

The Midden

Wetlands by Debbie Repasz

Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists

December 2021

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President's Corner by Pam House

As we have celebrated our 20th anniversary this year, it was so wonderful to review the amazing contributions made by the special people who choose to become Texas Master Naturalists. Although it is probably hard to remember at the end of August with the sweat dripping down your nose, I do think we are very lucky to live in this area with its tremendous variety of natural systems that has allowed those volunteer hours to be donated in such a wide variety of ways.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Galveston County has a total area of 874 square miles: 378 square miles of land and 495 square miles covered by water. In that relatively small area, compared to other Texas counties, we can find coastal prairies, wetlands, beaches and dunes, fresh water streams, brackish ponds, estuaries, tidal flows, and ocean waters proving distinctive habitats for huge varieties of native plants and wildlife - all of which find stewards among our members. It also means that there is always something new to learn, to see, and to do. Watching a butterfly chrysalis open, observing a sea turtle recover from cold stunning, harvesting seeds from the heads of native grasses, mucking about knee deep in mud--these have been a few of the new experiences for me this year.

The other new experience has been serving as your president since February. I am so very grateful for the guidance of the many of you who have offered support, advice, and kindness. I have learned that the efforts of the officers and directors of the chapter have been mighty and often unsung. The election of officers is held each year at the December meeting, but the directors are appointed by the incoming president at the first of the year. If YOU are interested in a director's position, please let the president know. Every board and committee meeting is open to all chapter members. During Zoom times, you just need to let the chairperson know of your interest, so that the Zoom link can be sent to you.

Next Chapter Meeting

December 2

Annual Awards
Celebration

And

Officer Election

Via Zoom

Although the chapter meeting on December 2 will be by Zoom, a celebratory picnic for the full membership is planned for an outside venue on December 4. The details are still in the works as this goes to press.

I hope to see you then!

Slate of officers for 2022

The nominating committee (Chris Anastas, Lynn Wright, and Susette Mahaffey) has presented to the board the following slate of officers for 2022 which will be presented to chapter at the December meeting for a vote.

- President - Pam House
- Vice President - Tyler Coleman
- Treasurer - Cindy Liening
- Secretary - Meade La Blanc

Wetland Wanderings: A Little Heron That Prefers Dry Feet by Lana Berkowitz

In another case of “if you restore it, they will come,” the least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) has found a home at Armand Bayou Nature Center to the delight of birders and conservationists.



Photo courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife

The little herons, which don't like to get their feet wet, weren't seen at ABNC until the California bulrush (*Schoenoplectus californicus*) was introduced for marsh restoration.

More than 26 acres of tidal habitat has been replanted since 1995 which attracted the least bittern, according to Mark Kramer, ABNC conservation director emeritus. His ABNC blog post Avian Acrobats about the least bittern and green heron (*Butorides virescens*) features amazing photos by Gary Seloff. (www.abnc.org/nature-blog/avian-acrobat)

As the bulrush marshes filled in, the least bittern moved in. Least bitterns have long, agile toes and curved claws that allow them to grasp reeds and hunt small prey while suspended over the water.

They have dagger-like bills and long necks that they often keep drawn in, which gives them a hunched appearance. Generally they take flight at dawn and dusk as they move between roosting and foraging sites.

The secretive birds aren't easy to spot. You will probably want to use your kayak or take an ABNC boat tour to get a glimpse of the heron, which is a little smaller than a crow. They are stalkers that stand still among the bulrushes and watch the water for prey.

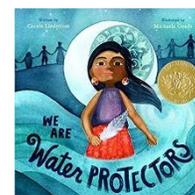
When alarmed, the least bittern freezes in place with its bill pointing up, turns both eyes toward the source of alarm, and sometimes sways to resemble windblown marsh vegetation, according to All About Birds.org.

If you spot a least bittern, your patience will be rewarded with a glimpse into their world of acrobatic maneuvering among the plants inches above the water.

Gift ideas

Here are books that the young wetland wanderers in your life may enjoy.

We Are Water Protectors (Roaring Book Press, \$17.99, 40 pages) by Carole Lindstrom and illustrator Michaela Goade



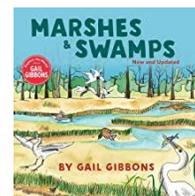
This picture book won the 2021 Caldecott Medal and is a New York Times best seller in Children's American Folk Tales & Myths category. It is about a girl's efforts to defend Earth's most sacred resource from a black snake's poison.

Take Me Home: Waters of the World (Albatros Media, \$14.95, 26 pages) By Pavla Hanackova and illustrator Linh Dao



This new board book in the Take Me Home series follows a girl as she travels around the world helping her animal friends find their proper habitats.

Marshes & Swamps (Holiday House, \$18.99, 32 pages) By Gail Gibbons



The updated 2021 edition introduces ecosystems of wetlands. The picture book explores the basics of wetland formation.

Prairie Ponderings: How Did the Prairie Chicken Cross the Road? by Diane Humes

One million Attwater's prairie chickens may have called Texas home one hundred years ago. They, along with the rest of the fauna, could travel freely across the state, with few roads and fewer automobiles to impede their progress. Today, the entire globe is paved with over 65

million miles of road, mostly in the U.S. and developed countries; consequently, habitats are quite fragmented.

Due to overhunting and habitat loss - factors common to many species - prairie chickens nearly went extinct. Master naturalists and many others work hard to ensure

the safety and future well-being of this and other species. What is being done to widen species' horizons? Wait until you see.

Memorial Park is a 1500-acre oasis in Houston's urban desert. A mecca for >10,000 walkers and joggers each day and home to the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, yet, the park habitats are surrounded by city and bisected by Memorial Drive. The Memorial Park Conservancy instituted a new park Master Plan after the disastrous drought of 2011 which called for restoration of native prairie, wetland and forest habitats AND creating a connection between both sides of the park for people and critters.



To that end, major construction began in August 2020 on a land bridge spanning double tunnels for Memorial Drive traffic. Soil will be spread three feet deep for planting native prairie grasses and forbs, increasing park prairie habitat by 45 acres. Including walkways for hikers and improved habitat for animals, the bridge is expected to become a destination site. Take a drive and check it out; construction completion is promised for early in 2022.

This will actually be the second wildlife crossing and pedestrian bridge in Texas. In San Antonio, the Phil Hardberger Land Conservancy completed construction of

the Robert L.B. Tobin Land Bridge over the Wurzbach Parkway in December 2020.



The largest such bridge in the U.S., it connects both sides of Hardberger Park, a popular 330-acre green space in the middle of the city. Planted with native plants, trees and prickly pear cactus, it feels like walking up a hill, instead of crossing a highway. With wildlife observation blinds and water bubblers at each end, critter cams have so far captured images of eight species using the bridge: gray fox, raccoon, rodent (unidentified), Virginia opossum, cotton-tailed rabbit, coyote, white-tailed deer and a bobcat!

Wildlife crossing structures are actually common around the world and include salamander tunnels in Japan, turtle and penguin underpasses in New Zealand, toad tunnels in Wales, red crab overpasses and tunnels in Australia, and a sugar glider bridge over a highway, used also by cockatoos! A prime wildlife location is Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada where fencing discourages wildlife from crossing the Trans-Canada Highway between Banff and Calgary, except by way of six underpasses and 38 overpasses. Moose, bear, wolves, and elk use the passages; wildlife carnage and car damage have been greatly reduced.

So, how will the prairie chicken cross the road? Houston, we may have an answer.

Women in Nature: Catalina Trail and the Wintering Monarchs by Meade LeBlanc

Many of us in Texas are familiar with the story of the monarch butterfly migration and are lucky enough to see some of these magnificent creatures fluttering around our yards each year. We have seen the migration graphics and wonder how they are able to survive the 4,000 mile journey, and also wonder why they do it. In years past, scientists also wondered where, exactly, the eastern monarchs went during the winter. They saw the trail disappear in Texas each fall and reappear there the following spring.

It took a 25 year old Mexican-born woman, Catalina (Cathy) Aguayo Brugger Trail, and her American-born husband, Ken Brugger, to solve the mystery.

Catalina was born in the Mexican state of Michoacan in 1949 and was interested in science and insects from a young age. She recalls watching Mexican blues, Gulf fritillaries, and other butterflies puddling in the streams near her childhood home after the rains came. She said she was a "crazy, buggy girl."

Her sense of curiosity and adventure led to a life of exploration. Starting in her late teens, she traveled in Mexico, Central America, United States and Canada, sometimes with friends, sometimes solo. On one of her adventures she met Ken, a Wisconsin native escaping the harsh winters by adventuring in Mexico. Ken had a newspaper ad from Dr. Fred Urquhart, a Canadian zoologist who had been studying monarchs since 1937. Dr. Urquhart was looking for research associates to help track the insects and Ken and Catalina wanted to help.



Catalina and Ken started their quest for monarch wintering grounds in 1973. Her knowledge of the language and customs proved invaluable in their travels through the remote countryside. In late 1974, they found groups of monarchs west of Mexico City. Dr. Urquhart had received reports of butterflies tagged by him in Canada found in the same area. Armed with this information and topographical maps, Catalina and Ken were able to narrow down the terrain of interest. The couple hired a guide and hiked over 11 miles a day.

Finally, in January 1975, they hiked to a high summit overlooking a dry creek bed at Cerro Pelon. What lay before them looked like a monarch super highway, with fir trees laden with millions of the butterflies. Catalina was the first to see them, while Ken and their helper

trailed behind with camera equipment. She remembers lying down and being covered with monarchs, feeling them walk across her face.



Catalina and Ken found five colonies of butterflies on that trip, and then called Dr. Urquhart. He swore the couple to secrecy, and it wasn't until a year later that the secret was out, when Dr. Urquhart visited the sites with National Geographic. The picture on the cover of the August 1976 issue was of Catalina covered in butterflies.

After that, not much was heard of Catalina or Ken. If you search Google for "who discovered where monarch butterflies winter?", the answer is Dr. Fred Urquhart, with the help of Catalina Trail and Ken Brugger. But of course it was only the Americans who did not know where the insects wintered. In Mexico, stories about them had been known for years.

As for Catalina, she now lives a quiet life in Austin, Texas, where she gardens and stargazes. She only recently made her past adventure known and is writing her memoirs. "I searched for the monarchs because of the love I have for all insects and all of nature," she stated. "For the awe that they provoke in me in all the beautiful and ugly ways. I care about the truth and the marvelous way that nature works in all of us."

Highlights from the 2021 Annual TMN Meeting by Diane Humes

The majority of the 695 registered attendees to the 22nd Annual Texas Master Naturalist Meeting voted with their feet and attended virtually, as did I. Nevertheless, Michelle Haggerty and Mary Pearl Meuth housed 215 in-person attendees who made the trek to DFW, plus 106 speakers in 128 sessions including 15 field trips.

Forty-four out of 48 chapters had some members attend; all sessions are recorded and may be viewed for another 90 days by all registrants! So, check it all out.

We were able to view photos submitted by 32 chapters, including ours, sharing their work and play during the past year. It was very inspiring to see what we have all been doing!

Sadly, we also noted the names of about 40 dedicated master naturalists - friends from near and far - who died this past year. Those lost from the Galveston Bay Area Chapter included Brian Corey, W. Mark Carter, and Sandy Rubin..

Dr J. Drew Lanham, ornithologist, poet, author, American naturalist, rising star and one of the smartest people I have heard speak began the meeting with his inspirational keynote presentation, "Coloring the Conservation Conversation." I think we need to read his books: *Sparrow Envy: Field Guide to Birds and Lesser Beasts* and *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*. He named us all "nature nurturers," "lovers of the land" and "wandering, wondering watchers" and encouraged us to find nature wherever we are and suggested we embrace technology, especially with young people, as a fantastic way to increase the spread of our message. Could it be, he wondered, if the "birds are looking at us and they're listing us?" He promised to come to Texas in the spring and I hope he does.

Another author, Amy Martin, highlighted *The Wonders of North Texas Nature*, her forthcoming book. (Another to look forward to.) She described many tantalizingly wonderful hikes and outstanding wildlife found in the DFW metroplex, mostly connected with the Trinity River and all its tributaries and reservoirs. Plan a wonderful trip, but a weekend will never be long enough.

I hope we can present an equally good impression next year, when the meeting will come to Houston, October 20 - 23, 2022!

Several chapters besides ours are celebrating 20 years: Cradle of Texas, Trans Pecos and Hays County. Many attendees achieved milestone recognition. Please congratulate our members, if you haven't already, for their achievements.

Dr. Barron Rector, founding TMN organization leader, who has attended all 22 state meetings (along with Michelle Haggerty, of course) was honored for his 40 years of service with AgriLife Extension.

Please congratulate yourselves for contributing to all that master naturalists have achieved since the program's inception. An amazing, resourceful and dedicated bunch, even during lockdown we managed to collectively accrue 375,285 volunteer hours!

Dinner & Evening Awards Reception 

Texas Master Naturalist Program Accomplishments

- Over 15,000 People trained
- 5.5 MILLION Hours of service
 - valued at \$121.35 MILLION to date
- Nearly 6.5 MILLION people reached to date
- 2,233 miles of trail developed and maintained
- 229,100 acres of habitat enhanced

The meeting closed after announcing photo and art contest winners. I'm pleased to report that our chapter took second place with its video "Reflections of 2020 GBAC Class". Also, chapter member Debbie Repasz won second place for her photo "Pollinators". Congratulations!



Photo by Debbie Repasz

And, last but not least, John O'Connell revealed next year's re-certification pin - the Texas lightning whelk.

Dolphin Challenge 2022 – Come Join Us! by Julie Massey

Imagine you are a high school student on a quiz bowl team in a competition on ocean sciences! Put a buzzer in your hand and you are about to face off with another team of enthusiastic, determined high school students! Then try to answer these questions!

"What does a refractometer measure?"
"Name fishes that spend most of their lives in freshwater but migrate to saltwater."

"The Marine Mammal Protection Act was enacted in what year?"

Whew! The pressure is on and the FUN begins!!

Join us for Dolphin Challenge 2022 on Saturday, February 12, 2022, at Texas A&M Galveston!



Dolphin Challenge is the Texas competition for the National Ocean Sciences Bowl (NOSB)! NOSB is a nationally recognized and highly acclaimed high school academic competition that provides a forum for students to test their knowledge of the marine sciences including biology, chemistry, geography, physics, geology, social sciences and technology. Texas Sea Grant sponsors the National Ocean Science Bowl competitions in Texas.

We need YOU to make Dolphin Challenge a success! Training is required. (Only one training is needed.) We are planning for the event to be in-person in 2022!

Volunteers are needed in every competition room for each round. Volunteers serve as competition officials

such as rules judge, science judge, moderator, scorekeeper, time keeper and runner as well as hosts and photographers.

Required training for Dolphin Challenge will be held at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Galveston County Office. **Volunteers need to attend only one training.**

Training will be held on the following dates:

- December 15 - 1:30pm - 3:30pm
- December 16 - 10am - noon
- December 16 - 1:30pm - 3:30pm
- January 5 - 10am - noon
- January 5 - 1:30pm - 3:30pm
- January 12 - 10am - noon
- January 12 - 1:30pm - 3:30pm
- January 19 - 10am - noon
- January 19 - 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Dolphin Challenge volunteers will enjoy a great lunch, receive a terrific t-shirt and bask in the admiration of high school students from across Texas. To learn more about NOSB, visit their website at <http://www.nosb.org/>. To register for volunteer training, please contact Julie at 281-309-5063 or julie.massey@ag.tamu.edu.

Trash 3.0 by Diane Humes

Trash, garbage, waste, refuse, rubbish, discards, offal, debris, litter, scrap, junk, scum, dregs - all names for the substances humans consider worthless, valueless, or useless. Humans are the only species to create objects that outlive the natural process of decay, much to the delight of archaeologists who use the lost, forgotten or discarded items as a window on our past. Throughout human history people dealt with trash variously, depending greatly on where and when they lived and their individual or societal circumstances.

When I was ten I lived with my grandparents for a year. My family experienced a different way of life as we shared their small house in the country near Lake Michigan. They had neither a disposal nor a dishwasher. There was a wringer washer and no dryer; clothes dried on the line in summer and in the basement in winter. The milkman delivered milk, butter and eggs and the trash man took the garbage. My grandparents were first generation children of Dutch immigrants and had lost everything during the Depression; they had high standards of frugality.

Grandma cooked bacon and eggs for Grandpa every morning; it may have been a plot, because it is impossible to sleep with bacon cooking! Grandpa was adamant that no grease should ever go down the drain,

so we had a can in the refrigerator for it. After breakfast Grandma cut up the cold bacon grease and any leftover bread to mix with birdseed for her three feeders outside. I might add that we all enjoyed watching the birds.

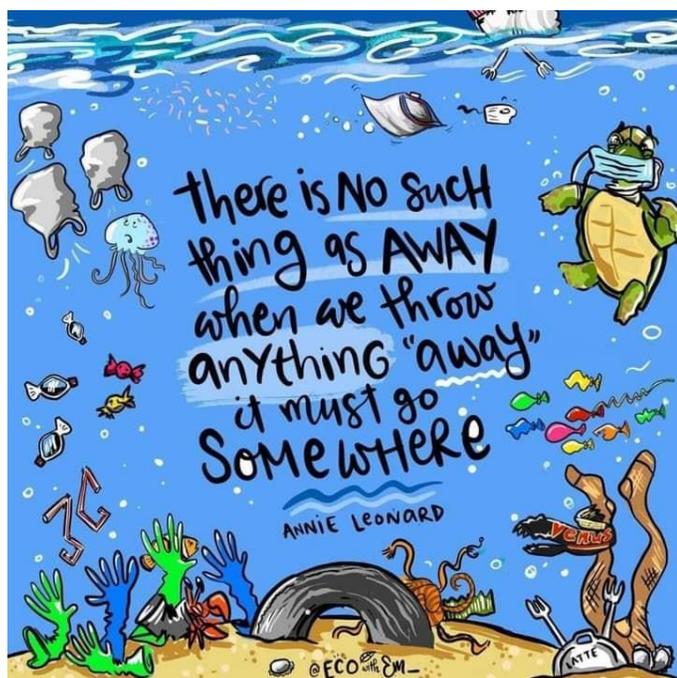
I never imagined any other way to deal with kitchen grease until learning of "fatbergs" - gigantic globs of fats, oils, grease, baby wipes, and other "flushables" clogging sewers all over the world including, this summer, in League City. Obviously most other people never had a grandpa like mine, or they are all too young to remember.



Photo courtesy of City of League City

Climbing further down the family tree, I know that one of my direct ancestors arrived in the wilderness of Plymouth, MA in 1620 on the Mayflower. At that time and place, he surely knew the absolute necessity of self-sufficiency and no waste. Artifacts from a Virginia plantation from that era proved it; a stoneware bottle neck, buried since the 1620s perfectly matched the bottom of a large jug on display in the plantation's museum. Found in completely different locations on the plantation, the simplest explanation is that these early colonists kept both broken parts for some time, using the top as a funnel and the bottom as a bowl. "Waste not, want not" was a common saying back then.

In fact, the very concept and word "wastebasket" did not exist until the late 1800s.



Old habits die hard, and most of what we do is learned at a young age at home (or we go and do the opposite!) I still have my Grandma's button jar and save all our buttons - might need them some day. Of course, times change, and with the rise of large corporations, manufacturing, shipping, advertising and great affluence, we have all changed our ways.

I'm beginning to think most of what we believe we know, is a product of advertising campaigns, mostly designed to make us think that a new device or product will save us either time or money and make our lives immeasurably better. You know the plea, "save a stamp, send your payment electronically?" Who benefits most, anyway? Many, many labor-saving devices and products have been marketed and sold since the 1930s; we barely know how to live without most of them anymore. Global spending on advertising in 2021 has topped \$569 billion,

calculated by www.theworldcounts.com, as of this writing.

Especially because of COVID-19 and because we can, we are all shopping online. I know the size of my stack of Amazon boxes - all perfectly brand new and re-useable, but what am I going to do with all of them? How many pristine cardboard boxes should you recycle and from how many trees? It's not just the boxes. I've read that my shirt, dress, or pair of pants that I returned to the seller is most likely to get trashed, even though I didn't wear it - it just didn't fit. Of course, they hoped I would keep it, but it is often too much trouble and expense to re-stock, since it's being sent to a distribution center, not a store. Somehow, it is better for the bottom line to advertise free returns and eat their losses.

So, how much are we throwing away? So far this year, also according to www.theworldcounts.com, 1.7 billion tons of waste has been dumped, globally. Of that, 1.6 billion tons was household waste. Total globally generated waste comes to 9 billion tons. Ten million tons of plastic have ended up in the oceans and the Great Pacific Garbage Patch covers 2.2 million square kilometers - mostly plastic. Worldcounts.org calculates that in 28 years there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean; of course, that also considers the amount of fish taken from the sea.

It is useless to blame single use plastics for all of it; everything we touch is a single use object. When was the last time you refilled any container? Or washed a napkin? Can we recycle ourselves out of all this mess?

The last straw came in this morning's news. Residents and businesses in the City of Houston produce 6.2 million tons of solid waste each year - a sizable portion of the global total. The city believes its 12 landfills will reach capacity in a short 30 to 40 years, seven of those may be forced to close by 2040 without major expansions. All private landfills taking construction and demolition debris will be full about the same time. Houston, we have a big problem.

In order to try to divert some of the waste stream from landfills, the City of Houston is launching a composting program and asking citizens to bring their compostable materials to several sites. This pilot plan will produce soil and reduce methane emissions. The list of acceptable compostable materials includes: food scraps such as coffee grounds and tea bags; meat and bones moldy or freezer-burned food; fruits and vegetables; dairy; seafood and shells; compostable utensils; bags and cups; newspapers; fur; hair and nail clippings; flowers; paper napkins and towels; vegetarian pet bedding and wood ash.

The professional compost facility will generate soil in a short 15-18 months. This process is much hotter than a

typical backyard “lazy” compost pile, so you may not be able to use ALL those items in your backyard pile. But, it is certainly worth a try and will greatly reduce your amount of weekly trash, especially if you also compost your yard waste.

If you compost and recycle all that you can, you will most likely have a tiny bit of trash for the truck. Although most of us live outside Houston’s jurisdiction, if there are 7 million of us in the region, no matter how you look at it, we may each count for almost a ton of trash each year. We’re not out of space for landfills, but they are expensive, and nobody wants to live near one.

With the amount of trash we produce, our cities will quickly become unlivable if the trash cannot go away. Now may be time to get really serious about the circular economy - planning objects from beginning to end for their eventual reuse - and as many other solutions as we can come up with.

Trash is a human construct and ways of dealing with it are really variations on ancient themes - bury it, burn it, re-use it, and use less of it. In the landfill, materials rarely decompose, while burning destroys nearly everything. We are currently overwhelmed by recycling and reusing, which leaves us with the last choice: use less stuff. The number of humans on the planet is the largest in history and still growing; collectively we are extracting more raw materials from the planet than ever before. By some calculations we are consuming as if we had 1.8 Earths.

Prior to the invention of mass-produced goods and organic chemistry, i.e. plastic, most enduring items were made of stone, bone, metal, pottery, or sometimes charred wood; very little else is usually preserved for any length of time. But, here we are entering the age of human domination of Earth called the Anthropocene, marked by the line in the geologic record formed from the layer of human trash.

20 Gift Ideas That Won’t Create a Lot of Trash! by Rebekah Gano

The holiday season is here, and it’s time to show others that you care about them, but how can you do that without giving things that are going to end up as trash? Here are some gift suggestions to try!

1. Send digital books.
2. Cook something delicious, and package it in an Earth-friendly way.
3. Write a poem or special letter.
4. Give away a special item, such as jewelry that you would love to see someone else use.
5. Make artwork. Use recycled materials for bonus points!
6. Gift a class: cooking, pottery, foreign language, etc. There are in-person and online classes.
7. Play a song. (Perform live or send a recording.)
8. Divide up plants and put them in re-used containers.
9. Create a seed basket (with seeds packaged in paper, of course).
10. Make task tickets such as “I will mow your lawn” or “Good for one house dusting”.
11. Give a get-away, such as a pass to a nature center, museum or zoo.
12. Pay for an app.
13. Pick a bouquet of flowers and put them in a pretty, re-used container.
14. Write compliments about someone and hide them around the house or workplace.
15. Create a special event at your home, such as a game night or movie night, and welcome your special guests.
16. Send a digital music gift card.
17. Provide membership to a streaming service, like Netflix, Disney+, Nintendo Online, or PlayStation Plus for those who love movies and video games.
18. Purchase a to-go utensil set so plastic dinnerware isn’t needed.
19. Give a donation to a favorite charity in someone’s honor.
20. Invite your friends or family to a fun picnic. For a cool day, you might pack soup, hot chocolate, camp chairs and plenty of blankets!



Camp Wild – Save the Dates, June 6-10 by Wayne O'Quin



Photo by Wayne O'Quin

Volunteering at Camp Wild is a great way to make a difference in the lives of a group of kids just completing 4th grade from Galveston schools. These children, 60 - 70, attend camp at no cost and enjoy a wide variety of activities. The activities include kayaking, fishing, swimming, fish painting, games and wildlife experiences.

We need people to help with activities, security, photography, transportation, food, and camp setup and take down. Master naturalists have helped make this camp a reality for 20 years (2020 and 2021 were suspended because of COVID), and we hope that you will join us this year. The day runs from 8:00 till 1:00. The camp provides you with memories that will bring you joy as well as food, outdoor activities, and t-shirts!

The mission of Camp Wild 2022 is to provide a safe, fun, engaging educational setting for campers to explore and learn about various nature activities in our Gulf Coast area.

Contact Information:

Terry Gaustad - sterrywine@aol.com

Davis Clay - dclay27@gmail.com

Wayne O'Quin wxoquin@gmail.com

Guppies from Julie - It all adds up!

(reprint from The Midden April 2018)

Hello Master Naturalists!

I would like to encourage you to record on VMS the contacts you make within the community as you conduct your stewardship and education activities.

These contacts and the diversity of the audiences you educate tell the story of the impact you make to inform and educate people on our local natural resources! Your contact numbers and diversity information are used by the Texas Master Naturalist Program sponsors, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), to share your impact with the Texas State Legislature.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and TPWD are funded by the Texas State Legislature.

In 2017, the chapter recorded 18,567 contacts while 2015 had 45,510 contacts. In two years, the numbers indicate a 59% decrease in the stewardship and education contacts made by the chapter. I really don't believe that the chapter was less active in working with the public in 2017 as indicated by the numbers. I think the diversity and number of contacts were just not recorded.

One of the ways the Texas State Legislature knows that we are meeting the mandate "to serve all of the people of

Texas" is by the reflection of the audiences educated by our "Master volunteers" such as Texas Master Naturalists. The audiences we work with should be reflective of the wonderful diversity of our great state! Without data, we cannot tell that story.

Please consider recording the diversity of the contacts you make in 2018 into the VMS. Complete data can then be shared with our funding organizations including the Texas State Legislature and the Commissioners Court of Galveston County.

There are a variety of ways to implement this data collection and I look forward to discussing options with you. If you have any suggestions or questions, please contact me at julie.massey@ag.tamu.edu.

Many thanks for "Being the Change You Wish to see in the World!"

Julie

(From Patty Trimmingham: Reminder to those of you who have not recertified this year--if you want to get the beautiful side oats grama pin, you will need to obtain 8 Advanced Training hours and 40 Volunteer service hours by 12/31/2021. If you need ideas on how to get these hours contact Ellen Gerloff for Advanced Training and Jo Monday for Volunteer Service.)

GBAC First Training Class by Diane Humes



In honor of our 20th anniversary, here is a scanned photo of our first training class, Fall 2001. Photographer unknown.

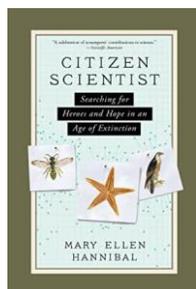
1. Doris Heard
2. Mike Jaschek
3. Anne Ray
4. Carolyn Lovell, founder
5. Cliff Muehe
6. Tawy Muehe
7. Bob Sobotik
8. Mary Vogas
9. Margaret Pickell, founder
10. Barbara Moore
11. Dick Benoit, founder
12. Irene Yodzis
13. Jackie Tingle, President
14. Alan Wilde
15. Ann Burns
16. Laurel Stine
17. Chris Kuhlman
18. Bill Moore
19. Polly Gordy
20. Mary Lou Kelso
21. Horace Kelso

Not pictured from training class list:

- Kenneth Bales
- Heyward Fetner
- Trudy Belz (transferred from Gulf Coast)



Heritage Book Study - Review of *Citizen Scientist: Searching for Heroes and Hope in an Age of Extinction* by Madeleine K. Barnes



You may have participated in or are currently involved in a monitoring project as a citizen scientist and may be interested in learning more about the bigger picture of citizen science and the present role that it plays in our understanding what is happening around us on the earth, both in the sea as well and on land.

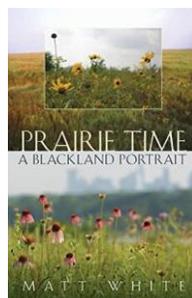
If you have had this opportunity to volunteer, take a moment to reflect on your experiences as a citizen scientist and what you learned by participating in a monitoring project. A citizen scientist can be described as a member of the general public, a non-professional, who collects and analyzes data relating to the natural world, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists.

The author, Mary Ellen Hannibal, is an award-winning writer and an active citizen scientist in multiple projects. These qualifications give her a unique perspective on this subject from the boots on the ground viewpoint which is one that we can identify with as master naturalists. The subtitle frames the goal of her book as she describes her search for “Heroes and Hope” during the present timeframe “in an Age of Extinction”. She describes both inquiries into science and history in her writing: “Extinction is a word from the realm of science, but it isn’t about science. It’s about history - what happened on the land and in the water, and why. History is based on storytelling, on narratives.”

Ms. Hannibal provides many detailed examples of long-term monitoring projects in her book addressing migrations, responses to climate change, invasive species, the impact of wildfire on natural systems, and many others. In addition, she writes about historical citizen scientists: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Charles Darwin, Rollo Beck, Alice Eastwood, and Ed Ricketts to name a few of those she referred to as instrumental. She also provides information as to the advances in current technology that are contributing to data collection, the abilities to analyze large scale changes in nature, and to apply these tools for greater scientific and community understanding. Some of these included by Ms. Hannibal are: iNaturalist, eBird, Google Earth Outreach, and Google Earth Engine. She also describes her interviews with numerous scientists

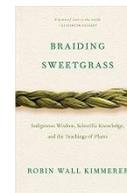
currently conducting on-going projects and the citizen scientists involved in them.

I did learn many new things about the role and growing number of citizen scientists from Ms. Hannibal’s book. There are two things that contributed to my difficulty in reading this one however, 1) the author’s non-linear writing style which was all over the map to me, and 2) the lack of continued focus on the important issues of citizen science, conservation, and “re-wilding” in her writing. Disclaimer: Remember that this is just my opinion and you may have a different view.



Our next Zoom meeting will be on December 6, 2021, to close our discussion of *Prairie Time: A Blackland Portrait* by Matt White. We will be discussing the last half of this book, pages 131-258, on that date. On Monday, January 3, 2022, we will discuss the first third of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall

Kimmerer. This book is a three-month reading from January through the March AT. If you want to join us for either or both of these AT opportunities, please contact Madeleine Barnes at Mad2Btmn@aol.com to be added to the list for additional information and to receive the Zoom meeting link and password.



We welcome your participation each month for two hours on the first Monday of the month starting at 10am for these AT meetings. Please note that we welcome anyone to participate whether you are TMN certified, recertified, or just want to remain a chapter member. We look forward to seeing you and let us know if you have read any good naturalist books lately. Happy trails!

The Midden Deadline
for the next issue

December 27

December and January Activities

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter Meeting - Dec. 2, Year-end Celebration!
6:15 Social Time, Elections, Awards, Fun (No AT)

No AT is currently planned for December or January.

Ongoing

Heritage Book Study Group

First Monday of every month via Zoom
10am-noon; 2 hours AT

Contact: Madeleine Barnes 281-474-9406

See Pg. 11 for meeting dates and books.

STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

For a complete list of stewardship activities, see our chapter website, <https://txmn.org/gbmn/what-we-do/>.

EDUCATION - OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

For a complete list of education - outreach activities see our chapter website, <https://txmn.org/gbmn/what-we-do/>.

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.

CHAPTER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Calendar - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/events/month/> Includes meetings, AT and volunteer activities

Board - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/board-of-directors/>
Contact information for the Board of Directors. **Board Meetings** - usually first Tuesday of each month (via Zoom), verify on the calendar

Committees - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/board-of-directors/>
Contact information for the Committee Chairs

Volunteer Service - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/volunteer-service/> Volunteer Opportunities

Advanced Training - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/advanced-training/>

Midden Archives - <https://txmn.org/gbmn/> Go to The Midden on the top menu.

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/gbactmn>



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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 this purpose or want to join the team, please contact Diane Humes, treimanhumes@gmail.com.

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The Midden is posted on the GBAC-TMN chapter website: <https://txmn.org/gbmn/> 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@ag.tamu.edu.

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