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President's Corner by George Kyame, President 2017

Season's greetings fellow Naturalists! And a very Happy New Year to you all, as well as to our organization, which, as we all should be aware, just celebrated our 15th Anniversary.

And so we begin a new year! I have never really been one for resolutions. I do not know for sure if that be good or bad. I do, however, often hear the many little conversations at our work activities. And those frequently are topics involving "How can we make this better?" and such.

When I first encounter these comments, I think, "Hey, We are doing a great job". I like the status quo. If it ain't broke, don't fix it, ya know. Ok, maybe.

But ideas are engines, and good ones are high performance! The desire to improve on an already good thing is top choice. It is with this message that I want to encourage everyone to share their thoughts, step forward and be heard. I look forward to seeing everyone at the chapter meeting this February 2nd, or Groundhog Day. So whether you see your shadow or not...just kidding, as far as we are concerned, it is World Wetlands Day, since 1997! See ya there, wet shoes or not.

Take care til the next time, GJK.

Next Chapter Meeting
February 2nd
Putting Wetlands to Work in the City
By
Mary Carol Edwards
Texas Coastal Watershed Program
At Carbide Park



Food, Fun, and Friendship at State Meeting 2007 by Mel Measeles

Prairie Ponderings: Living on the Texas Coastal Tallgrass Prairie by Diane Humes

I live on the Texas coastal tallgrass prairie, of which less than one percent remains in undisturbed condition. Most likely you do, too. My family is the third to occupy our house, built over 40 years ago in a subdivision of 805 homes. The builder landscaped our little quarter-acre homestead in "outer suburbia"; he planted the standard collection of vegetation - wax leaf ligustrums, pittosporums, privets, red-tipped photinias, junipers, azaleas and nandina, St. Augustine grass, with two requisite front yard trees. When we moved in, the main addition had been a few irises planted by the back door. The only clue it might have been prairie came from a long-time resident who remembered that our section had always been "just grass".

Families in outer suburbia are mostly concerned with their own bottom lines; they want to be prepared to pull up roots, move on, without losing money on the transaction! Mostly, they have no knowledge of plants - native or otherwise; their main desires are to fit in with the neighborhood and preserve property values. Vegetation is chosen for its uniformity, utility, and low cost.

The suburban landscape has grown up in America with park-like yards from coast to coast - tall trees with short grass - where the proverbial squirrel could cross the continent scampering through suburban treetops. Our standard suburban vegetation bears no resemblance to the prairie habitat it has replaced; landscape plants are mostly native to Japan and China. Is this a problem?

Plants and animals have evolved together in specific regions over millennia, but humans have moved a lot of them around, with unintended consequences. Evolution takes a long time; non-natives have become invasive in their new habitats, lacking the restraints present in their normal habitats. This is definitely a problem in all habitats.

Another issue is the scale of change: outer suburbia for us stretches from Galveston to Conroe, Houston to Katy. This former prairie habitat supports very little wildlife. As humans, our species has now confiscated half the planet for our own objectives, as described by Edward O. Wilson in *Half Earth*. The phrase, "less than one percent remaining" used to describe prairies, refers to most natural habitats.

Douglas Tallamy, entomologist, has documented the effects on wildlife of fragmented and reduced habitats, filled with non-native plants. Generally, our insects, one step above plants on the food chain, are unable to eat the non-native plants (advertised as pest-free!). Without native insects, animals higher on the trophic level will also starve.



Photo by Nancy Saint

In, *Bringing Nature Home*, Tallamy offers a plan for how we can help; he recommends restoring the native plant base in our own yards. Plant with native insects in mind; they are pollinators, bird food, amphibian food, fish food. If we mindfully plant what our wildlife needs and willingly share our space with wildlife (let them eat our plants!), including suburban yards, parks, ROW easements, the impact on wildlife could be huge!

Tallamy's ideas were the topic of discussion at the December meeting of the Native Plant Society of Texas, Clear Lake Chapter (npsot.org). This new group, dedicated to learning about our native plants, meets at UHCL, 6:30 pm on second Mondays. Future meetings will include: February 9, Barbara Willy, Director of Monarch Gateway, speaking about "Monarchs and Milkweed", and March 13, Diana Foss, TPWD Urban Wildlife Biologist, "Plant NOW for a Great Wildscape".

Paul Hawking, writing in *The Ecology of the Commons*, counted more than 1 million grassroots organizations worldwide dedicated to improving ecological and/or human justice issues. Our group, Texas Master Naturalists, would like to welcome NPSOT-Clear Lake Chapter! We know that plants are the foundation of life on Earth. They are the life support of our planet, producing oxygen and converting sunlight and CO₂ into the food that supports all other trophic levels of life.

Many species are facing habitat loss and fragmentation - even possible extinction. It is up to us to do what we can,

now. My yard may never be a complete prairie again, but if we work together, we can make a difference. As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;

indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

The time to help is now. As W.S. Merwin, poet and naturalist said: "When there is no story/that will be our story/ When there is no forest/ that will be our forest."

Wetland Wanderings: After a Neighborhood Goes Down, a Nature Center Rises by Lana Berkowitz

The story of the rise of Baytown Nature Center (BNC) also is the story of the fall of a popular waterfront neighborhood and the triumph of nature.

I have heard the BNC story several times. It's part of the experience for ninth-graders participating in the Back to the Bay field trips. When the students hear how about 300 homes once stood where they are tossing cast nets and doing water testing, they take another look at their surroundings.

On the drive into BNC, as Burnet Bay comes into view on the right, there is an in ground swimming pool jutting up at the shore. Take the trail to Wooster Point and find a shelter built on a home's foundation. The pink floor tiles of the bathroom are still visible. These landmarks are reminders of BNC's history.



Photo by Lana Berkowitz

During the mid-1930s, a cattle rancher's land was sold for development. Humble Oil thought the site would be a great place to build its executives' homes. During 1962, Baytown annexed Brownwood subdivision, which was in a beautiful setting with linked peninsulas surrounded by three bays, Crystal, Scott and Burnet.

However with the influx of industry and residents, there came problems. Groundwater was pumped out for use by nearby plants and other developed areas, which caused subsidence. As the land sank, flooding during the

high tide seasons became a problem. The switch to surface water stopped subsidence, but the land loss was irreversible. Tropical storms and hurricanes caused more damage.

Residents tried to hang onto their beloved homes, but ongoing flooding and evacuations became their reality from 1967 to 1981. Many decided to leave. Then devastating Hurricane Alicia hit in 1983. The hurricane wiped out the neighborhood with storm tides up to 10 feet high.

Longtime residents were heartbroken when the area was declared uninhabitable and utilities to the peninsula were cut off. Some homeowners filed lawsuits. During the next 10 years the homes, foundations and streets continued to crumble while legal issues were sorted out. It was wild area for squatters, dumping and nature.

Eventually the city of Baytown obtained the land with a plan to turn the area into a natural preserve.

In 1995 the Baytown Nature Center opened with 65 acres of tidal wetlands, freshwater pools and forested areas. Most of the initial funds were for a mitigation site as part of the French Limited Superfund cleanup project. Houses were bulldozed and the streets became part of the trail system.

During the next 10 years channels were dug and lined with smooth cordgrass. An observation hill was built and trails were added (and continue to develop). BNC expanded to 450 acres.

Today school groups of all ages visit regularly. The smaller peninsula at the front of the park is open to fishing although there are warning signs about toxins that may be in the fish. Fishing is prohibited in the channels cut into the larger peninsula to protect the wildlife.

Petrochemical companies surround BNC and Ship Channel traffic glides by. The San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site is upstream. Yet most agree that thanks to environmental regulations the water is much cleaner than it was in the 1970s and wildlife has made a comeback.

Hikers and bicyclists share the trails. In addition to the wildlife and wildflowers, photographers can find a great view of the San Jacinto Monument. North America's smallest butterfly, Western Pygmy Blue, likes the glasswort (*Salicornia* spp.) along Arkokisa Trail.

Birders find everything from Roseate Spoonbills to Eastern Screech Owls. The past couple of years a Grooved-bill Ani has stopped by. BNC is one of the few locations in Harris County that the Nelson's Sparrow and Seaside Sparrow can be seen during the winter months.

BNC is still susceptible to flooding. In 2008 Hurricane Ike flooded BNC with 13 feet of water. A lot of debris had to be cleared. The playground and other structures were rebuilt with the knowledge that nature continues to shape BNC's future.

** BNC, 6213 Bayway Drive, is open daily, except Christmas and days of extreme weather. Admission is \$4 for adults and \$1 for seniors and children. There are volunteer opportunities, including helping with school groups and working on the butterfly garden. If interested, contact ChristinaButcher@baytown.org.

Beach Patrol: Furrowed Blister Pod Sea-bean by John Wright

Number one of the Top Ten Reasons to be a Texas Master Naturalist: When you identify a rare sea-bean with only 13 known specimens in the world, you can find someone you can talk to about it.

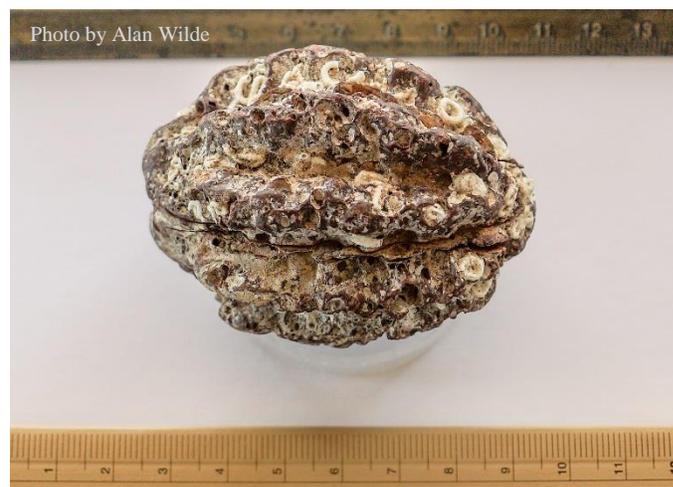
When I was asked if I would write a short article about a very rare sea-bean that I helped identify on the sand table at the Galveston Island State Park (GISP) Nature Learning Center, I made a quick mental inventory of what was known about the sea-bean: nobody knows who found it, when it was found or which beach it was found on, and nobody knows when it was put on the sand table. "Sure - why not!"

This was the sum total of what Bill Ashby had to go on over a year ago when he noticed this large, heavily encrusted sea bean while preparing for his Sea-Beans and Shells Advanced Training class for our GBAC-TMN chapter. His recollections were that after discussing the sea bean with Cindy Howard, he concluded it might be a Bitter Bark sea-bean native to Gabon, Africa and similar to the Hand Grenade sea-bean which is often found on Galveston beaches.

Bill's comment stayed dormant in the back of my mind until, with poor weather conditions, no one showed up to our last November Beach Walk. I had recently attended the International Sea-bean Symposium in Galveston and had the opportunity to speak with Ed Perry IV, a coauthor of *Sea-beans from the Tropics*, so I took a few pictures of the sea-bean on the sand table, searched the web for a bit, and was shocked to find that it might be the Furrowed Blister Pod, a very rare specimen, indeed.

www.seabean.com/guide/Sacoglottis_cf_costata/

A few quick emails to Bill Ashby and Ed Perry, followed up with a series of emails and photos to Dr. Raymond van der Ham in the Netherlands to confirm and, yes, we had one of only 13 known specimens of this sea-bean in the world sitting on our sand table.



Sea-beans, or drift seeds as they are sometimes called, are typically tropical seeds, fruits or endocarps - the woody layer directly surrounding a plant's seeds, similar to peach stones or walnuts. They are uniquely adapted for long distance dispersal by fresh and salt water, are usually very buoyant, and have a hard seed coat that helps to resist the effects of prolonged salt-water immersion. Rain, streams, and rivers combine forces with wind and ocean currents to help move these seeds and fruits from their parent plant origins to distant beaches with many of these journeys stretching thousands of miles.

The Furrowed Blister Pod (*Sacoglottis* cf. *costata*) recently identified on the GISP sand table, no doubt completed one such journey. Although its parent plant has still yet to be identified, it is believed to originate somewhere in the northern South American Orinoco or Amazon River basins. There are two rare plant specimens collected from these drainages that could be the source of the Furrowed Blister Pod but none, to date, has ever flowered. Before washing up on Galveston Island, our specimen probably drifted a distance of at least 3000 to 5000 miles.

It's often difficult to determine the distances that sea-beans drift, since their origin plants often have wide geographic ranges. One exception, Mary's Bean, with a crucifix-like impression on one side, is commonly found on our beaches, probably because of our proximity to its very limited point of origin. It only grows in a few narrow bands of rain forests in southern Mexico and Central America, yet Mary's Bean is found on beaches from Norway to the Marshall Islands in the Pacific and has the widest known drift seed range (15,000 miles) of any sea-bean.

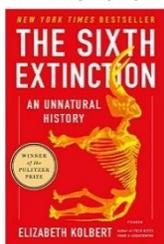
What I find the most interesting about the Furrowed Blister Pod is that the same hard seed coat adaptation that allows it to drift great distances in salt water, also helps to keep it identifiable in the fossil record. Digging back into a 1933 publication by E. M. Reid on fossil fruits of the Tertiary age from Columbia, Dr. van der Ham determined that the Furrowed Blister Pod sea-bean more closely resembles the fossilized specimens Reid

discovered in Columbia. This sea-bean was given the taxonomic name *Sacoglottus cf. costata* (the abbreviation cf. is short for the Latin 'confer' meaning compare and is sometimes used for specimens that are difficult to identify because of poor condition or to express a significant resemblance to known species).

Sea-beans have been described in the historical literature for quite some time and it is fairly common for them to be identified prior to discovering the parent plants. One example comes from the traditional Portuguese name for the sea-bean, Fava de Colom (Columbus Bean) or the Sea Heart. Its parent plant is the Monkey ladder vine, *Entada gigas*, a liana found in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The traditional lore is that Columbus used his knowledge of the ocean currents, this sea-bean, and drift material on the wrack line to postulate the presence of land far off to the west. (References upon request)

HBS – Review of *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Madeleine K. Barnes

The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert was discussed at the December and January book study AT meetings. Kolbert is an investigative journalist and author of *Field Notes from a Catastrophe* which describes how climate change is disrupting ecosystems across the earth. *The Sixth Extinction* was a best-seller in 2014 and received a 2015 Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction. In this follow-up book, Kolbert attempts to answer the question of whether the earth is actively experiencing or headed towards another mass extinction event. She describes how past extinctions occurred and how planet-wide human environmental impact may trigger future mass extinction events.



The goal in reading this book was to increase our knowledge of current, wide-spread extinctions for both flora and fauna. This includes the dynamics involved in creating extinction. There are frequent news stories about the various species impacted, and threats to species that migrate through or are native to our own state. Kolbert discusses these and other threats actively happening and the reasons why.

Did you know that the idea of extinction is relatively recent? Credit goes to Georges Cuvier, a French naturalist and zoologist, who in 1813 wrote *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, and suggested that new species were created in the aftermath of catastrophic floods. Catastrophic events were finally connected to fossilized remains of creatures that no longer existed; up to that point, no one had put together that species in the past may have died off in mass extinction events.

Kolbert explores the history and evidence of five significant mass extinctions visible in the geological record. According to British paleontologists A. Hallam and P.B. Wignall, mass extinctions are defined as events that eliminate a “significant proportion of the world’s biota in a geologically insignificant amount of time.” They describe a “normal” (background) extinction rate which is attributable to earth’s geological and biological history before humans became a primary contributor to extinctions. Kolbert traveled around the globe with scientists, researchers and guides, from the Andean forests, the rainforests in Panama, the Great Barrier Reef, Bikini Atoll, and other locations, gathering information about impacted flora and fauna. She documents the signs of extinction, the species that are endangered, the causes, and the actions that are being taken by scientists and naturalists to understand what is happening and what is being done to reverse trends.

Kolbert points out that, while we hear a lot about carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the air, our oceans are also absorbing CO₂, resulting in ocean acidification, with increasing impacts to our reef systems and aquatic organisms. While Kolbert writes this investigation with impartiality, she identifies a general lack of awareness of these issues and denial that this is actually happening. Kolbert concludes that we are deciding “which evolutionary pathways will remain open and which will be forever closed.” *The Sixth Extinction* was a very interesting and readable selection for anyone, specifically educating the naturalist about the impacts and ongoing challenges of extinction. If we humans have altered life on this earth to adapt it to our needs, will we take steps to stop the changes that may result in extinctions?

The following is the **2017 Reading Selection List for GBAC Heritage Book Study:**

Feb 6th & March 6th - *Water Is For Fighting Over* by Chris O'Shea Roper and Tom Linton, PhD, 2015. We have copies of this book available for purchase. Contact me at dwbmb@aol.com for details if you want to purchase it before the February 2nd chapter meeting.

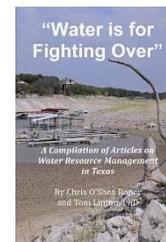
Apr 3rd & May 1st - *Life on Matagorda Island* by Wayne H. McAlister, 2004

June 5th, July 10th & Aug 7th - *Attracting Native Pollinators* by The Xerces Society, 2011

Sept 11th, Oct 2nd & Nov 6th- *The Diversity of Life* by E.O. Wilson, 1992

Dec 4th & Jan 8th, 2018 - *The Life History of A Texas Birdwatcher* by Karen Harden McCracken, 1986

Our current reading selection for February 6th is pages 1-75 of *Water Is for Fighting Over*. We will meet on March 6th to discuss the second half, pages 76-175. We are honored to have both authors, Chris Roper (a GBAC member) and Tom Linton, Ph.D. and Senior Lecturer in Marine Sciences at TAMU join us at the March 6th meeting for the discussion of this book. We welcome your participation each month for two hours on the first Monday of the month starting at 10:00a.m. at the Agrilife Extension office. We look forward to seeing you and let us know if you have read any good naturalist books lately! Happy trails!



Introduction to Herpetology AT by Mike Wehrman

The last time I had a close encounter with a snake was when I almost stepped on a small copperhead in our bathroom. How it got there is still a mystery. Snakes and their herpetological cousins are full of surprises, and, sometimes, venom.



Photo by Chuck Snyder

As I let the bathroom intruder scramble out of my bucket in a nearby field, I didn't have the compulsion to kill the venomous critter. However, I know that my knowledge of reptiles and amphibians ranks way below the Ranger Rick level. When I heard there was an AT class on herpetology being taught by Tracey Prothro at the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education Center, I struck at the chance to sign up.

Tracey began with a great exercise called "What's in the Bag" that brought people out of their shells, a technique that would also work great with children. Her excellent presentation focused on the multitude of species, but it was her command of the subject that kept us eager for

more information. She contrasted and compared species to emphasize how complex and interesting amphibians and reptiles are. Senses, life cycle, distribution, effects of pollution, and area problems were all covered.

For example, the Houston toad has been wiped out in the Houston area by loss of habitat and fire ants. Now, the toad exists only in Bastrop State Park. However, with the recent fires there, biologists had to restart the toad breeding program.

At a glance, do you know how to tell a frog from a toad? A frog's eyes bulge out, but a toad's doesn't. Frogs have moist, smooth skin and long powerful legs while a toad has dry, bumpy skin and short legs. Unfortunately, frogs and toads absorb toxins through their skin. Human activity spreads chytridiomycosis, an infectious disease, and roads fragment their habitat.

Turtles, tortoises, terrapins, crocodylians, lizards, snakes -- Tracey covered them and kept us riveted with interesting and practical information. For instance, temperature determines the sex of alligators. If the temperature within an alligator egg nest rises to 94 degrees or higher, you can expect a male, and less than 93 degrees, a female. Alligators tolerate brackish water, but prefer fresh water. And alligators are moving north because of rising temperatures.

But it was discussion of Texas' venomous snakes that made us recoil and prompt us to tell about our close encounters.

The remainder of the class was all hands-on. She gave us a tour of The Educational Center -- alligators, snakes, tortoises could be held by any brave Master Naturalist.

State Sea Turtle of Texas by Diane Humes

The Kemp's ridley sea turtle became the official State Sea Turtle of Texas on May 2, 2013, by unanimous vote of the Texas State Legislature. Suggested by students from Oppe Elementary in Galveston, the nomination crafted by Representative Craig Eiland, Galveston, and Senator Larry Taylor, Friendswood, cited the Texas turtle's unique life history, its fidelity to the Texas Gulf Coast, and the many conservation efforts to save it from extinction.

And now, the Kemp's ridley sea turtle is the Texas Master Naturalist 2017 re-certification pin emblem! Who will be the first to earn theirs? And, what will you say when someone asks you about your new pin?



The Kemp's ridley sea turtle, *Lepidochelys kempii*, is named for Richard Moore Kemp of Key West, Florida, who sent the first known specimen to Harvard University for identification. The Kemp's ridley is the rarest and most critically endangered sea turtle, due to many of the usual causes - habitat loss and hunting - and others more specific to sea turtles. It nearly went extinct before its biology became known.

The Kemp's ridley sea turtle is a small sea turtle, reaching about 2 feet in length at maturity, weighing about 100 pounds. Sea turtles spend most of their lives at sea; males never return to land after hatching, but females begin returning to their home beach by age 10 - 15 to lay eggs every two years. Unlike other sea turtles, the Kemp's ridley females lay eggs in daylight hours. Each nest may contain 50 - 130 eggs; the female may lay two or three clutches in a season. She digs her nest in the sand, covers the eggs, and returns to the ocean. The young must dig themselves out and find safe passage to the sea.

Young turtles float in the sargassum for their first years. Adult turtles forage in the warm, shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the western Atlantic Ocean. They dive to the bottom to dine on crabs and other marine invertebrates and plants. Floating plastic can be a problem for sea turtles; it may resemble jellyfish, and can be frequently found on the beach with turtle bites.

Historical data about Kemp's ridley sea turtle populations and nesting sites is scarce, but indicates the species

nested along the Gulf Coast from Mustang Island to Veracruz, Mexico. The main nesting area is in Mexico, concentrating around a 16-mile stretch of beach near Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, where a 1947 film showed a mass nesting, **arribada**, of perhaps 40,000 females on a single day. Despite protections, Kemp's ridley sea turtle populations declined until fewer than a couple hundred females nested at Rancho Nuevo and none at all in Texas. In 1985, estimates of population size suggested only about one percent of the former Kemp's ridley sea turtles remained.

Mexican and American conservation agencies stepped up their efforts to save the species, focusing on protecting nests, protecting nesting females, reducing fishery by-catch and offshore mortality (mandating turtle excluders), and establishing secondary nesting beaches in Texas.

These efforts have been rewarded and by 2009 turtle numbers had rebounded to an estimated 10,000 turtles. Although turtle numbers have fluctuated, and impacts of the Deepwater Horizon blowout, which could have had a disastrous effect on young turtles, are still being studied, turtles are definitely returning to nest at Rancho Nuevo. In the 2016 nesting season, Rancho Nuevo and surrounding areas recorded 18,000 nests. Still, Kemp's ridley sea turtle remains the most endangered sea turtle in the world.



Many master naturalists have patrolled miles of beach for many years to help our sea turtles. Turtle patrol coincides with nesting season - April 1 - July 15. This is our chance to help our State Sea Turtles. And when someone asks you about your cool pin, do not hesitate to tell them the story.

Osprey Vacation by Debbie Repasz

I never knew that the day I took a picture of an Osprey flying in 2014 would change my life. As I looked over my photos at home, I noticed that one Osprey had a blue band on its leg. That meant that it was banded by someone who was studying Ospreys. Curiosity got the best of me.



Photo by Debbie Repasz

It took two months but when I finally caught a good picture of the band, I contacted Sue Heath, PhD from the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory who checked around and found that Marco Restani, PhD was the bander of the Osprey. Marco, who now works for Montana Audubon, was thrilled that one of his birds was in our area and provided the following information: *I banded 10/B on 15 July 2013 in Montana along the Stillwater River (a tributary of the Yellowstone River). Distance between the*

nest site and Seabrook is a cool 1350 miles. The bird had 3 siblings, and was about 35 days old when banded.

We have kept in contact, and I sent him a picture for last year of 10/B. He invited Dave and me to Montana in July when he was banding the hatchlings, so we decided to go. What a vacation! We met Marco in Red Lodge, MT for dinner one night and went out to band Ospreys the next day. Many things have to fall into place for his work to be successful.

He has a good rapport with the electric utilities that loan him workers as well as bucket trucks when he is banding. They have built platforms for the Osprey to keep them away from power lines and possible electrocution. He banded 73 Osprey chicks in 2016.

It is difficult to express the feelings I had when I held the Osprey in my arms! Wow!

He would greatly appreciate everyone keeping their eyes open for banded Ospreys. If you can get the color and number of the band, it would be great! Different banders use different colors. A picture would be even better. My Osprey, 10/B, is back for the winter as of October 3, 2016.

Now, whenever I see an Osprey, I look for a band. Report your sighting on <https://www.reportband.gov> and your report will be added to a database maintained cooperatively by the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory and Canadian Wildlife Service Bird Banding Office.

Treasures of Bay Award Recipients 2016 by Carolyn Miles

Each year our chapter recognizes outstanding service and contributions to natural resource restoration and education efforts with the "Treasures of the Bay Awards!" Here are the 2016 recipients who were recognized at the December chapter meeting.

Nonprofit Award

Friends of Galveston Island State Park

Making a Difference Award

Hans Haglund - Texas Parks and Wildlife

Chuck Buddenhagen Memorial Education Award

Chris Anastas and Beth Cooper

Chapter Service Award

Suzanne Becker
Dorothy Hogg
Debi Shelton
John Wright

Prairie Restoration:

Tom Betros, Martha Richeson, Joe Bryan, Nancy Saint

Sammy Ray Researcher Award

Carlos Rios

Congratulations to all the award winners!

TMN Endowment Banks on Valuable Volunteers by Lana Berkowitz

The establishment of a Texas Master Naturalist Endowment is a sign of growth, not a call for members to open their pocketbooks, according to Mary Pearl Meuth, Texas Master Naturalist assistant state program coordinator.

"The most important thing that a Master Naturalist volunteer can give to the program is their time and their passion," Mary Pearl said. "One of the things that Michelle (program coordinator Haggerty) and I said from the very beginning is that we did not want this endowment to feel like we are asking our volunteers for money. That's not our intention at all."

For donations, TMN coordinators plan to seek assistance from organizations, foundations and agencies that see value in the TMN program. "They utilize Master Naturalist volunteers' work and they know how strong our volunteer force is and they want our program to continue to be successful," Mary Pearl said.

Discussion about a TMN endowment started about five years ago, Mary Pearl said. Since the inception of the TMN program in 1997, it has grown from one chapter to 48 chapters, which is a grand success. Yet federal funding has remained the same.

When Mary Pearl joined the TMN staff three years ago, it was apparent that resources were getting stretched too thin, she said. "It was getting harder and harder to give the attention that it deserved back to the program."

TMN coordinators approached the Texas A&M Foundation and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation because those foundations had vested interests in the TMN program and its success. Both groups thought the endowment idea was fantastic, Mary Pearl said.

It was decided the TMN endowment account would be held within the Texas A&M Foundation. TPWD will provide support and assistance.

The \$5 million goal was set after number crunching and advice from A&M. TMN's annual budget for the statewide program is approximately \$200,000, which comes from a federal grant. That pays the salaries for Michelle and Mary Pearl and operating costs for state activities and the chapters.

With 4 percent annual return guaranteed by the A&M foundation, \$5 million would provide \$200,000. "That would essentially double what we could do," Mary Pearl said.

A board to administer the money would include current master naturalists, who understand the TMN culture and

needs, plus leadership from A&M AgriLife and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"Michelle and I said what if we had \$5 million today? What would we do with the endowment funds? We have a dream list," Mary Pearl said. The "wouldn't it be fantastic if" list includes adding a junior master naturalist coordinator, regional staff coordinators and grants for chapter projects.



The first goal of \$25,000 was set to meet Texas A&M Foundation regulations, Mary Pearl said. "For an account to be self-sustaining it has to have \$25,000 within five years after opening. So we have until 2021 to reach \$25,000. I have no doubt that we are going to hit that. We are almost halfway."

The TMN endowment is getting off to a slow start because the two staffers are swamped.

"Here's the Catch-22, we just haven't given the endowment the attention that it deserves because there are other things that are more pressing for the daily survival of the program," Mary Pearl said.

Fundraising experience also is an issue although coordinators are getting some help from an A&M development director. "Michelle and I are trained wildlife biologists, and I did not take a single course in college on fundraising," Mary Pearl said. "We are definitely trying to develop this idea in a thoughtful process but also from an area where we don't have a lot of experience."

A master naturalist from another chapter already has contacted Mary Pearl about how the initial email announcement about the foundation could have been worded more effectively. Mary Pearl said she welcomes help from members with fundraising expertise.

"We will be working in the spring on refining our message and getting more marketing together. And hopefully having a website to host all this information.

I've started a FAQ for all the questions that have come in the past couple of weeks," she said. "So have patience with our messaging and with our rollout of information."

Wildlife Rehabilitation Emergency Information by Madeleine K. Barnes and Mattie Smith

What do you do when confronted with a situation that you are not prepared to handle? Scenario: You have found a bird/animal that is injured or orphaned. What do you need to do if you decide to become involved? Where can you find information that can help you? Who do you call and where can you take this bird/animal for help?

Master naturalists are out in the prairies, beaches, forests, roadways and other areas on a routine basis. As a result of your training and interests, you may observe injured wildlife and want to help the bird/animal get what it needs to stabilize and possibly recover. There are agencies/organizations out there who are trained rehabilitators to help you and other volunteers. If this is within an incorporated area, city animal control may be available to assist if contacted during working hours. If this is not the case, we are very fortunate in our area to have the Wildlife Center of Texas located in Houston. The Wildlife center is open 7 days a week (hours listed on website) and has trained staff and volunteers to care for injured wildlife. In addition, there are licensed and trained wildlife rehabilitators listed by county and specialty through Texas Parks and Wildlife.

One of our GBAC chapter members who volunteers at the Wildlife Center of Texas helped me with this article. Mattie Smith wrote: I have volunteered at the Wildlife Center of Texas for over five years with wonderful people from so many different backgrounds who have come together to help care for animals. It's not always a glamorous job because there are lots of cages to be

cleaned and animals to be fed. But I have been able to see and learn so much about wildlife up close including everything from possums, squirrels, and song birds to otters, bobcats, and raptors. We are the largest response center on the Gulf Coast and take in over 8,000 animals a year. No injured or orphaned animal native to Texas is ever turned away. It is so rewarding to watch the patients grow, heal, and be released back into the wild.

Visit The Wildlife Center of Texas home page for information about what to do if you find orphaned or injured wildlife or are interested in becoming a volunteer. Maybe this is a service opportunity for you to learn more and spend time providing care for wildlife.

Contact Info:

Wildlife Center of Texas, 7007 Katy Rd., Houston, TX 77024. Call (713) 861-WILD or visit <http://www.wildlifecenteroftexas.org/need-help/found-injured-or-orphaned-wildlife/>

For information and a list of rehabilitators from Texas Parks & Wildlife by county: <http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/rehab/list/> (If no computer access, call 1-800-792-1112)

Additional Info:

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/rehab/orphan/>
<http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/rehab/regs/>



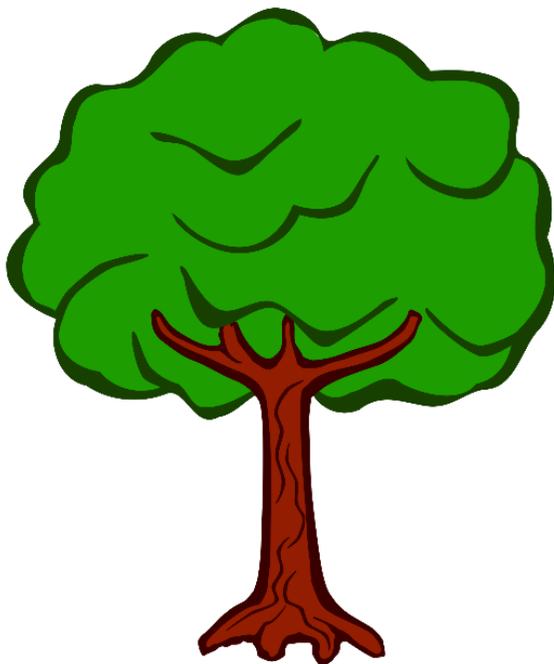
For more information, go to <http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>.

2017 Board of Directors

2017 Board of Directors	
Elected	
President	George Kyame
Vice President	Ron Morehead
Treasurer	Lynn Wright
Secretary	Tim Long

Appointed	
Volunteer Service	Jo Monday
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Training Class Rep.	Bill Breaux
Sponsor	Julie Massey
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The full chapter organization chart and a list of the committee chairs can be found at <http://txmn.org/gbmn/board-of-directors/> .



The Midden

Published bimonthly by the Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists. The purpose of *The Midden* is to inform, communicate and educate chapter members and the community. If you have an article that contributes to this purpose or want to join the team, please contact Diane Humes, treimanhumes@earthlink.net

Texas AgriLife Extension Service
4102 B Main (FM 519) Carbide Park
La Marque, TX 77568

The Midden is posted on the GBAC-TMN chapter website: www.gbamasternaturalist.org two weeks prior to chapter meetings. Archived issues also on chapter website. If you prefer to receive *The Midden* in hard copy and are not currently receiving it, please contact: Julie Massey, julie.massey@agnet.tamu.edu.

Midden Team

Madeleine K. Barnes	Linda Welzenbach Fries
Lana Berkowitz	Carolyn Miles
Verva Densmore	Chuck Snyder
Diane Humes, Managing Editor	

The Midden Deadline

for the next issue

February 27

If you have Advanced Training or Volunteer Opportunities, please submit information to Ron Morehead, ronmorehead.com



Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status.. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Court of Texas cooperating.

February and March Activities

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter Meeting - February 2nd; Putting Wetlands to Work in the City
Mary Carol Edwards, Texas Coastal Watershed Program
6:30 Social, 7:00 Meeting, 7:30 Speaker
AgriLife Extension Office; 1 AT hours

Whooping Crane Boat Trip - Feb. 14-15
TBD hours AT; Look for further information on email and at the chapter meeting.
Location: Rockport, TX
Register with Emmeline Dodd txdodd@aol.com

Diurnal Raptors - Feb. 27
1:30-4pm; 2.5 hours AT
Location: AgriLife Extension Office
Presenters - Lynn and John Wright
Register with Emmeline Dodd txdodd@aol.com

Ongoing
Galveston Island State Park
10 am at the Welcome Center (Begins again in March)
Every Saturday- Beach Explorations
Every Sunday- Bay Explorations
Tours 1 to 1 ½ hours long. Bring water and family.

Heritage Book Study Group
First Monday of every month. AgriLife Extension Office
10am-Noon; 2 hours AT
Contact: Elsie Smith (409) 392-7003
See Pg. 5 for meeting dates and books.

STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Ongoing Activities:

Mondays - Galveston Island State Park, Contact: Chatt Smith chattsmith@gmail.com

Tuesdays -

- Sheldon Lakes State Park, Contact: Tom Solomon crandtr@sbcglobal.net
- Texas City Prairie Preserve, Contact: Jim Duron wishkad@yahoo.com
- Environmental Institute of Houston at UHCL, Contact: Wendy Reistle reistle@uhcl.edu

Wednesdays - Wetland Restoration Team, Contact: Marissa Sipocz m-sipocz@tamu.edu

Thursdays -

- Stormwater Wetland Team, every Thursday, 9 - Noon. Contact: Mary Carol Edwards mary.edwards@agnet.tamu.edu
- San Jacinto State Park, Contact: Jim Duron wishkad@yahoo.com

Fridays - Prairie Friday, ABNC, 8:30 - 11:30am, Contact: Chatt Smith chattsmith@gmail.com

EDUCATION - OUTREACH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Bay & Island Adventures - Volunteers teach six in-class hands-on modules 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 staff their nature center. Go to <http://txmn.org/gbmn/partners/> for the list, then click on the link to the organization's website.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(At Extension Office monthly unless specified)

Board Meetings - First Tuesday, 2-4p.m.

Committee Meetings

Communication - Feb. 27, 9-Noon
Advanced Training - Third Monday, 10 to Noon
Education/Outreach - Third Tuesday, 10 to 11:30a.m.
Stewardship - Meets quarterly.

