

The Midden

Photo by Nathan Veatch

Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists

February 2010

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Getting Our Ducks in a Row for 2010

by Diane Humes, President 2010

The New Year encourages a time of reflection - to look into the future and back to the past. At the State Meeting in October, we received a 10-year report of the Texas Master Naturalist program, encompassing the years 1998 - 2008. The report stated that 5,306 trained Texas master naturalists had collectively reported 1,003,409 volunteer service hours and 185,541 advanced training hours. Closer examination of the numbers shows that our chapter is leading the way for the whole state. The Galveston Bay Area Chapter has accrued fully ten percent of the volunteer AND advanced training hours counted! This cannot be explained by our chapter size; we are neither the largest nor smallest chapter, but our service and training hour totals are impressively twice that of any other chapter, per number of trained volunteers. Also, out of 13 master naturalists with 5000+ service hours, four came from our chapter.

What can we say? We work hard, we study hard, and we play hard. Our winning formula of food, fun, and friendship has encouraged us all to do the best we can to fulfill our mission and make a difference to the natural areas of Texas.

Just before the Holidays, Verva, Nancy, Sue, and I, the very new Board, met with the more "seasoned" Board to learn trade secrets. We surely appreciate all the hard work and love that has been poured into the Galveston Bay Area Chapter and hope to live up to the high expectations that have been set. As we get all our "ducks in a row," we look forward to a wonderful master naturalist year in all our activities.

Next Chapter Meeting

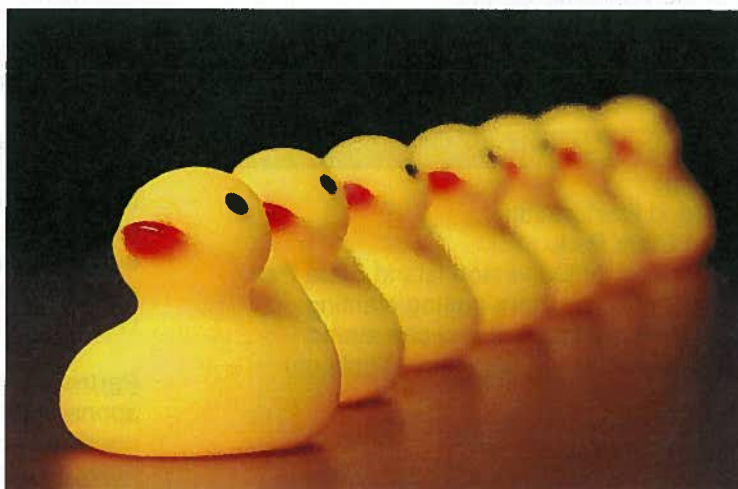
February 4th

Coral Reefs in the Gulf of
Mexico

By

Kelly Drinnen
Flower Garden Banks
National Marine Sanctuary

Location Change
Walter Hall Park



Be the change you want to see in the world!

February and March Activities

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter Meeting - February 4, 2010

Presenter: Kelly Drinnen, Education Specialist from Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, will discuss Coral Reefs in the Gulf of Mexico
6:30 Social, 7:00 Presentation, 8:00 business meeting
Location change!! Walter Hall Park 1 Hour AT

Sea Turtles - February 27, 2010

Extension Center
9am-Noon 3 Hours AT
Presenter: Steve Alexander and TAMU Galveston Researchers
Project lead: Mel Meeseles

Hawks - March 8, 2010

Extension Center
6PM - 9PM 3 Hours AT
Presenter: Dick Benoit, Project lead: Ellen Gerloff

Amphibian Watch - April 16th, 2010

Armand Bayou Nature Center
4PM - 9PM 5 hours AT
Presenter: Texas Parks and Wildlife
Project lead: Mel Meeseles

Something Fishy - May 20, 2010

Extension Center
9am-Noon 3 Hours AT
Presenter: Julie Massey, Project lead: Diane Olsen

Ongoing (Starts March 20th)

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.

STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Project of the Year:

Prairie and Wetland Restoration Galveston Island State Park

The Project of the Year at Galveston Island State Park will conclude in May. Three more potting/planting dates with Artist Boat are listed. If you can attend please contact Richard Benoit rbenoittex@aol.com

POY-GISP

Thursday, Jan 21,
Monday, Feb. 1,
Monday March 1.
9 - Noon

Ongoing Activities:

Mondays - Reitan Point, second and fourth,

Contact: Liz Gimmler gimmler@consolidated.net

Tuesdays -

- Sheldon Lakes State Park, Contact: Tom Solomon crandtr@sbcglobal.net
- Texas City Prairie Preserve, Contact: Marybeth Arnold mbarnold@aol.com

Wednesdays - Wetland Restoration Team,

Contact: Marissa Sipocz m-sipocz@tamu.edu

Fridays-

- Prairie Friday, ABNC, 9 - Noon Contact: Dick Benoit RBenoitTEX@aol.com
- Sundance Garden, Contact: Trudy Belz trudybelz@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. Dickinson Contact: Sara Snell snellsw@verizon.net Galveston Contact: Mary Jean Hayden bean1219@earthlink.net

Jr. Master Naturalist Club - Volunteers guide twenty-five 5th graders of Galveston's Austin Magnet School as they conduct experiments, build models and do other activities that give them a deeper understanding of the six topics taught in the Bay & Island Adventures program. The club meets every Wednesday after school and takes six Friday fieldtrips. If you have an interest in conducting one of the modules, helping guide the kids through the activity or observing what goes on, contact Mary Jean Hayden bean1219@earthlink.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 Mary Jean Hayden bean1219@earthlink.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

A Decade of Progress



This past decade of prairie restoration in the Galveston Bay Area region has shown progress even though the gradual erosion of prairie loss continued with the loss of **Spencer Prairie** and local prairie remnants. The beginning of the decade most of the prairie progress was slow and localized at U of

H Coastal Center and Armand Bayou Nature Center where maintenance and preservation were the main modes. ABNC had a crew of a few that mowed and began transect work to monitor the prairie and at U of H mowing was the main tool of preservation.

At the end of the decade major strides were taken in regional prairies. This past year at ABNC 11,424 one-gallon plants were planted with 3,669 work hours. Mowing, controlled burning, and transect monitoring continue for the tenth year.

- **U of H Coastal Center** continues to maintain itself and provide local prairies with a seed base and an example of what can be done by someone with restoration vision.
- **Texas City Prairie Preserve** continues with its restoration effort in 2009 planting 1800 one-gallon plants with about 2000 work hours. Here one of the world's most endangered birds finds habitat in one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America.
- **Sheldon Lake State Park** prairie in 2009 the focus was a multi-chapter team that planted 8,322 one-gallon pots with 1,682 work hours.
- **Brazos Bend State Park** was a site of a multi-chapter team in 2009 that planted 525 one-gallon

plants in about 50 work hours at this demonstration prairie site.

- **Galveston Island State Park** was the chapter's Project of the Year in 2009 that along with Artist Boat potted about 2000 one-gallon plants and planted another 2000 dune plants.
- **Reitan Point Prairie** worked for the second year spending about 200 work hours planting about 200 one-gallon plants.
- **Fort Travis** on the Bolivar Peninsula was the site of two days of restoration efforts in late Fall where 120 work hours were spent planting about 600 plants.



The achievements of this past decade were in due largely to the dedicated effort of Texas Master Naturalists that were inspired to help restore one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America, the Coastal Tallgrass Prairie. Hopefully you will find this goal one of yours for the new decade and in 2020 an even more glowing report may be written on accomplishments of the Prairie Restoration Team.

Wetland Wanderings by Dick Benoit

A Decade of Progress

The Wetland Restoration Team has had a successful decade of progress. Whereas the Prairie Restoration Team has very few guidelines in its restoration effort, wetland restoration has many restrictions; it has been stated, "It is easier to destroy a wetland than it is to restore one.



The main effort was at Bray's Bayou that spanned most of the decade. Much of the time was spent locating, digging, growing, sprigging, and finally planting over 10,000 plants. But even more time was spent waiting for other entities to complete projects so we could proceed.

Other projects included Sheldon Restoration 1, Sims Bayou Restoration, Buffalo Bayou Restoration, San Jacinto Restoration, Dickinson Bayou

Restoration, and the current project, Sheldon Restoration II and III.

Along with the restoration effort the past six years have had a week Wetland Plant Class.

If you have the desire and ambition to work on wetland restoration we generally work on Wednesday mornings.

Wetland Restoration Volunteer of the Decade - Diane Humes

Diane Humes has contributed over 1,000 hours over the past decade dedicated to restoration of our endangered wetlands. She has planted well over 10,000 wetland plants, keep a journal on the teams activities, monitored both the water and bacteria population at Bray's Bayou, given lectures to various groups on her wetland work, written articles, and yes, even driven the van to activities.

Diane has begun the decade leading the chapter as its president and will continue to be involved in wetland and prairie restoration work. What a gal!

A Trip to Shangri La by Diane Olsen

It was a beautiful day in Orange, Texas as 37 intrepid master naturalists, 36 from Galveston Bay Chapter and one from the Gulf Coast chapter enjoyed the day at Shangri-La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center. We began our trek early in the morning and had a full day. The tour started with an introduction from the volunteer and tour coordinator Holly Hanson and a welcome by the volunteers and staff. All were genuinely glad to see us and looked forward to talking with fellow "naturalists." After a short film about the beginnings of Shangri-La we split into two groups. Each group had guided tours of the gardens and a pontoon boat tour of the adjacent bayou.

The bayou boat ride allowed us to see different types of cypress trees including one that was estimated to be over 1000 years old. Along the way we stopped and walked along a boardwalk over the swamp to the prairie and saw the bat house where there is an estimated one million bats living. From there we walked to the outdoor classroom which over looked the swamp - a great place to talk with kids about the habitat.

The gardens walk showed an amazing array of plants and gardens styles. A community scarecrow contest was

going on and there were entries throughout which added an air of festivity. Along the way we were able to see the remains of the honeymoon houseboat that was built by the founder, Lutcher Stark, for his third wife and he to spend their wedding retreat. There were beautiful sculptures and a pavilion over the pond. Additionally, three greenhouses displayed more delicate or specialized plants including a wonderful array of orchids. My favorite part was the children's garden where they taught kids how to grow their own food and even allowed them to eat the plants! There was even an active beehive and a butterfly garden that was full of butterflies

Shangri-La is a platinum LEEDS facility and has been voted one of the 10 greenest facilities in the world. Parts of their buildings were built from reclaimed wood from Hurricane Rita (the park lost over 50,000 trees). They have a windmill and solar panels. They collect rainwater. They even have soy based insulation and carpeting made from corn. Everywhere you went there was another aspect of how they protected or worked with the environment. The admission monies are used to allow school children to come for free and even help to pay their transportation costs. I, for one, plan on returning in

the spring when the azaleas are in bloom and the estimated 5000 egrets, herons and spoonbills return to nest over the bayou. It was beautiful with only some

flowers; it will be amazing to see it when there are thousands in bloom.

2010 Sea Turtle Patrols begin in April by Steve Alexander

Researchers at Texas A&M University at Galveston, led by Dr. Andre M. Landry, have received two year funding from Sea Grant to continue monitoring the nesting of Kemp's ridley sea turtles on the upper Texas coast.

So, for the fourth year in a row, Master Naturalists will have the opportunity to help in the recovery of the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle by signing up for patrols on local beaches. Patrols begin this year in April and conclude in July.

Our chapter's patrol efforts have grown over the last few years. In 2007, five members of our group helped patrol Galveston beaches for sea turtle tracks and nests. In 2008, eight members manned patrols on Galveston Island and Bolivar Peninsula. Last year, a total of 15 members patrolled Bolivar, Galveston Island, and Surfside beaches. Our members have not only filled patrols, but also have helped excavate eggs from nests, helped tag female Kemp's ridleys, and helped release tagged females. The opportunity to work with a nest or a female is an unforgettable experience.

The Kemp's ridley is the most endangered of all the species of sea turtles. While other sea turtles may nest occasionally on Texas beaches, the Kemp's ridley frequently nests on our Texas coast. The female comes ashore during daylight hours, usually in the morning, to dig her nest in or near the dunes. She deposits about 100 eggs in the nest cavity and carefully covers the eggs with sand before retreating to the water.



Since predators may dig up a nest or pick off young after they emerge from the egg, there can be high mortality before the hatchlings even reach the water. This fact is the principal reason for the patrols. Patrols are designed to find nests so that the eggs can be safely removed and then transported to an incubation facility where they are safely hatched and released under controlled conditions. Egg excavation to hatchling release under controlled conditions has a success rate in excess of 80%, a far greater success rate than if eggs were left in place. With a greater number of hatchlings reaching the water, there is a greater chance for the recovery of the species.

In an effort to prepare Master Naturalists for 2010 sea turtle patrols, there will be a sea turtle workshop on Saturday, February 27th from 9-12 am at the Extension Office. Participants will learn about sea turtle biology, hear the latest research at Texas A&M University at Galveston, listen to patroller experiences, and sign up for patrol training.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to have had a number of experiences with sea turtles: I have helped rescue a Kemp's ridley female and a juvenile loggerhead, came across a dead leatherback on the beach, seen countless sea turtles being rehabilitated at the ARK facility in Port Aransas, observed sea turtle tracks on the beach, helped excavate nests, handled eggs, and held a female Kemp's ridley while she was fitted with a satellite tag.

But to date, I have not watched a female come ashore, dig a nest, lay eggs, cover the nest, and retreat to the water.

Fun at Prairie Heritage Day by Sara Snell

The Galveston Bay Area Chapter was well represented at the Prairie Heritage Day at Brazos Bend State Park

hosted by the Coastal Prairie Chapter. Eleven members representing GBAC, BayWatch, Armand Bayou and the

Native Plant Society helped make the event a success. Over 1000 people stopped by the various activities provided by Master Naturalist Chapters and environmental organizations. Those who helped:

Dick Benoit, Tom Solomon, Jim Duron, Charlotte Wells, Marybeth Arnold, Sara Snell, Will Rountree, Odie and Marie Asscherick, Terry and Alan Jackson.

What Should a Texas Master Naturalist Know? by Diane Humes

The State of Texas has many symbols celebrating its unique natural history - the state flower is the bluebonnet, state large mammal is the Texas longhorn, and state



grass is sideoats grama, etc. - all codified and ratified by the Legislature. Texas Master Naturalists have their own symbols, beginning with the dragonfly, the **Cyrano darter** (*Nasiaeschna pentacantha*).

The Cyrano darter is a monotypic genus, widespread in the eastern United States and Canada to Texas. It lives in sheltered forest ponds, streams, and lake coves, and perches on vegetation over water. It has a pronounced **frons** - essentially face - and blue eyes, and is named for the Cyrano de Bergerac of literature, referring to the prodigious proboscis! Of course, Cyrano was also very well educated and enlightened, as are Texas Master Naturalists.



Master Naturalists began receiving re-certification pins in 2002. These pins have symbolism beyond hours accrued for service; they represent inhabitants and habitats from around the ecological regions of Texas. The very first pin represented a Post Oak leaf.

The **Post Oak** (*Quercus stellata*) is a large, abundant tree, forming large stands in the prairie transition zones of the Cross Timbers region of Texas. It was used for fence posts - hence, the name. With especially thick taproots, Post Oaks grow best in sandy, rocky soils and tolerate extreme drought. Trees sprout prolifically when cut or burned and encroach rapidly into grasslands if prairie fires are suppressed. Acorns provide high-energy food for wildlife. Tough like Texans, Post Oaks survive and thrive in extreme environments.



The **Lindheimer daisy** pin in 2003 honors the Father of Texas Botany, Ferdinand Jacob Lindheimer. Lindheimer collected plants in Texas from 1843-1852 and discovered several hundred new plant species. He is buried in New Braunfels; his house and grounds on Comal Street are a museum and garden showcasing his plants. The **Lindheimer daisy** (*Lindheimera texana*), also known as Texas Yellow Star, is a pretty little member of the Asteraceae from the Hill Country and is easily cultivated in garden settings. The entire genus is named

for the first Texas botanist.

The **Green Treefrog** (*Hyla cinera*) is considered one of the most beautiful treefrogs in

North America. It lives throughout the South, in wet and damp habitats, such as swamps, borders of lakes and bayous, clinging to the undersides of green vegetation by day and hunting insects by night, often on house windows. It climbs rather than jumps and has a distinctive call "Duck! Duck!" or "Quank! Quank!" The Green Treefrog is the Louisiana (not Texas!) state amphibian, the model for Kermit the Frog, and the recertification pin for 2004.



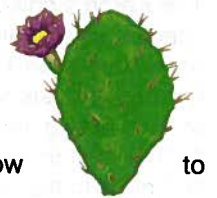
The 2005 pin is a **Belted Kingfisher** (*Ceryle alcyon*), a common waterside bird throughout Texas and North America. It

announces its presence with a loud, rattling cry and is often seen perching or hovering over water, before plunging headfirst to catch a fish. It is sometimes mistaken for a Blue Jay - in fact, the Texas Master Naturalist website names the kingfisher *Cyanocitta cristata*, which is actually the name for the Blue Jay (oops!!!). Belted Kingfishers are frequently seen along Armand Bayou and other waterways.

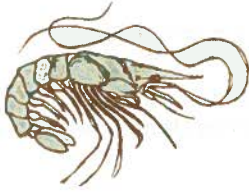


The **Texas prickly pear cactus** (*Opuntia engelmannii* var *lindheimeri*) is the official Texas state plant and the 2006 recertification pin.

Common in the drier area of South and Central Texas, Texas prickly pear is a thicket-forming and heavy-bodied cactus with a cylindrical trunk and yellow red flower blooming in June. Used extensively for food, the fruits - tunas - are eaten raw or preserved by humans and also favored by many birds and animals. Legend has it that the coyote brushes the spines off the fruits with his tail before eating them!



The **grass shrimp** (*Palaemonetes vulgaris*), pin 2007, resides in the inshore shallow waters of the Gulf Coast and its bayous. Among the most widely distributed, abundant, and conspicuous of shallow water



invertebrates, grass shrimp depend on marshes with dense stands of underwater vegetation for food and protection from predators. They are vital decomposers and detritivores and primary prey for fish and other carnivores. Loss of marsh

habitat due to dredging, bulkheading, and subsidence caused noticeable decrease in grass shrimp abundance, affecting animals higher up in the food chain.



In 2005, the Texas State Legislature designated **Texas purple sage** (*Leucophyllum frutescens*) the Texas native shrub. A member of the Scrophulariaceae (Figwort Family), Texas purple sage is native to central and west Texas southward. Also called Cenizo and Texas barometer bush, its purple blooms may appear any

time of the year, noticeably after rain showers. Texas purple sage is our recertification pin for 2008.

The **Texas Salamander** is an entirely aquatic, lungless salamander native to the United States and endemic to central Texas. It is the TMN 2009 pin. This



is a species of concern, considered vulnerable, as it is known only from the immediate vicinity of spring outflows, under rocks and leaves and in gravel substrate in Bexar and Kendall counties. The Texas Salamander receives no protection from either the State of Texas or the Federal Government.

And for 2010, the newest pin will be the **Wood Duck** (*Aix sponsa*). A colorful duck of forested wetlands, many people consider it the most beautiful of all waterfowl. The Wood Duck is one of only a few North American ducks that nest in trees. Nests are often over water, but may be up to a mile away. Ducklings must jump out of the nest to the ground, up to 290 ft, and do so without injury, when it is time to fledge. Wood ducks eat seeds, acorns, fruits, and aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates. Wood Ducks reside throughout Texas all year. Populations are stable or increasing, following declines in the 20th century.



So, what should a Texas Master Naturalist know? Perhaps these few facts will provide a starting point and a talking point when someone asks you about all those pins.

Our Wonderful Treasures of the Bay by Carolyn Miles

As usual we had food, fellowship and fun at the annual Awards meeting in December. One of the highlights of the meeting was the presentation of the Treasures of the Bay awards. The following awards were presented:

Chuck Buddenhagen Excellence in Education Award - Sara Snell, Bay Adventures, Camp Wild, Chapter Training & More

Corporate Award - Mary Vogas, Education Animal Programs

Non-Profit Awards

- Houston Coastal Center University of Houston, Glen D. Aumann, Director
- Wildlife Rehab and Education Center, Sharon Schmalz, Director

Chapter Service Awards

- Marie Asscherick, Bat Education and Conservation
- Odie Asscherick, Bat Education and Conservation

- Art Chapman, Prairie Restoration and Water Quality Monitoring
- Terry Jackson, Queen of Membership
- Doris Heard, Bat Education and Conservation
- Diane Humes, Wetland and Prairie Teams, *e coli* Water Testing
- Gib Larson, Water Monitoring, Junior Angler and NASA Longhorn Project
- Gail McAdoo, Restoration Projects
- Barbara Nowakowski, Prairie Restoration and TCPP Bird Monitoring
- Diane Olsen, Advanced Training Chair, Workshop Educator
- Margaret Pickell, Wildlife Rehab and Education
- Ken Russell, Prairie Restoration and Hawk Watch
- Tom Solomon, Prairie Restoration Leader

Making a Difference Awards

- Marybeth Arnold, TCPP Monitoring and Restoration
- Liz Gimmler, Reitan Point Lead and Prairie Restoration
- Mel Measeles, You name it - He does it!
- Ollie Schwausch, NASA Longhorn Project Education and Restoration
- Janice Schwausch, NASA Longhorn Project Education and Restoration
- Green Team, Sally Paulissen, Margaret Canavan, Meff Faillace, Verva Densmore, Dick Benoit, Nelda Tuthill



Collage by Mel Measeles

The fun continued with the singing of the “Modern Master Nat’ralist” by Fran Ryan and Margaret Canavan, with apologies to Gilbert & Sullivan and Dick Benoit.

Modern Master Nat'ralist

by Fran Ryan and Margaret Canavan, with apologies to Gilbert & Sullivan and Dick Benoit

I am the very model of a Texas Master Nat'ralist
I've information vegetable, animal, and aqueous,
I know the mighty woodpecker, and quote the famous Bedicek
From Galveston to Anahuac I keep all natural things in check.

I'm very well acquainted, too, with matters ecological,
I understand biology both simple and remarkable,
About the native plants we need I'm teeming with a lot o' news,
With many cheerful facts about the plants our insects love to use.
I'm very fond of marsh grass and at planting it effectively
I know the scientific names of many things once new to me
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and aqueous,
I am the very model of a Texas Master Nat'ralist!

I am the very model of a Texas Nat'ralist!
I am the very model of a Texas Nat'ralist!
I am the very model of a Texas Nat'ralist!

In fact, I can identify a raptor and a chickadee
And I can tell at sight a Prairie Chicken and a partridge pea,
When camping trips and field trips are upcoming and desirable,
You'll see my name on every list, and I'll attend, reliable,
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and aqueous,
I am the very model of a Texas Master Nat'ralist.

We are a model Chapter of the Texas Master Nat'ralists
We're known throughout the Lone Star State for mastering our Top Ten lists.
Our Motto features the three "F's" of food and fun and fellowship.
Our efforts are to educate and save our lands by stewardship.
We teach schoolchildren 'bout the Bay, the marshes and the prairie wide.
We love to see them gasp with glee when they have once a ghost crab spied.
We roll seed balls for prairie plants and scatter them most carefully.
From wetlands to the prairies we maintain a sight for all to see.

I am the very model of a Texas Nat'ralist!
I am the very model of a Texas Nat'ralist!
I am the very model of a Texas Nat'ralist!

Miz Hayden is a model of a Texas Master Nat'ralist
And as she moves to Dallas by our Chapter she'll be sorely missed.
She's held forth at the State Park and has led Camp Wild repeatedly.
We know that folks up north of us will welcome her amazedly.
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and aqueous,
She is the very model of a Texas Master Naturalist.

Julie is a model of a Texas Master Naturalist
 Her love of life is shown to all who see her youthful zestfulness
 Who are amazed to see her dance of fun and joy and yestfulness
 She is the perfect model of a Texas Master Naturalist
 Her years as Chapter sponsor here have been so full of friendliness
 And in '09 she claimed a crown that came to prove her worthiness
 Indeed so many persons have been targets of her selflessness
 She is indeed a model of a Texas Master Nat'ralist.

She is in deed a model of a Texas Nat'ralist!
 She is in deed a model of a Texas Nat'ralist!
 She is in deed a model of a Texas Nat'ralist!

For ecosystems knowledges our members simply can't be beat
 Our meetings feature education programs and of course we eat.
 We stick together faithfully and work with smiles on land and sea
 Our services are valued and of course we always work for free
 In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and aqueous,
 We work to serve our Gulfside home as Texas Master Nat'ralists!

Editor's note: This was written and performed at the annual December chapter meeting by chapter members.

Stewardship Committee

The Year in Review by Dick Benoit

Our Project of the Year was helping restore Galveston Island State Park, mainly helping Artist Boat's work on Prairie Restoration. We had thirteen workdays of about 400 work hours that included potting over 2000 one gallon pots and planting about 2000 dune grasses affecting 4 acres of land. We also initially helped in the clean up from Hurricane Ike, construction dune fences, but mainly above plant work. We will continue helping the first part of 2010.

Armand Bayou Nature Center was the site of one of our main prairie restoration. We worked most Friday mornings and spent about 3,500 work hours planting about 11,000 one gallon plants. With the planting we were also involved in burning, mowing, Tallow removal, and transect work on 34 plots in May and October that covered about 600 acres.

Sheldon Lake State Park was the site of Tuesday morning prairie restoration and Wednesday morning wetland restoration. The multichapter prairie team spent about 1500 work hours planting 8,500 one gallon plants in 18 acres, while the wetland team spent about 100 work hours in planting 500 plants in 2 acres.

Texas City Prairie Preserve was the site where Tuesday had about 400 work hours spent planting about 2000 one gallon plants in 5 acres. The work with the Prairie Chickens: building cages, feeding them, and tracking

them daily required about 500 work hours covering most of the 2000 acres.

Reitan Point Prairie was the site for alternate Mondays that had about 200 work hours spent planting about 500 one gallon plants over its 2 acres. Much of the time was clearing the area from the ravages of Hurricane Ike and replanting.

Brazos Bend State Park was the site of two multichapter plantings of about 50 work hours planting about 500 one gallon plants.

Fort Travis, Bolivar Peninsula prairie restoration twice in the fall with Houston Audubon where 120 work hours were spent planting 600 plants on 2 acres.

Buffalo Bend Bayou Park was the site of wetland restoration that had about 200 work hours planting about 2000 plants in its 3 acres of wetland.

Water Monitoring Team worked in 15 water sites and monthly record date spending about 150 hours monitoring covering undetermined acres of water.

Bacteria Monitoring at Brays Bayou wetland restoration monthly for 30 work hours on the 3 acres site.

Invasive Species Monitoring was done mainly by one person.

Phytoplankton Monitoring was done by two people.

Monarch Monitoring was done.

Bat Monitoring was done.

Sea Turtle Monitoring was done.

Christmas Bird Count was monitored at Armand Bayou Nature Center.

Texas City Prairie Preserve Wednesday Bird Count was done.

Sylvan Beach Hawk Watch was conducted during March and April with 250 watch hours monitoring over 60,000 migrating raptors.

Winter Raptor Census was conducted with about 36 watch hours and 300 raptors counted.

Advanced Training Committee

The Year in Review by Diane Olsen

It was quite a busy year for the Advanced Training Team. We hit the road running in January. Not only had we begun scheduling for the year but we also began working on procedural issues and methods for AT to be more effective, more adaptive and meeting the interests of the Chapter. We have conducted two surveys of the chapter and will have those results in the next *The Midden*. From the information that we get from them we will develop more classes and opportunities based on what the members have asked for.

The AT opportunities for the year 2009 were varied and covered a lot of territory. We started the year with a GPS class that was so popular that we offered another in April. The sea turtle and raptor classes are also very popular and will be a regular addition to the AT schedule each

spring. April taught us about butterflies and May brought birds. An AT opportunity was offered in July to Sea Center Texas and the Brazosport Museum. AT opportunities are different from classes in that there is no formal instruction. August brought "Tools of the Trade" and in October "Local Prairie Remnants." In November we headed to Shangri La in Orange, TX. If you were not able to go, make it a point to head there this spring - it will be magnificent! December we rested, well sort of, there is another year to plan and still more committee work to do. We lost valuable committee members this past year and we thank them for their dedication and hard work. We gained new members and look forward to working with them. This is a great team to be a part of and we are always in the market for new members. If interested let me know!

Communication Committee

The Year in Review by Diane Humes

The Communications Committee, consisting of Steve Alexander, chairperson, Carolyn Miles, webmaster, Diane Humes, and Nathan Veatch, *The Midden* editor, met 7 times to prepare the bi-monthly newsletter, *The Midden*, for publication.

The Midden is published in February, April, June, August, October, and December, coinciding with our chapter meetings. Its usual format is 16 pages and includes regular columns from the president, chapter advisor, and calendar of upcoming activities. It also features a prairie team and a wetland team column, and various submissions about master naturalist activities

and/or informational pages. The entire newsletter is written by chapter members.

The Midden is mailed to the entire membership and is available online at our website:

<http://gbamasternaturalist.org>

Website editor, Carolyn Miles, updated and modernized the chapter website this year, adding a new "look" to our site. She had updated the partners and provided maps and links to stewardship locations, added links to reporting forms, and posted "Top Ten" lists and other information. Chapter news is updated at least bi-monthly.

Guppies from Julie

2010 is off and running! Master Naturalists are digging, planting, testing water, exploring and getting ready for the Spring Class!

We Need You to make the spring class a huge success! Plan to be a training class volunteer - mentor a new class member, bring potluck or breakfast goodies, introduce speakers, set up equipment and much more! You'll have fun meeting the new class members, learning and volunteering!

The Spring 2010 Class begins on Thursday, February 18, 2010 at Armand Bayou Nature Center! Volunteer now by contacting Sara Snell at 281-309-0276 or snellsw@verizon.net.

You are Invited!

Dr. Barron Rector will speak at the first class! He is an inspiring, funny, down to earth naturalist and one of the founders of the Texas Master Naturalist Program!

Plan to join us on February 18 at Armand Bayou Nature Center to meet the new class and enjoy Dr. Rector! (Dr. Rector's presentation may count as advanced training for some Master Naturalists.)

Save the Date - Saturday, March 6, 2010!

On March 6, 2010, Master Naturalists will have the opportunity to volunteer with the Dolphin Challenge in College Station. Dolphin Challenge is the regional competition for National Ocean Science Bowl (NOSB). NOSB is an academic competition that tests high school students' knowledge of the marine sciences including biology, chemistry, physics and geology. Volunteers are needed for all aspects of the competition from timekeeper to serving as judges - training will be provided!

Save Saturday, March 6, 2010 for Dolphin Challenge! If you would like to volunteer, please contact Julie at jmassey@ag.tamu.edu or 281-534-3413, Ext. 2, 2.

See you on the marsh or in the prairies! Julie



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The Midden

This newsletter is published by Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service
5115 Highway 3
Dickinson, TX 77539-6831

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 April Issue

February 28

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