

The Naturalist

Volume 11 Issue 9

September 1, 2026



The mission of the Master Naturalist Program is "to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas."

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President's Corner

by Mike Wenzel

Summer is officially here.....

Hope everyone is coping with this heat and drinking plenty of water. While driving back from San Antonio I was amazed at all the snow on the ground in the coastal bend. Not to worry I have not been out in the sun too long.

While driving it occurred to me how much cotton still on the plants that have been defoliated looks like snow. How many people drive by this all the time and never see that or make the connection that cotton is used to make many things. I used to grab a cotton plant, after the harvest has been done, and take it to show to my kids and now grandkids. I would explain what it is and allow them the opportunity to hold this plant and the cotton still on it. I believe when we can make that connection between someone and something we have accomplished a lot. It causes that person to take a closer look at the world around them and perhaps become more curious. This in turn leads them to be outside and hopefully wanting to become a Master Naturalist.

Until next month enjoy the snow covered fields and think cool thoughts.

Parks on the Air

by David Neipert

Parks on the Air is an international program that encourages licensed radio operators to operate portable radio stations from state parks, national parks, and public land. I recently made a presentation at an initial training session at the Marine Science Institute. Since I was the last to speak in the afternoon, I set up my station at Mustang Island State Park in the morning while the trainees were doing field work. During a two-hour session I made 35 contacts from Florida to Oregon telling others about South Texas Parks and learning about theirs. If you see me or others operating shortwave radios in public parks, be free to observe and chat with the operators. It's our form of public outreach. David Neipert, radio call AF5NF



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Texas Master Naturalist – September Chapter Meeting

Tuesday, September 15, 6:30 pm
South Texas Botanical Garden – Education Room

Michael Wetz, Harte Research Institute at
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Water Quality Challenges on the Texas Coast

Water quality is an essential component of coastal ecosystem health. Degraded water quality poses risks to human and wildlife health, and it is difficult to support economically and ecologically valuable habitat and fisheries with degraded water quality. Coastal water quality in Texas is under pressure from increasing human populations in coastal watersheds, aging sewage treatment infrastructure, and changing ocean conditions. This talk will synthesize results from several water quality studies in the region to answer the question, “How has water quality changed on the Texas coast?”. Vignettes will be presented covering indicators of water quality health including fecal bacteria, *Vibrio* (“flesh eating bacteria”), and nutrient pollution.



Mike Wetz is the Chair for Water Health at the Harte Research Institute of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Wetz earned a B.S. in Marine Science from Coastal Carolina University, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Oceanography from Oregon State University. He is a broadly trained marine scientist, with expertise in phytoplankton ecology and coastal water quality. Wetz leads a volunteer water quality monitoring program in Baffin Bay, Texas results from which guide the Bringing Baffin Back™ initiative that was selected as a 2022 Conservation Wrangler program by Texan By Nature. Bringing Baffin Back™ integrates research and monitoring, watershed and bay habitat restoration, and efforts that enhance stewardship to improve the health of Baffin Bay and the coastal economy that relies on it. Wetz also co-chairs the Baffin Bay Stakeholder Group, which plays an integral role in the Bringing Baffin Back™ initiative. Wetz is also managing partner of Clean Coast Texas, which is a Texas General Land Office-led program that aims to provide resources to coastal communities to improve and/or protect water quality and the economies that rely on clean water.

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From the Front of the Room

By: Randy Bissell



Why speak to the public? Because I believe scientists and Texas Master Naturalists™ have an obligation to make what we know accessible beyond universities, professional societies, and technical publications. In both roles, I see public speaking as part of that responsibility. And...honestly, as a naturally reluctant presenter, it's a real challenge—and weirdly fun.

My talks tend toward places where geology, natural history, archaeology, and human history intersect—sea-level change, regional geology, coastal evolution, geoarchaeology, and the ways history can still be read in our landscapes. These subjects become especially meaningful when they are tied to places people know: a coast, a river, a bay cliff, a historic crossing, or a familiar waterway.

Much of what I present rests on the great work of others—geologists, archaeologists, historians, ecologists, naturalists, and local researchers whose scholarship and field observations provide the foundation for my research and interests. My aim is often to bring those pieces together, add my own field experience where appropriate, and translate that work into something useful and understandable for general audiences—adding irony and humor when appropriate.

I also enjoy the exchanges. Our local audiences are often eager, curious, and remarkably knowledgeable. Their questions, comments, family stories, and observations routinely teach me something, sharpen my interpretations, or point me toward something I need to investigate further. Sometimes they show me rocks and artifacts to identify. Fun!

Within our Texas Master Naturalist mission, I work to keep evidence and context at the center. Some subjects can inspire strong passions and opinions, including my own, but my own advocacy must remain secondary to the information and evidence. Solid science should be at the core of any presentation.

At its best, public speaking becomes a shared exploration of interesting topics—landscapes, history, and natural science. When it hits with the audience...it's sublime.

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Meet and Greet

by Mara Doemland

The 2026 Meet and Greet with the new chapter members was a success. New members were celebrated as well as those who completed the Bobcat Challenge to receive a prize plus pin.



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Portrait of a Parasite

By: Chuck Blend

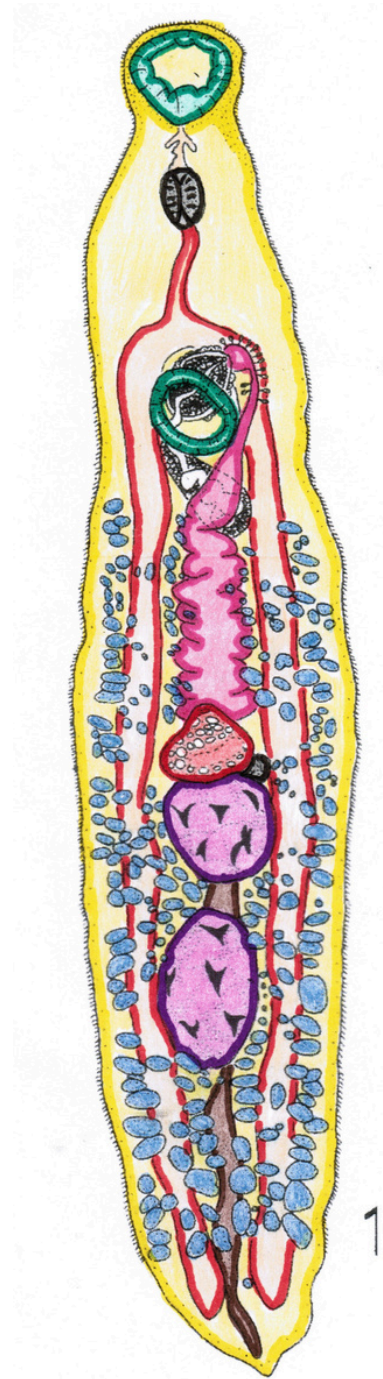
CITATION: Blend, C. K., Dronen, N. O. & Armstrong, H. W. 1997. Six new species of *Lepidapedon* Stafford, 1904 (Digenea: Lepocreadiidae) from deep-sea macrourid fishes from the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, with revised keys to the species of the genus *Systematic Parasitology* 45:29-51.

SUMMARY: This parasitic fluke is *Lepidapedon mexicanensis*, a new species described from the intestine of the hollowsnout grenadier, *Coelorinchus caelorhincus*, from the NE Gulf of Mexico at a depth of 375-534 m. This flatworm also parasitized the carmine grenadier, *Coryphaenoides carminifer*, and the thickbeard grenadier, *Coryphaenoides zaniophorus*, from the same location at depths of 436-655 m. Grenadiers or rattails are one of the most common fish found along/near the continental shelf break, slope, and abyssal plains of the world's deep oceans. The species name 'mexicanensis' reflects the location where this parasite was found – the Gulf of Mexico. Flukes of this type typically parasitize a gastropod (snail) as 1 st intermediate host and jellyfish, ctenophores, polychaetes, bivalves, and/or sea urchins as 2 nd or subsequent intermediate hosts; the grenadier definitive host becomes infected by eating the latter intermediate host(s).

HOST: Here's a picture of the hollowsnout grenadier, *Coelorinchus caelorhincus*. You can see from the appearance of its tail why this family of fish are called 'rattails.'



[Source: www.fishbase.org]



Scan QR code to learn more!

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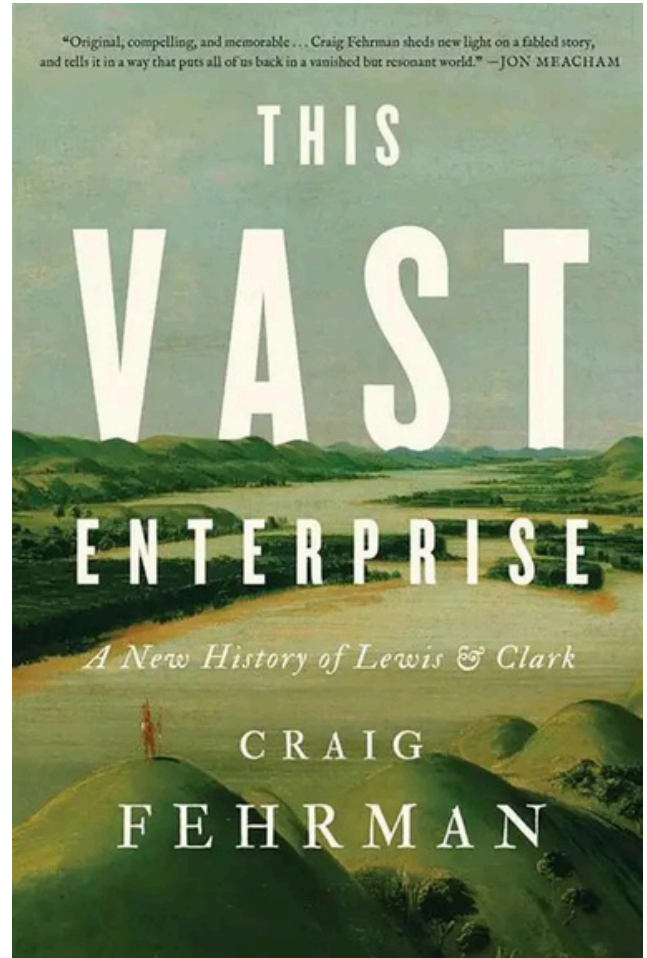
Brief Notes on Books a Fellow Naturalist Enjoyed Reading

By Cornelia Gates

This summer, when I saw that there was a new book about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, I realized that I don't remember essentially anything that I learned about Lewis and Clark in high school (fifty plus years ago!). So, it was with solid delight and great anticipation that I read *This Vast Enterprise: A New History of Lewis & Clark* by Craig Fehrman.

Fehrman structured *This Vast Enterprise* so that each chapter is told from the perspective of a different member of the expedition. I listened to this book (long story as to why I can't yet hold a hardback book for any extended period of time), so I had the wonderful experience of multiple readers - a different reader for each of the chapter characters. Accompanying the audiobook was a pdf that included a list of characters, maps of the expedition as well as two appendices. Apparently, the actual book has additional color photographs.

What I learned about the American West of the early 1800s, and the American politics of that time is still resonating in a good way. If you are curious about the Lewis and Clark Expedition and its geographical and political context, this well-researched book is for you. It's not absolutely perfect, but it's a perfectly enjoyable and informative page-turning read.



Poem by Mary Oliver

Submitted by: Toni Briscoe

**With Thanks to
the Field
Sparrow,
Whose Voice Is
So Delicate
and Humble**

I do not live happily or comfortably
With the cleverness of our times.
The talk is all about computers,
The news is all about bombs and blood.
This morning, in the fresh field,
I came upon a hidden nest.
It held four warm, speckled eggs.
I touched them.
Then went away softly,
Having felt something more wonderful
Than all the electricity of New York City

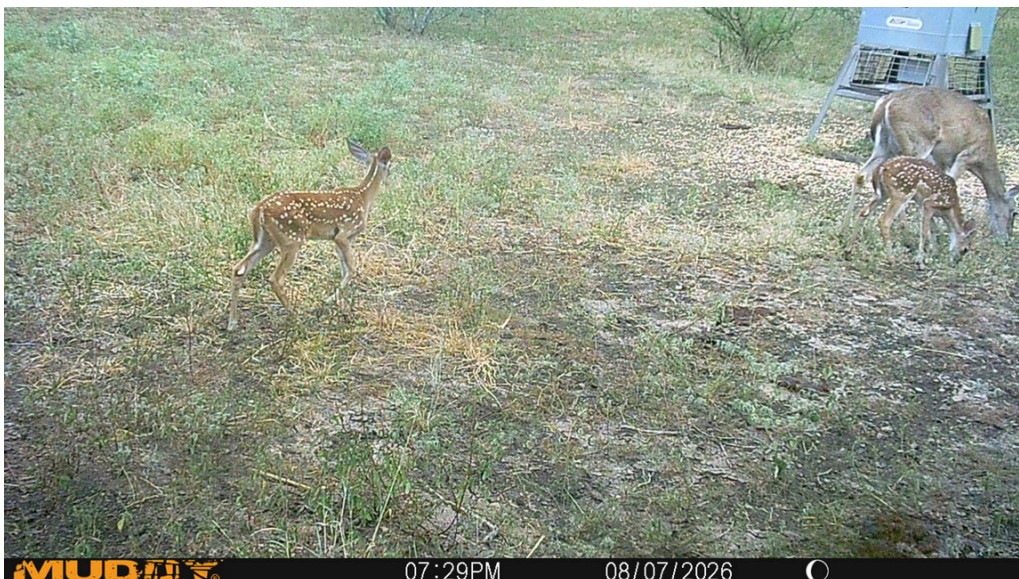
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Wildlife Watch: Captured by Camera

By Mike Wenzel

Welcome to this month's edition of Wildlife Watch, where I share some of the fascinating birds and wildlife captured by my game cameras—both locally and beyond.

This month I want to feature some photos of babies from our place in Wilson County. For a while I was concerned that there would be no babies this year due to the ongoing drought. I was relieved when I checked my trail cameras found some really cool baby pics. While filling the deer feeder (I don't hunt, I just feed the deer and other wildlife.) I startled a morning dove from a tree. Upon closer in section, I noticed a nest with two young birds in it. While checking the trail cameras I also found a raccoon with two young and a deer with two spotted fawns. Nothing much cuter in this world than babies and we apparently have several.



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August Initial Training

By: Mara Doemlandl

Our first initial training session was at Packery Flats, Mustang Island, and The Patton Center. All participants left with a lot more information and the ability to identify different plants on the beach, how to check the salinity in water, a fun new parasite dance and so much more than I could write in this paragraph.

Current chapter members are welcome to attend training sessions if space allows. If you'd like to join a class, please text or call **Dawn Bissell at 361.960.2151** to see if an opening is available.



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Outreach Kits: Take Nature on the Road!

By Holly Ahern

Ready to share your love of nature with others? Our new **Outreach Kit Checkout System** makes it easier than ever to participate in community events. Packed with hands-on activities, displays, and educational materials, our outreach kits are designed to help you confidently engage children, families, and adults - whether you're a seasoned volunteer or participating for the very first time. Watch your email for upcoming outreach volunteer opportunities or contact Holly if you have a small local school event and want to help inspire the next generation of naturalists, one conversation at a time!



Outreach Kit Checkout

Remove complete kit only ... do not take bits & pieces
Date & Time Checkout & Check in with your name
Take photo(s) of Checkout sheet(s) and TEXT to Holly at 512.784.9951. OUT and IN

OUT Date _____ Time _____
IN Date _____ Time _____
Your Name _____
EVENT NAME/DATE _____

Box #1 Kit Contents
Booth Set up

☐	Two notebook and black metal stand
☐	11 x 17 Dragonfly w/ QR code
☐	Visitor Clickers: ADULTS & KIDS
☐	Small White clipboard w/ pen, Volunteer registration
☐	Connect with Nature, Volunteer with Us, ACKRUC BONUS (3)
☐	Two Business cards, VOLUNTEER Referral (side 1) & QR CODE (side 2)
☐	Bamboo BUSINESS CARD HOLDERS
☐	Two Bookmarks
☐	Two corporate 3-fold flyer
☐	Self-addressed Post for CANON
☐	Self-addressed Post for HANS LENSES
☐	Self-addressed Post for DRAGONFLY STICKERS



OUT Date _____ Time _____
IN Date _____ Time _____
Your Name _____
EVENT NAME/DATE _____

Box #2 Kit Contents
Beach Critters & Shells

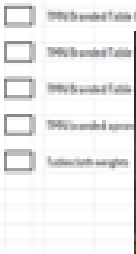
☐	Beach Dig Tool Backpack w/ sign
☐	Plastic Beach Specimens
☐	Plastic Beach Specimens
☐	Beachlife specimens
☐	Beachlife specimens
☐	Lightweight Black Specimens
☐	Lightweight Black Specimens
☐	Specimens in Plastic Buckets: Beach Flying, coral, sand dollar, coral, puffer
☐	Shore Mud Specimens & Instructions sign
☐	Shore Mud Specimens & Instructions sign



OUT Date _____ Time _____
IN Date _____ Time _____
Your Name _____
EVENT NAME/DATE _____

Box #1A Kit Contents
Booth Set up - Tablecloths

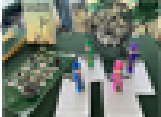
☐	Two-sided Table Cloth
☐	Two-sided Table
☐	Two-sided Table
☐	Two-sided Table
☐	Tablecloth weights



OUT Date _____ Time _____
IN Date _____ Time _____
Your Name _____
EVENT NAME/DATE _____

Box #2A Kit Contents
Sea Bean BINGO

☐	BINGO cards/signs
☐	Printed Sea Beans and
☐	Sea Bean BINGO 11x17
☐	White Cardstock BINGO cards, Original Form & Name "P"
☐	BINGO w/ Seashells - Multiple colors
☐	Play Sea Beans BINGO sign
☐	Laminated BINGO for SEA BEAN sign
☐	Self-addressed Envelope w/ small plastic marine animals





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Volunteer Opportunities

Visit our South Texas Chapter homepage to view all of our September opportunities.



Mustang Island State Park

You can volunteer by:
Having beach walks, shell & tell, bird/plant identification, sea turtle help, geology education, trash pick up, geogaching, and much more.

You can either have an informal or planned/scheduled volunteer time.

Contact:

Suzanne Smith, Operations Trainee,
Mustang Island State Park
Suzanne.Smith@tpwd.texas.gov
361-749-5246

Volunteer Opportunity

Scan the QR Code
to APPLY ONLINE:



Volunteer Opportunity



Goose Island State Park

Goose Island State Park around the Big Tree
Main need is guinea grass management

Other opportunities -

- Herpetofauna surveys
- Vegetation surveys
- Trail maintenance
- Other stewardship tasks as needed

Contact- Catalina Berry - (361) 729-2858

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Volunteer Opportunities

Education Opportunity



Cenizo Garden Drawing Club September 3 @ 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

The Cenizo Garden Drawing Club welcomes art and plant enthusiasts to an open & friendly gardening community to practice their drawing skills and get to know the plants around them.

Limit 20 people - **RSVP required**



Scan the QR Code
to RSVP

Volunteer Opportunity



The Geek Gala Monarch Madness at the CC Museum of Science & History is Thursday, September 10 beginning at 5:00 for outreach table set up. Be a part of the first outreach event of the Texas Master Naturalist volunteer season!

We'll have a fun and engaging MAKE 'N TAKE activity about the Life Cycle of a Butterfly using Pasta pieces.

Scan the QR Code
to sign up



Opportunity to volunteer to help this happen.

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Volunteer Opportunities



Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

We're looking for two RV volunteers — either a couple or two individuals — to join our Visitor Services team this October through December.

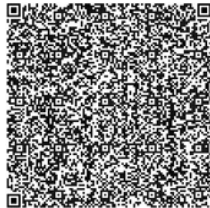
If you love wildlife, enjoy meeting visitors, and want to spend three months on the Texas coast, we'd love to have you!

Commitment: 3 months, with potential to extend up to 6 months

Schedule: 24 hours/week

RV pads available on-site, full hook-ups included

Scan the QR Code
to APPLY ONLINE:



If you have a submission to make,
please send them to:

marakdoemland@gmail.com

Volunteer Opportunity

September 26, 2026

National Public Lands Day Insect BioBlitz

National Park Service - Padre Island National Seashore

Point of Contact:

avery_landreth@partner.nps.gov

Scan the QR Code
to APPLY ONLINE:



Volunteer Opportunity

November 21, 2026



Contact - Chelise.hyatt@scouting.org

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Who Did What in July

by Cindy Frank

List of who did what – July, 2026
(total volunteer hours for month = 952.50)
(total people seen for month = 2645 adults and 2288 youth)

ARK-RM – Neesy Tompkins, Paula Baker, Kathy Cima, Brad Stockman
Blucher Park-RM – Bibi Dalrymple, Sharon Heilman, Sue Barley
CC Museum-PO – Chuck Blend, Randy Bissell
CC Museum-RM – Chuck Blend, Randy Bissell, Katie Heuermann
Citizen Science-FR – Cindy Frank, Carol Singleton, Pat Clark, George Gardiner, Cindy Hanifen
Community Presentations-DO – Randy Bissell
ComPartServ-PO – Mandy Bever, Ron Collier, Chad Huckabee, Christy Blend, Chuck Blend, Carla Haskett
Flour Bluff-PO – Chad Huckabee
Flour Bluff-RM – Cindy Frank, Chad Huckabee, Rick Martin, Nada Martin, Pat Clark
Hazel Bazemore-RM – Chad Huckabee
Mustang Island SP-RM – Randy Bissell
NDP-PO – Phil Woods, Jean Meadors
OBWPNC-FR – Randy Bissell
OBWPNC-PO – Gerry Vahle, Phil Woods
PINS-PO – Patti Baker, Bill Beaman, Denise Beaman, Rick Martin, Nada Martin
PINS-RM – Cindy Frank, Carol Singleton, Phil Woods, Ann Flanagan, Kathy Cima, Brad Stockman, Claude Smith, Suzanne Smith, Bill Beaman, Denise Beaman, Melodi Wells, Jessica Bruyere-England, Cherie Heimann, Emma Hengst, Debbie Plowman
Port A Nature Preserve-RM – Cindy Frank, Ann Flanagan
Public CleanUp-RM – Michele Connolly, Pat Clark, Margaret Cleaves, Ted Cleaves, David Major, Randy Bissell, Kathy Cima, Brad Stockman
STBGNC-DO – Adel Casiano, Carol Singleton
STBGNC-PO – Randy Bissell
STBGNC-RM – Adel Casiano, Margaret Cleaves, Pat Clements, Carol Singleton
TSA-PO – Patti Baker
TSA-RM – Patti Baker
TSC-RM – Patti Baker
UTMSI-DO – Jenny Dailey
UTMSI-PO – Jenny Dailey, Kathy Cima, Brad Stockman, Ann Flanagan
WWF-DO – Randy Bissell

Who Did What in August

by Cindy Frank

List of who did what – August, 2026
(total volunteer hours for month = 931.00)
(total people seen for month = 250 adults and 141 youth)

ARK-RM – Neesy Tompkins, Paula Baker
Blucher Park-RM – Sharon Heilman, Sue Barley, David Major
CC Museum-PO – Chuck Blend
CC Museum-RM – Chuck Blend, Randy Bissell, Katie Heuermann
Citizen Science-FR – Cindy Frank, Carol Singleton, Glenn Goldapp, Randy Bissell, Phoebe Cundiff
Community Presentations-DO – Randy Bissell
Community Service-TG – Bibi Dalrymple
ComPartServ-PO – Mandy Bever, Chuck Blend, Sue Barley, Paula Baker
Flour Bluff-RM – Cindy Frank, Chad Huckabee, Rick Martin, Nada Martin, Pat Clark, Debbie Plowman, Jennifer Pshigoda, Madison Wise
Lake Corpus Christi SP-PO – Mike Wenzel
Mustang Island SP-PO – David Neipert
Mustang Island SP-RM – Debbie Plowman
NDP-PO – Jean Meadors
OBWPNC-FR – Randy Bissell
OBWPNC-PO – Gerry Vahle, Phil Woods
PINS-PO – Patti Baker
PINS-RM – Phil Woods, Ann Flanagan, Kathy Cima, Brad Stockman, Cherie Heimann, Hope Warne, Stephanie Lewis, Margaret Cleaves, David Major, Patti Baker
Port A Nature Preserve-PO – Cindy Frank
Port A Nature Preserve-RM – Cindy Frank, Ann Flanagan
Public CleanUp-RM – Michele Connolly, Pat Clark, Margaret Cleaves, Kathy Cima, Brad Stockman, Paula Baker, Glenn Goldapp, Mike Wenzel, Mara Doemland, Morgan Pyle
STBGNC-RM – Adel Casiano, Margaret Cleaves, Carol Singleton, Ted Cleaves
TSA-RM – Patti Baker
TSC-RM – Patti Baker
UTMSI-PO – Jenny Dailey, Kathy Cima, Brad Stockman, Ann Flanagan, Michele Connolly

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs, activities, education and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunities throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

