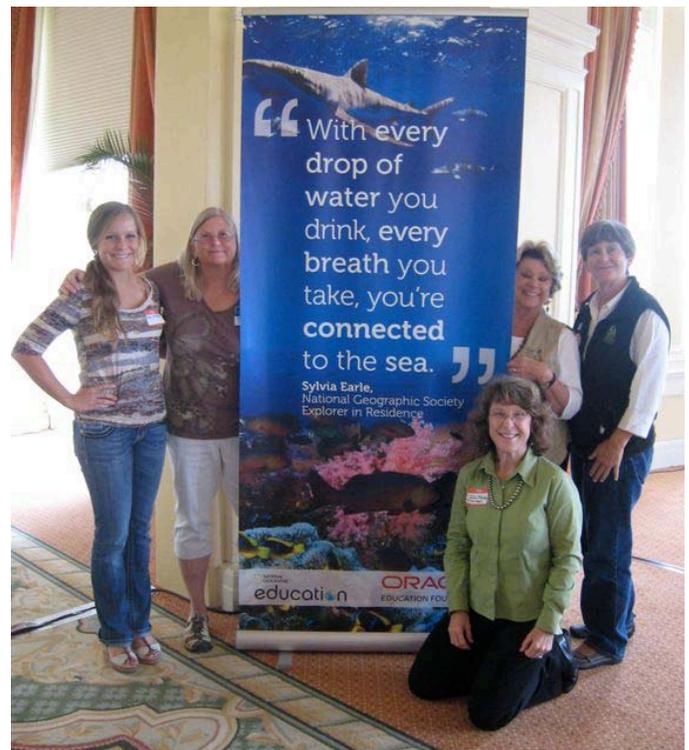
Sara did a great program on the top ten shells on our beaches while I focused on the wonders of Galveston Bay!

Plan to attend the conference next year. It will be held at Camp Allen in Navasota, October 26-28, 2012.

National Geographic and MNs!

Sara Snell did a great presentation at a National Geographic conference held in Galveston in early November. Yes, National Geographic! The conference was designed to provide information to marine recreation

businesses on the local natural resources, the idea being that these businesses can share this knowledge with their clients and tourists.



Sara spoke about how Master Naturalists "sell" their message to the public as well as how they keep engaged and informed through the chapter.

Master Naturalists helped with registration and the chapters' exhibit was also on display.

Many thanks to Sara, Diane Humes, Debbie Howard and Bay Lee Wilhite for making our chapter shine at this unique conference!

Save the Date - Saturday, March 3, 2012!

On March 3, 2012, Master Naturalists will have the opportunity to volunteer with the Dolphin Challenge. This year the competition will be in our backyard at Texas A&M University at Galveston. Dolphin Challenge is the regional competition for National Ocean Sciences Bowl (NOSB).



Improving Lives. Improving Texas.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Galveston County Commissioners Court of Texas cooperating.



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Texas AgriLife Extension Service
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For comments on this issue or to suggest content for future issues, please contact **Nathan Veatch at 281-480-6985** or by e-mail at nveatch@swbell.net.

The Midden Deadline For the December Issue

January 9th

If you have Advanced Training or Volunteer Opportunities, please submit information to Diane Humes treimanhumes@earthlink.net

Master Naturalist 2011 Tour

Poem by Root Choyce

Performed by the 2011 MN Class at the 10 Year Celebration

Welcome to the 2011 Master Naturalist Tour
We are here to show you what we learned and more
Since February when we first walked through the door

We had our pictures made by Mel
Met Julie, Diane, and Sara Snell
They showed us what they knew so well
How to observe with senses touch, sight, and smell

We had a snack and met our class
And Dick showed us some icecream grass?
We found out there's a lot to know
Then Jamie gave us a fashion show

We then met Professor Sammy Ray
Who showed us the oysters in the bay
Nathan had us cut up squid in a dish
Then we went and printed some fish

In Texas City on March the third
We were introduced to a rare old bird
It once was booming, but its clock is ticking
Yes we are trying to save the prairie chicken

We then headed north around the bay
And ended up at the Eddie Gray
Where we now owe Emmeline some hugs
Because she taught us all about bugs - INSECTS!!
Some of us sure got the shakes
When it was time to pet the snakes

Back again to Armand Bayou
Where there always is a lot to do
Learning to be stewards of the prairie
By weeding out the Tallow tree

Oh how we miss the Buffalo
That helped the prairie grasses grow
And of all the things to learn
How to do a prairie burn

Margaret gave a mammal talk
Showed us squirrels, and skunks, and fox
Beavers, possums, and wild hogs

And how coyotes were not dogs
Then on to birds and other fowl
Pigeons, doves and a great horned owl

Next we headed to the beach
Took a bay walk with Nathan Veatch
Looked for ghost crabs in the sand

Dug in the surf for coquina clams
Seined the weeds for fish with feet
And other fish too small to eat
Then off we went to the turtle barns
Where they raise the turtles free from harm

Our next class was to make a quest
To find the Spoonbills on their nest
We took the ferry and crossed the bay
Drove through Bolivar to the rookery
Hérons, Egrets, and Roseates
Were on the island with their mates

Then we went and took a hike
All the way to the Texas City dike
It was hot as hell
But we handled it well
Learning about the Phytoplankton
That starts the bottom of the food chain

Lastly we got to take a float
Down the Armand Bayou on a boat
There were many things to see
Plants and birds and many trees
And to top the class off with something new
We then learned how to canoe

Thus ends our Master Naturalist tour
But wait we have one thing more
We thought we would take a chance
And show you the Attwater Chicken Dance



Root Choyce