

Chapter News

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." ~ Audrey Hepburn

Spring is almost here according to the calendar or already here if you look at what's growing and blooming all around us. Trees are turning a faint green; bluebonnets and paintbrushes are springing up; there are baby calves in the pasture; cranes in the rice fields; baby rabbits in the garden; and almost every weekend there is a plant sale somewhere!

This is my favorite time of year. My hands stay stained with soil for several weeks at a time. I've started all my vegetables, pruned my trees, and planted many kinds of wildflower seeds. I'll keep my fingers crossed that some of these will come up so that I can transfer them to the ground. It's a LOT of work, and it's easy to get stressed out, but when I get into it, gardening is a great, mind-calming exercise to escape from any worries. We all need some sort of activity to "get away" and rejuvenate.

We have MANY volunteer activities for you to participate in over the next few months. There is Nature Day at Sea Center, Migration Celebration at San Bernard NWR, Spring Fling at Quintana, Spring Break Open House at Brazoria NWR, Wings over Surfside, DEEP sessions at Brazoria NWR, and on and on!! I hope that at least ONE (or two or three) of these will appeal to each of you

and that you will volunteer at several! These are all wonderful opportunities for us to share our knowledge and get people engaged with the outdoor treasures we have here in Brazoria County.

Many thanks to Tom Morris for organizing a very successful Whooping Crane trip to the Rockport-Fulton area. While I didn't get to go on the boat ride after all, I heard that the group saw several cranes and other species of birds. We will have many migratory birds coming through our area over the next several weeks, so get out and see them!

Our 2023 Intern program is off to a great start with several enrichment opportunities also available to current members. We have 11 interns and one person transferring membership from the San Antonio area. Please be sure to say hello and welcome these new folks when you see them at a volunteer event or monthly meeting.

Our meeting this month will be at 7 pm on Wednesday, March 8th. Mickey and the social committee will have a "Pi/Pie" trivia contest in honor of

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Kathy Pittman is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. She can be reached at pittman@tmn-cot.org.



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The Texas Master Naturalist program is coordinated by Texas A&M AgriLIFE Ext. Svce. & Texas Parks and Wildlife 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.

NOTICES

Annual dues should be paid by the end of March. Pay on-line at <https://txmn.org/tmncot/> or contact dhsabathier@att.net

Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
Chapter News – March 2023

Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter General Meeting and Advanced Training

Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 7 P.M.

at Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service, Angleton TX, and via email invite to the
Extension Service's Microsoft Teams Meeting license

6:30 PM	Social Time
7:00 PM – 7:15 PM	Welcome and Volunteer Report
7:15 PM – 8:15 PM	Advanced Training Speaker: Randy Bissell Topic: "The 10 Biggest Events in Texas Geological History (and a Few Little Ones)" <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>
8:30 PM – 9:00 PM	General Membership Meeting <i>[Hours for Volunteer Time (VT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>



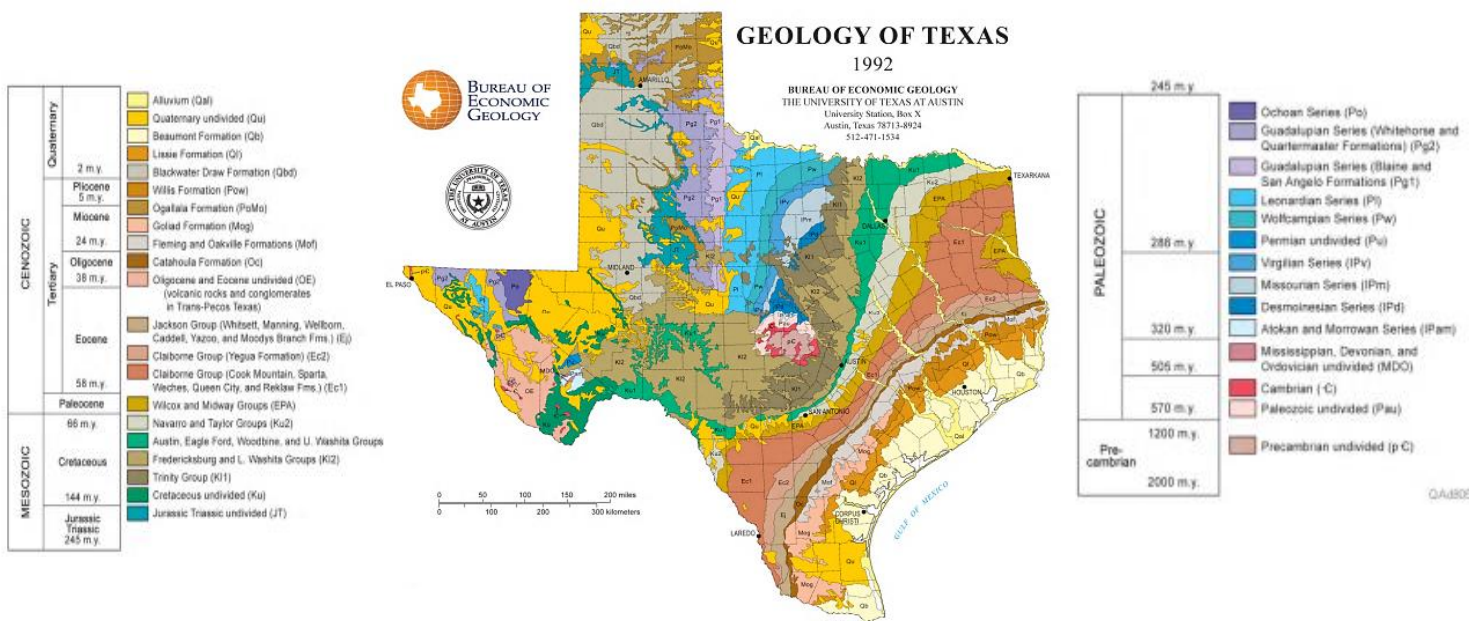
Randy Bissell

Randy Bissell is Geoscience Advisor to Headington Energy Partners, LLC, in Corpus Christi, Texas. He is assigned to acquire, explore, support, and develop natural gas prospects on major ranches in deep South Texas using advanced geological and geophysical techniques.

Randy holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Master of Science from Oklahoma State University.

Today, with nearly 40 years' experience working around the world for Exxon and South Texas for Headington, he devotes his field time to the landscape of South Texas as a Texas Master Naturalist new-member and advanced-training instructor.

Randy has taught Earth History as an adjunct professor at TAMUCC, and he regularly lectures at local colleges and within his community on topics related to South Texas geology, advanced techniques for exploration, and geoscience careers.



MEMBERSHIP DATA REPORT by Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Congratulations to the following members achieving certifications and milestones as of February 28, 2023.

2023 Recertifications since January 31

Melanie Hollenshead	Larry Peterson
Lisabeth Martinez	Kathy Pittman
Lisa Myers	Regina Tippet

250 Hours Milestone

Karen Mosis

1000 Hours Milestone

Debbie Nance

Hours Totals YTD—February 28, 2023

2191 Hours VT 323 Hours AT

* February only: 942 VT and 254 AT Hours

Impact Data YTD—February 28, 2023

78 Adults 85 Youth 153 Total

At the February 8 General Meeting, John Boettiger (from far left) congratulated Kathy Pittman (1,000 volunteer hours), Barbara Yoder (250 hours), Amanda Gabehart (2023 recertification), and Malcolm Mosis (250 hours). Not pictured: Kim Richardson (2,500 hours). Photo from TMN-COT Facebook page.



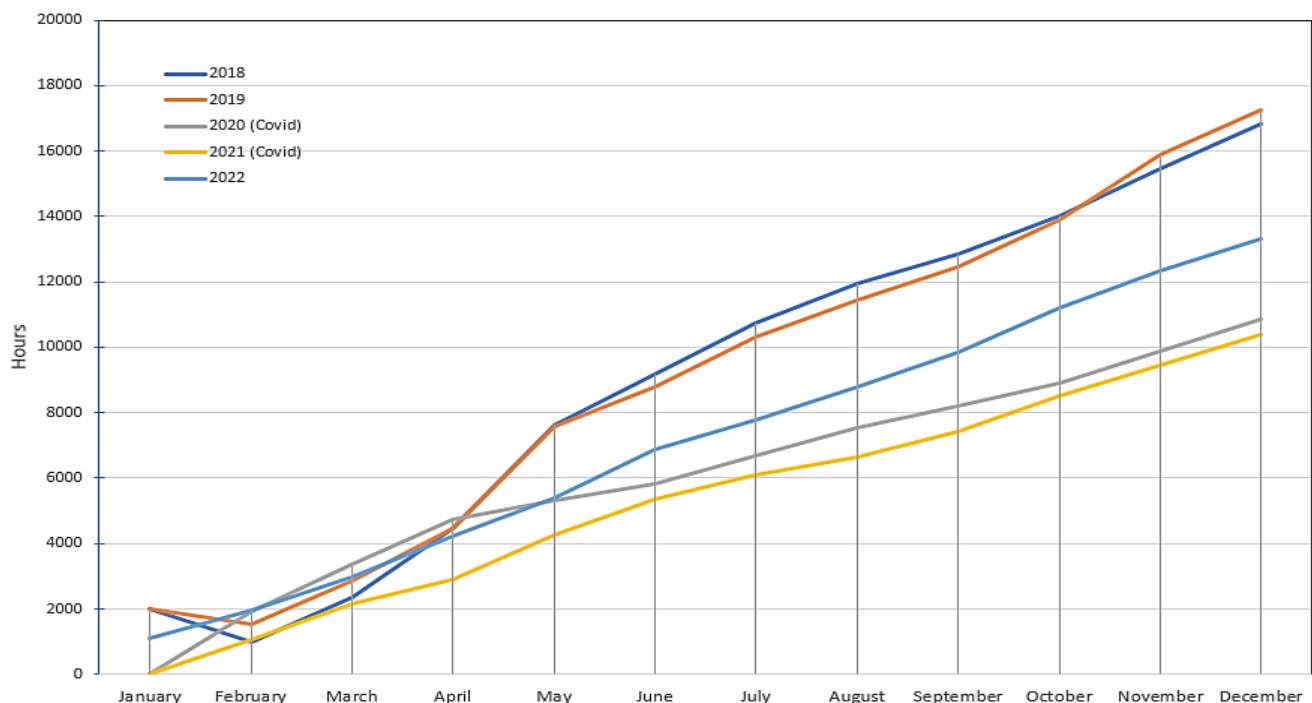
2022 Hours Totals

13,681 Hours VT 1,937 Hours AT

2022 Impact Data YTD

11,360 Adults 24,816 Youth 36,176 Total

Cumulative VT

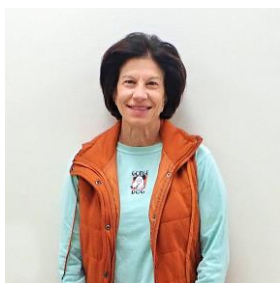


MEET COT's SPRING 2023 NEW MEMBER CLASS



Barbara Whaley

I have been retired for three years and have done a few volunteer hours at Houston SPCA. While working at Alvin ISD, I volunteered for job fairs, book fairs, etc. I volunteered extensively when my kids were in school, and I was a band parent. I worked for Alvin ISD in its Human Resources Dept. as secretary to the director for eight years. Prior to that, I was a teacher's aide for five years. I'm interested in learning about our natural resources, nature in general, and how to protect our surroundings. I have many years of secretarial skills, am very organized and willing to help wherever needed.



Pam Penn

I was born in Illinois but came to Texas as quickly as I could. My family moved here when I was three years old. I live in Bellaire and am a physical therapist who works part time. I heard about the Master Naturalist program while scrolling on Facebook. I love the beauty and wonder of nature.... how plants and animals grow and adapt to their surroundings... the simple sound of a bird chirping and the

roar of the ocean waves. I am excited to learn about parts of nature I am not familiar with and even critters I have previously stayed away from—for example, spiders!

Outside of work, I enjoy tennis and have recently taken up pickleball. My husband and I enjoy hiking and biking. We have a dog named Benny who loves to explore with us.



Juli Martin

Although I am a 17-year resident of Angleton, I originally hail from "all over" as my dad was in the Air Force. After retiring, he became an Earth Science teacher, which led to my love of science and nature. I teach elementary music at Northside Elementary STEAM school in Angleton, and I am the coach of the school's STEAM Ambassador club. My students have presented at conferences across the state including CAST, the state science conference. My culminating degree is an Education Specialist in STEM Leadership.

My interests include aquatic sports such as swimming, canoeing and paddle boarding, and I am a lifeguard instructor for the Boy Scouts. I also teach multiple courses for the Red Cross, including Wilderness First Aid. Ornithology is my favorite topic in the Master Naturalist program. I was fortunate to have attended educator training at the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology in the Summer of 2019 and am looking forward to going to the Adirondacks this

summer for their 2023 program. Joining TMN is something I have wanted to do for a long time.



Pamela Lewis

I work for RB Stewart as the night shift Lead Dispatcher. My company delivers fuel to Buc-ee's. I became a TMN in the Alamo Area Chapter in 2017 then transferred to Mid-coast Chapter in May of 2020. When I received a promotion at work, I moved to Oyster Creek. Due to some health issues and COVID I went inactive with TMN. In December of 2022, I was at Padre Island National Seashore doing some deep soul searching as to what I was missing in my life. At the Mid-coast Chapter, my favorite opportunities were sea turtle patrol, beach clean-up, nurdle patrol, and birds. My favorite opportunities at Alamo Area included birds, trash pick-up and wildlife rescue. As I looked out across the beach and the ocean, I knew what was missing... I HAD to go back to TMN and help protect our natural resources because without nature, I am just an empty vessel wandering around aimlessly...



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MEET COT's SPRING 2023 NEW MEMBER CLASS Continued



Stephanie Kaup

My husband and I have been talking about retirement and moving from Pearland to East Texas. We are a few decades from that transition, but planning takes time. In my career as an architect and master planner, my passion is design, and I like to be thorough. We have an opportunity to manage family land in the future, so naturally I started research in the best ways to utilize it. Should it be maintained, developed, or improved in some way to encourage wildlife? Through a stray research of bee keeping, quail population, and native trees, I stumbled onto the TMN website and saw value in working at a local level that could impact my work with clients now and help me make responsible decisions for my family's little patch of Texas. I have a Sam Houston Bearkat daughter studying to become a teacher and a teenage son who is a true outdoorsman.

Chris Tobola

Photo and bio not yet available.



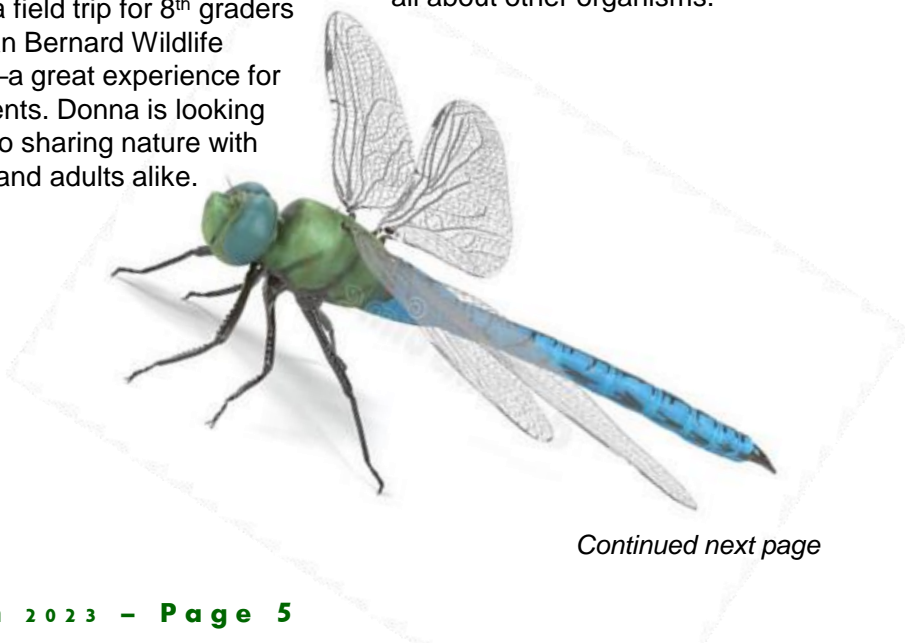
Donna Gregurek

Donna has a degree in History from the University of Houston, Clear Lake, with special coursework in Education and Computer Science. She worked for Sweeny ISD as a computer technician, teacher, and Director of Technology Services, and she retired in 2016. Donna and her husband love to travel. Their first big trip after retirement was via RV to Alaska, but her favorite camping destinations are right here in Texas. Donna lives on 25 acres with her husband, two dogs, four miniature horses, one mini donkey, a few chickens and guineas. She loves gardening and being outdoors with her family. She has three grown sons and seven grandchildren. Hiking, biking, and beach combing are some favorite activities. Bird watching is a pastime at home and anywhere. While still teaching, she wrote a grant that paid for a field trip for 8th graders to the San Bernard Wildlife Refuge—a great experience for the students. Donna is looking forward to sharing nature with children and adults alike.



Emily Matula

I currently live in Pearland in the Shadow Creek area, and I am an extravehicular activity (spacewalk) flight controller/instructor at NASA. I came to COT after I saw a colleague's license plate with the dragonfly on it and looked up what it meant. My grad school research involved using algae for human spaceflight applications, so I grew to love the green stuff. Currently, I am a citizen scientist for the NOAA Phytoplankton Monitoring Network for which I characterize local algae species to watch for harmful algal blooms. When I was in grad school, I got the awesome opportunity to collect algae from the glacial-fed streams in Taylor Valleys of Antarctica for ecological monitoring. This furthered my appreciation of the resilience of these photoautotrophs. I really like water systems and algae, so I am looking forward to bringing my passion to this group and to learn all about other organisms.



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MEET COT's SPRING 2023 NEW MEMBER CLASS Continued



Marlon Kirk Nation

I live in Pearland. I'm a retiree from the Air Force and Texas Air National Guard and am currently employed as an Adjunct History Professor at San Jacinto College. I happened upon the program and chapter while looking at the Texas A&M AgriLIFE extension website. As a part of my current profession, I have studied the lives of famous men who are most notable for their achievements as presidents and philosophers. However, another side their lives that is rarely mentioned is their affinity for nature. Nature has much to teach us and show us, and that inspired me to become a Master Naturalist... To study and enjoy the benefits of nature and to act as her custodian... To learn and to teach others... To "query the ant and listen to the owl and to see what the sea has to say." I'm concerned about sustainability, preservation, and management of natural resources. However, I'm a novice with a lot of passion, and I'm going to rely on that passion to move me to an area of specialization among the many areas available. For now, I'm excited to get started.

My other interests are photography, writing and speaking. So, this is a new area for me, but I feel like it's been calling for a long time. Nature's beauty and bounty have always been there. Unfortunately, I've taken her for granted, never stopping to look and listen. With this training, I hope to develop

and foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of the natural world and encourage others to do the same. I believe that we are but temporary caretakers of natural resources that can span generations if properly managed. Nature is resilient but not invincible, so we must be good stewards and encourage and educate those coming behind us to do likewise.



Kim Calhoun

Hello everyone. I live in the small town of Liverpool, Texas. I am lucky enough to also work for the city as a water and court clerk. I have loved the outdoors since I was a little kid. This training class is a great opportunity to learn more about something I love. I enjoy anything outdoors, whether it's tending to my little garden or taking pictures of nature. I can't wait to see where this road takes me.



Charles Davenport

I moved to Lake Jackson from Denton. I worked in the facilities department for the University of North Texas. Before that, I spent decades in commercial/industrial construction and engineering design. I moved back to the coastal area to join the Brazoria County Parks Department. My Pa was a sailor, and I worked as a long-shoreman, on offshore oilfields, and as sailor, so I feel like I've come back home. My skills include electrical, plumbing, carpentry, millwork, and metal work. As for special interests, my family and I enjoy camping, backpacking, hiking, hunting, fishing, surfing, playing at the beach, and birding. I became interested in Master Naturalists as I've benefitted from their volunteer activities in our outdoor endeavors. Additionally, I've got a family member who is a TMN and have enjoyed hearing her talk about her participation.



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MEET COT's SPRING 2023 NEW MEMBER CLASS



Brian Hanson

A longtime resident of Sweeny, I have been a Texan for 50 years. I am married to COT member Paula Hanson. I'm a mechanical engineer by education with most of my career spent as a project controls engineer in the oil/gas/ petrochemical industry.

I found out about Master Naturalists and the intern training through Paula but hadn't had the opportunity to become certified until now as I'm still working full time. I've had a lifetime interest in outdoor activities such as swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, camping, backpacking, hiking, rock climbing and rappelling, and just generally enjoying being out in nature. Recently acquired interests include kayaking, birding, exploring our local wealth in wildlife refuges, and helping at Sea Center Texas. We're planning for my retirement in the relatively near future, and this class schedule accommodates working folks and gives me the opportunity to pursue a deeper understanding of the natural world all around us.

Something special about me: I'm a beekeeper without portfolio (no beehives at present, lol).

Chastity Keulemans *(no photo)*

I am excited to become a Master Naturalist! I first heard about the program during college from an awesome anatomy and physiology professor. I remember thinking what a great opportunity it would be to join some day.

I am a SPED teacher at Barrow Elementary in Brazoria. I absolutely love my job on a campus of my dreams, which has allowed me to grow as an educator and give me the opportunity to sponsor all kinds of clubs for my students. I have had the pleasure of starting a chess club and Barrow Bots, a Lego robotics team. Our team made it to regionals where we placed second in core values—not bad for rookies!

I am truly a nerd at heart and am proud of it! I have always loved science and count it a favorite hobby. I have a desire to learn and am always excited to try new things. I love to travel and enjoy visiting interesting places and learning about different cultures and their history. I also love trying all the delicious food! I have a beautiful daughter, Andy, who is attending college right now, so I am what is considered an “empty nester” and miss her so much!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Continued

Pi" Day on March 14th. It should be fun. Our featured speaker is **Randy Bissell**, Texas Professional Geologist and Texas Master Naturalist. Randy will present "**The 10 Biggest Events in Texas' Geological History (and a Few Little Ones)**". Randy will also present to our intern class in the next week or so, and we are very happy that he agreed to present twice. In April, **Jordan Kieffer**, our TPWD advisor from Sea Center Texas, will talk about Interpretation, and Jimmy Salinas has interesting speakers lined up for the next few months, so come listen and learn something new.

If you have not yet paid your annual dues, please do so as soon as possible. To date, about 70 members have paid, with another 50 to go. For \$25 a year, you get at least 11 hours of training opportunities and even more opportunities to volunteer alongside like-minded

people. WHAT A DEAL!! Current **2023** interns have paid their dues as part of the course fee. Interns from **2022** need to pay dues for 2023. And please, if anyone has an issue with the expense, contact me or Don and we will work with you on a resolution.

Again, there are many events where YOUR help is needed this spring and into the summer. I hope we will see many of you out with the public.

Kathy Pittman

*"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, But Nature more."*

~ from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* by Lord Byron

MEMBERS "OUT STANDING" IN THE FIELD



The Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge's Information Pavilion got a new coat of paint on February 10 and 11 thanks to coordination by Friends of BWR's Dick Schaffhausen and help from COT's David Dungan, Brenda Stitt, and (not pictured) Mike Hampy and Kate Harris.

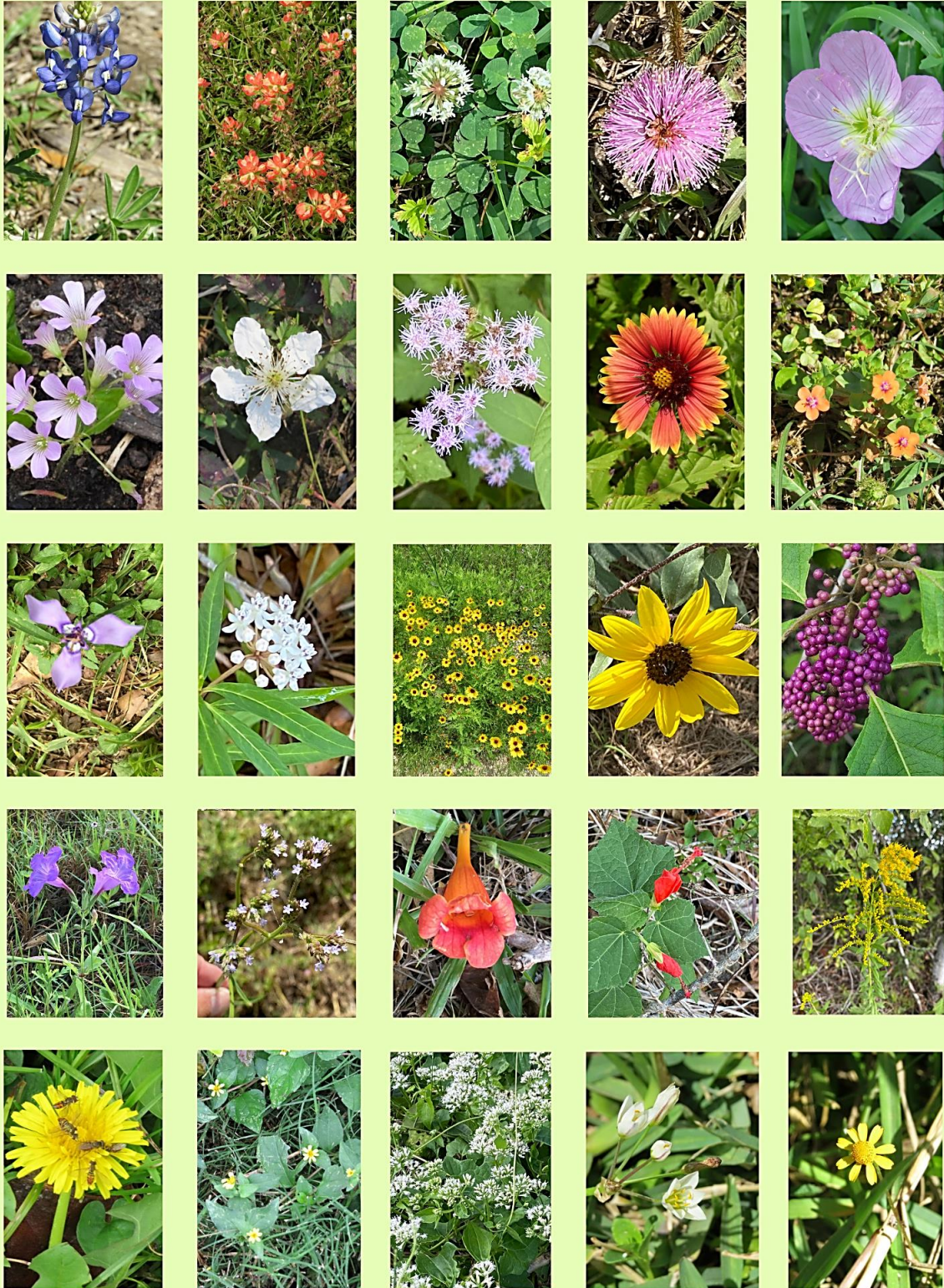


The Biennial COT Whooping Crane Trip coordinated by Tom Morris resumed on February 15 after a COVID hiatus. Attendees were rewarded with 11+ whooper sightings and other species including the common loon.



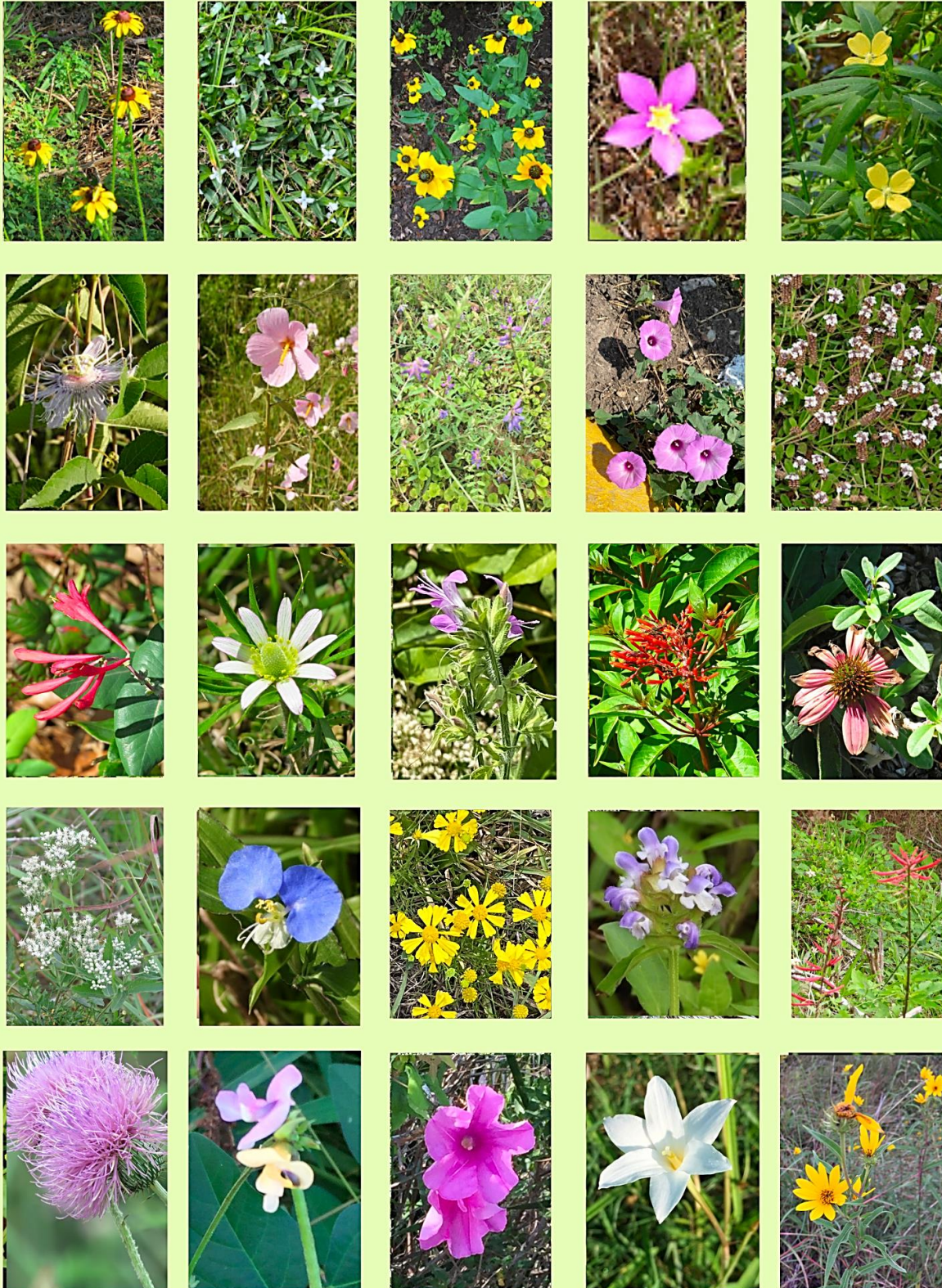
BRAZORIA COUNTY WILDFLOWERS—TEST YOURSELF (Page 1 of 2)

Photographed, Compiled and Identified by Deb Nance



Row 1: Texas Bluebonnet; Texas Paintbrush; White Clover; Sunshine Mimosa; Pinkladies.
 Row 2: Largeflower Pink-Sorrel; Southern Dewberry; Blue Mistflower; Indian Blanket; Scarlet Pimpernel.
 Row 3: Prairie Nymph; Aquatic Milkweed; Plains Coreopsis; Common Sunflower; American Beautyberry.
 Row 4: Tiny Bluet; Brazilian Vervain; American Trumpet Vine; Turk's Cap; Tall Goldenrod.
 Row 5: Common Dandelion; Straggler Daisy; Climbing Hempvine; Crowpoison; Oppositeleaf Spotflower.

BRAZORIA COUNTY WILDFLOWERS—TEST YOURSELF (Page 2 of 2)



Row 1: Black-eyed Susan, Buttonweed, Clasping Coneflower, Meadow Pink, Mexican Primrose-Willow.
 Row 2: Purple Passionflower, Saltmarsh Mallow, Slender Vetch, Tievine, Turkey Tangle Frogfruit.
 Row 3: Coral Honeysuckle, Tenpetal Anemone, False Mint, Firebush, Purple Coneflower.
 Row 4: Late Boneset, Whitemouth Dayflower, Butterweed, Common Selfheal, Coral Bean.
 Row 5: Texas Thistle, Trailing Fuzzy-Bean, Saltmarsh Morning-Glory, Traub's Rain-Lily, Maximilian Sunflower.

BOOK REVIEW OF *THE GENIUS OF BIRDS* by Madeleine K. Barnes

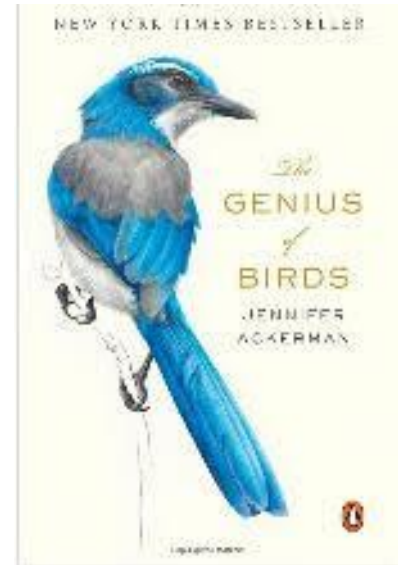
Printed with permission of the reviewer, Madeleine K. Barnes of TMN Galveston Bay Area Chapter for its Heritage Book Study group

You may or may not be an avid “birder,” but you will be intrigued by these amazing creatures with which we share the world. You may have identified a few or many species using what is referred to as “field marks” or distinctive markings, colors, and highlights. If you are a beginning birder, you may read or hear from experts that while these are very helpful, the size, shape, and the behavior of birds can help distinguish and identify birds even more. *The Genius of Birds* addresses aspects of bird behavior.

Some interesting facts about this book: It has been translated into 25 languages; was a *New York Times* bestseller; was named one of the 10 best nonfiction books by *The Wall Street Journal* and a Best Science Book of 2016 by *National Public Radio*’s “Science Friday”; and a Best Book of the Year by *The Spectator* and *The National Post*; and a Nature Book of the Year by *The London Sunday Times*. Author Jennifer Ackerman has been writing about science, nature, and health/human biology for over 30 years, has written several other books, and her work has appeared in numerous publications.

Ackerman’s writing focusses on sharing the latest scientific studies and understanding about bird intelligence. Yes, that could be dry reading, but she uses her own insight, humor, and anecdotes to keep it readable and interesting. She explains the complexity and species adaptations to help us learn and appreciate the smaller-sized, but no less amazing “bird brains” that are in our backyards and neighborhoods.

How do birds learn? Via a combination of instinct and knowledge or learning through trial and error? Do bird brains function differently in different species? The other part to this question is the reason why—to be more attractive to a mate, to be more successful in securing food, or by outwitting a predator and surviving? She explores how birds share learning and mentor each other. Some have developed techniques for shaping and using tools to secure food or build nests. Of note is the chapter about bird species learning to sing through tutoring and mimicry, producing lengthy and complex songs and sounds while repeating them without error over and over. Are you aware that bird species have regional dialects as well? This was news to me.



Perhaps you are curious as to why a bird would build an elaborate bower and decorate it to entice and impress a female and how this relates to species survival? What does song complexity and the intense effort to perform it flawlessly have to do with being a more attractive mate and better parent? Would you be interested to know more about how birds successfully migrate long distances, construct maps, and perform navigation, given their brain size?

You should add this book to the top of your reading list, and I hope I haven’t given away too much that you may learn for yourself that birds are smarter than we perceive.

Ackerman includes the following quote from Einstein: “As a human being, one has been endowed with just enough intelligence to be able to see how utterly inadequate that intelligence is when confronted with what exists.”

Once you read this book, you will never again look at birds in the same way.

Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

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Master Naturalist Email Lists

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.

Chapter News is published monthly on Monday before the General Meeting by the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Submissions are welcome; submission deadline is 5:00 PM on Thursday before the General Meeting. Send submissions by email to *Chapter News* Editor at news@tmn-cot.org. Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.