



OCTOBER 2020

Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

***** ATTENTION *****

There is no Chapter General Meeting in October due to conflict with the Annual State Meeting.

Once again, this message is concurrent with what looks to be another major hurricane in the Gulf expected to make landfall somewhere along the Northern Gulf Coast. Technically, there are only 53 days left in the Cyclone Season.

Update on the Annual State Meeting

Bob Whitmarsh reports that as of October 5th, 1070 people were registered. Early registration (\$55) closed October 2nd, but late registration (\$65) is available. Also, don't forget about the virtual field sessions. On October 8th, a virtual field session took place at Mercer Botanical Garden. On October 13th, the COT chapter will sponsor two virtual trips: at Flo Hannah Prairie and the Follett's Island Strand Prairie, guided by Mike Lange and Susan Conaty. The State Meeting kicks off at 8:00 AM, October 14th.

The Photo, Art and Media contest closed for entries at midnight on September 30th. I'd like to thank the seven or so COT members who contributed entries. Statewide, there was a total of 251 entries for all categories. Our chapter is hosting this event, and it was admittedly a challenge at first to convert the contests to a virtual format, but it ran smoothly after a couple of weeks. It was nothing but teamwork, and the State has heaped praise on the COT committee.

October Presidents' Meeting Highlights

The Virtual Volunteer Fair link is still available on the State website.

Over 650 members attended the fair on September 2nd.

Return to service requirements pretty much remain the same. Indoor meetings are limited to 50% capacity and/or 50 members max with masks and social distancing required. As always, local regulations supersede TMN directives.

Recertification directives remain the same, but there will be an update made at the State Annual Meeting. I have no idea what the update will include.

The end of year officer and board elections will be held in December and nominations will be taken at the November General Meeting.

Enjoy yourselves at the Annual Meeting and learn all you can.

Be careful, assume responsibility for your actions with all aspects of the COVID-19 virus, and above all, be safe.

Regards,

Bill

P.S. I hope to see y'all soon.



Bill Ahlstrom is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at ahlstrom@tmn.com.

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is coordinated by Texas A&M AgriLIFE Ext. Svce. and Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. TMN programs serve all people without regard to socio-economic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Masthead photo by Charles Jesse Miller Jr at BNWR.

Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
Chapter News – October 2020

REMINDERS

1. **THERE WILL BE NO OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING.**
2. **"See" you at the TMN 21st Annual Meeting, Oct 14-17!**

MEMBERSHIP DATA REPORT by Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Congratulations to those achieving recertification and milestones as of September 30:

Recertification

Marty Cornell Neal McLain Connie Stolte

500 VT Hours Milestone

Larry Kirby Linda Sluis

Impact Data YTD—30 September 2020

2094 Adults 6258 Youth 8352 Total

Hours Totals YTD—30 September 2020¹

8764 Hours VT 1423 Hours AT

¹ September hours: 597 VT; 112 AT

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT by Kathy Pittman, Class of 2019

As a way for members to get to know each other, a brief article focusing on one or more members will be published monthly or bimestrial in the newsletter. **This month's spot lit member is CINDY VINCENT, Class of 2019.**



Photo by P. Romfh

Cindy Vincent grew up in Corpus Christi and has lived in Alvin, Texas, for 28 years. An identical twin, her birthday is July 11th. In the summer of 2019, Cindy retired as an elementary public-school teacher who spent most of her 23-year career teaching fifth grade science, a subject and grade level she absolutely loved. Cindy also enjoyed facilitating an environmental club and garden club at two different schools.

Cindy wanted to become a Master Gardener for many years; however, classes were only offered during school hours. A few months prior to her retirement, Cindy's husband participated in a class with Brazoria County and learned of the Texas Master Naturalist program. Cindy researched the TMN organization and decided COT's program was what she wanted.

According to Cindy, "[Picking] my favorite volunteer activity [with COT] is a challenge. I have learned from and enjoyed every experience. Each activity has excited my curiosity, and I have found it is a great privilege to volunteer with the wise, experienced members of the chapter because one learns so much. If I had to pick one favorite activity, I think it would be DEEP at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge. I volunteered there only a few times, but each was a blast and working with students and nature is perfect."

So far, Cindy's favorite COT memory has been working on her intern project team and continuing to work with the wonderful friends

she's made with team members. However, new memories are made with each volunteer opportunity. Cindy says, "Being a Master Naturalist has made me realize that I know only a minute fraction of what there is to learn about the environment. I am always amazed how much I learn each time I participate in any activity, training, or meeting ... I do know that teaching awareness about taking care of the environment truly excites me and there are so many avenues for this opportunity with TMN."

Other hobbies and interests include canning, gardening, and doing just about anything outside. Cindy also enjoys traveling with her husband to state and national parks where they hike, camp, and enjoy driving the 4x4 trails: "I am just beginning to further my knowledge of birding, which prior to TMN, I really didn't know it was a thing. I always look forward to spending time with family and friends."

Cindy's advice for new interns or members is not to worry about what their niche will be in this organization. It may seem overwhelming at times to see so many members who have a great deal of knowledge in a specific field. There is so much for all members to learn and enjoy, and in time, everyone will find a niche. With only a year under her belt, Cindy is still exploring the possibilities, and that's the fun part. For interns, Cindy recommends having fun, learning, and enjoying this great organization and the knowledge it offers! Soon you will be sharing with others as well.



Riparian Forests Team C

Photo by D. Schaffhausen

Photo by K. Pittman

Near right: Cindy Vincent (second from left) with members of her intern project team and advisor. Far right: Janet Townsend (left) with Cindy at the Camp Mohawk County Park pollinator garden.

FROM THE SPIDER'S WEB

By Melanie Hollenshead, Class of 2019



Female Spiny Orb Weaver with silk egg case. Photo by M. D. Hollenshead.

It is October, and I want to share my very favorite specie of spider with you. These sweet beauties come in fall colors—red, white, yellow and orange. Their abdomens

with black dots and six red or black spines along the edge. The cephalo-thorax is small, black, and partially tucked beneath the hard shell. I am, of course, talking about *Gasterancantha cancriformis*, the **Spiny Orb Weaver**.

These gentle spiders are 5-10 mm across and build orb webs about two feet in diameter in low branches of trees and shrubs. Females can be found in the center of the web during the day. Their hard shell and spines are protection against predation from birds.

Males are very small and are seldom seen.

I was fortunate to have one of these spiders in my care for a few weeks. A few days after capture, she presented me with an egg case. Initially shocked to see that her silk for the egg case was chartreuse green, when I thought about her natural habitat, it made sense. She would normally lay her eggs beneath a leaf. This silk was the perfect camouflage for her eggs.

The Spiny Orb Weaver seldom bites. I have moved many of them to safer areas in my sister's yard. All of them gently walked on my hand without threat postures or bites. I even hand fed mealworm guts to my captive.

Spiny Orb Weavers are common spiders in Brazoria County and in the southern United States. It is not uncommon to find numerous webs in your garden or around the outside of your home. Enjoy the free pest control and fall decoration of these remarkable spiders!



White Spiny Orb Weaver



Orange Spiny Orb Weaver



Underside of Spiny Orb Weaver showing legs and spinnerets. Above photos by L. T. Jeffers.

News from GCBO



- **Bird Banding** is closed to the public in October
- **Saturday Family Bird Days** is canceled
- **GCBO Headquarters and Plant Nursery** are still NOT open to the public, but trails are open during regular hours and our nursery is on our online store
- **Brew on the Bayou** has been postponed until March 27, 2021
- **Raptor ID Weekend** is virtual this year. Info at <https://www.gcbo.org/>

CLASS OF 2020 TACKLES WETLANDS, INSECTS, PLANTS ON FIELD TRIPS

With cloudless blue skies, a light breeze, and some uninvited mosquitos at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, the COT New Class field trip on September 28 was a perfect day to learn about terrestrial and aquatic insects and plants. Ed Barrios led the insect portion of the trip, assisted by Lisa Myers. Interns scooped up and examined freshwater aquatic insects; swept for terrestrial insects; and finally, observed specimens via

a projecting microscope in the Discovery Center. Afterwards, botanist Thomas Adams of USFWS led interns on a tour of the refuge's many native and invasive plants.

Earlier in the month, Brazoria County Parks Department's Mike Mullenweg, a COT member, led the interns' wetlands fieldtrip, which included seining and ghost crab hunting. Photos by Mary Schwartz.

Insects



Plants

Wetlands



OUT IN NATURE IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC—PART III

John Boettiger captured this beautiful, early-fall sunrise, below, while visiting the Texas Hill Country. The buck in the other photo was taken via a wireless AT&T cellular game camera (over 250 miles from Lake Jackson). John says this buck is well past his prime (vs photos from 2019); had a better “rack” last fall; and likely weighed 15 to 20 pounds less.



Ed Barrios is having fun trying out his new camera—an R5 and RF100-500 with 1.4 multiplier.



The mosquitos were so dense at GCBO's Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary on October 2 that **Lisa Myers** and her husband fled to the observation tower for this picture.



A Quintana Beach County Park beach cleanup on September 26 was organized and attended by **Jimmy and Luanne Salinas** with new class interns: Eric Schaefer, Mika Mendoza, Rain Moises, Karen Moises, Angela Griffin and her husband, Steve Baker, and Kathy Pittman. Data was entered in Clean Swell and the Brazoria County Parks Department assisted by supplying trash bags and picking up filled bags.

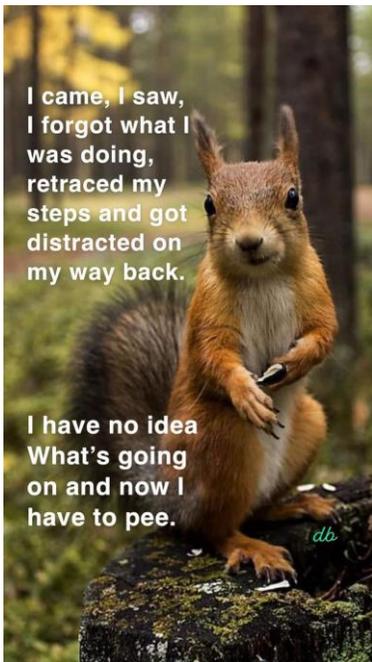
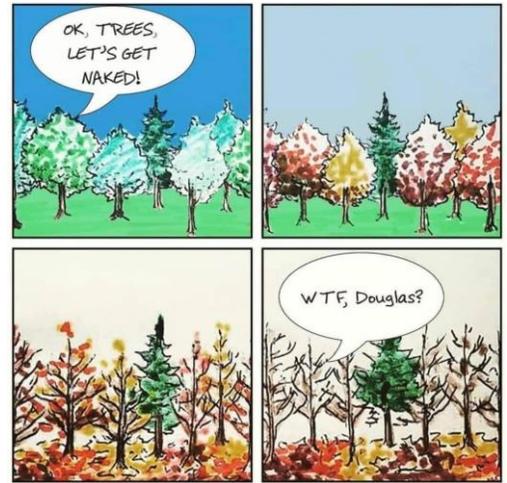
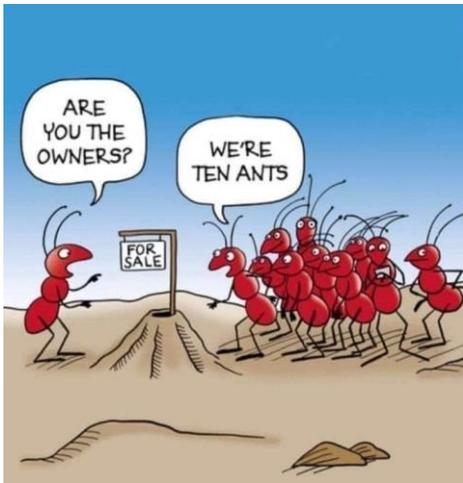


Kathy Pittman checked on the pollinator garden at Camp Mohawk County Park on August 24 and caught the giant milkweed starting to bloom and lots of bees and monarchs on the salvia.

A NOTE OF NATURE LEVITY



In many places it is now unlawful to play Yahtzee with squirrels.



Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

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TMN-COT Chapter list

- Instructions <https://txmn.org/tmncot/organization/email-lists/>
- Send messages to TMN-COT@googlegroups.com
- Message Archive <http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail>
- All messages are sent immediately.

State Master Naturalist list

- Instructions <http://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmn-listserv/>
- Subscribe listserv@listserv.tamu.edu
- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator.

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