



Photo by Luanne Salinas



May 2024

# Chapter News

**The May 8 General Meeting will be a hybrid:** attend in person at the Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service, 21017 County Road 171, Angleton, TX, or virtually via e-mail invite. Visitors and guests are welcome.

5:30 – 6:00 p.m.	<b>Social Time and Refreshments</b> (in person)
6:00 – 6:15 p.m.	<b>Welcome, Awards and Outreach</b>
6:15 – 7:15 .m.	<b>Advanced Training Speaker:</b> Kati L. Krouse will speak about black bears in East Texas and how BEARS Etc. is helping.  <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>
7:30 – 8:00 p.m.	<b>General Membership Meeting</b> <i>[Hours for Volunteer Time (VT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>



Kati L. Krouse is the Executive Director of BEARS Etc., a permanent, community-based, self-sustainable refuge for displaced exotic and wild animals, which she and her husband founded (<https://bearsetc.org>). She has been passionate about animals and their wellbeing her entire life. She is also a fifth-generation farmer and is a certified Master Gardener.

She went to Veterinary Technology School at Purdue University where she minored in Wildlife Management and Natural Resources and tracked wildlife and exotics. She lives in Montgomery and sits on the board as Chair of the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce, is a diplomat for the Conroe/Lake Conroe Chamber of Commerce, Vice President of the Texas Black Bear Alliance, and sits on the Advocacy Committee for the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance.

## REMINDERS

**Migration Celebration**, April 27 - 28, 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. **Volunteers are needed.** Contact Barbara Whaley, Volunteer Coordinator, for more information or to sign up ([babswhaley@gmail.com](mailto:babswhaley@gmail.com)).

**Beach Sweep, Quintana Jetties** – Monday, May 6 (weather permitting), 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.; contact Jimmy or Luanne Salinas.

**DEEP** – May 14 and 16, 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.; contact Ed Barrios.

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<https://facebook.com/TMN.COT>

Website <https://txmn.org/tmncot/>

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is coordinated by Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

TMN programs serve all people without regard to socio-economic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Masthead image by Charles Jesse Miller Jr., in Oyster Creek.

Texas Master Naturalist Program  
Cradle of Texas Chapter  
Chapter News – May 2024

## President's Message

***"We have many years to eat and sleep, but how many years do we have to make a difference in the lives of others? That's the highest calling any of us can have: Living our life so as to intentionally add value to others. But to do this, we have to make ourselves more valuable. We have to keep learning, growing, developing as leaders and taking responsibility for being the change we want to see in the world."*** ~ — John C. Maxwell



April is National Volunteer Month in the United States. I can't thank our Chapter members enough, each of you, for all that you do! We have the opportunity and responsibility as volunteers to make others' lives better, through everything that we do. Whether we are educating the public, or making areas accessible to all, or cleaning up after those who ignorantly leave signs of their presence in our parks, **WE ARE IMPROVING** the lives of others. You may not see it directly but know that YOU are the most important factor in the improvement equation. We absolutely must do all that we can and that starts with believing in what we CAN do, and not dwelling on what we

CAN'T do. We keep learning, we keep increasing our knowledge and we put it to work. **You are priceless and don't ever forget it!**

Make sure to put **our Annual AT Day** on your calendar for Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup>, as well as the **Nothing pre-event** on Thursday June 13<sup>th</sup> at Brazos Woods. Both days will be informative and a lot of fun. Lunch will be provided, and other chapters will be invited if space allows. We will also have a display contest (2 prizes to be awarded) and "home grown" native plants will be offered as door prizes. Please be sure to sign up starting May 1<sup>st</sup>. Watch your email and the website for details!

We have a bit of a breather on volunteer activities in May, with the summer Library series ramping up in June and July. We need LOTS of hands across the county to make these sessions successful, so please help if you can. Go to the website calendar for all events, and **please email Ruby Lewis at [rublewis77515@ymail.com](mailto:rublewis77515@ymail.com) if you can help.** Also, there are two remaining DEEP sessions in May. If you can assist as a sub, **please email Ed Barrios at [ed77566@comcast.net](mailto:ed77566@comcast.net) to sign up.**

Training for **the Bat Monitoring project** is underway, and monitors will start being deployed over the next 2 months. We are excited to be the "guinea pigs" for our State efforts. Craig Hensley from TPWD, our April AT speaker, led a training session on deploying the sound monitors with a group of about 15 members. Kudos to **Mickey Dufilho** for taking the lead in bringing this project to the Chapter. It will be interesting to learn what bat species might be in our areas.

Our **Spring 2024 intern class** celebrated their graduation on Wednesday April 17<sup>th</sup> with an evening tour of Nash Prairie. I couldn't have picked a more fitting setting, complete with a tarantula, a snake, beautiful plants and few to no mosquitos. Congratulations to this fun, engaging and energized group of new members! Please welcome them to our meetings and events. I know you will enjoy working with them. They are a wonderful addition to our ranks! Thank you, **Susan Conaty**, for your inspiring words about your TMN journey, and MANY, MANY thanks to **Melanie Hollenshead** and the entire Training Team for a job well done!!

**Please plan to attend our next Chapter meeting on Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm.** The work on the roof and HVAC units should be done. BRING A FRIEND!!!

Reminder - if you need a ride or can give a ride, send a note to the Chapter members at [tmn-cot@googlegroups.com](mailto:tmn-cot@googlegroups.com).

Thank you for all you do for our area, and see you soon, OUTSIDE!!!!

Kathy Pittman

***Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach.*** -Clarissa Pinkola Estes

**VOLUNTEER HOURS, CERTIFICATIONS & MILESTONES - John Boettiger**



**Certification**

Anna Loonam

**Recertifications**

Dave Brandes  
Mickey Dufilho  
Amanda Gabehart  
Anna Loonam

Karen Mosis  
Debbie Nance  
Larry Peterson  
Mary Schwartz

Regina Tippett  
Janet Townsend  
Barbara Whaley

**Milestones**

**Barbara Whaley  
500 Hours!!**



Pictured L to Right: Kathy Pittman, Barbara Whaley & John Boettiger



Pictured L to Right (back): Kathy Pittman, Regina Tippett, Janet Townsend, Melanie Hollenshead, Karen Mosis, John Boettiger, Debbie Nance, Angela Griffin & Oron Atkins (front) Barbara Whaley, Mickey Dufilho, Dave Brandes & Mary Schwartz

**Congratulations to all !!!**

**IMPACT DATA REPORT – MARCH \***

- Dave Brandes, Data Manager



Photos by Dick Schaffhausen

	March	YTD
Hours:		
VT	1,030	3,246
AT	<u>140</u>	<u>645</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>3,891</b>
Impact Data		
Adults	736	921
Youth	<u>928</u>	<u>2,087</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,664</b>	<b>3,008</b>

\* data not considered final until mid-May

## Entomology Corner: Roly-Polies – The Beneficial Decomposer

by Barbara Whaley

The roly-poly, or pill bug, looks just like an insect, but is a terrestrial crustacean, having adapted to living completely on land over the past 200 and 60 million years ago. There's little research as to why the species abandoned water, and that has been inconclusive. Oval shaped, with a hard outer shell, these creatures are best known for their ability to roll themselves into a perfectly shaped ball when threatened. Native to the Mediterranean, roly-polies can be found in nearly all temperate ecosystems worldwide.

### Fun Facts

- Common Name: Roly-poly or pill bug
- Scientific Name: *Armadillidium vulgare*
- Average Lifespan in the Wild: 1.5 years
- Current Population: Unknown



ArisSu/Getty Images

Officially called pill bugs, they're also known as doodle bugs, wood shrimp, potato bug and woodlice. The scientific name of the most common species is *Armadillidium vulgare*. They're more closely related to lobsters, crabs, and shrimp than to beetles or butterflies. They even taste like shellfish, if cooked properly, hence the name, wood shrimp. These creatures range from one-quarter inch to one half-inch (1/4 – 1/2") in length and have segmented bodies and seven (7) sets of legs.

Just like other crustaceans, female pill bugs have a brood pouch—called a marsupium—on their underside. Females carry their eggs in the pouch for two to three (2-3) months until they hatch. Even after hatching, young pill bugs may return to the pouch and continue to grow and be nourished through their mother's marsupial fluid before heading out into the world. Sometimes roly-polies are half-pink because they are arthropods, and they molt their hard exoskeletons as they grow. Since the roly-poly's shell is in two (2) parts, the back half falls off first and the front half falls off several days later. If you find one that is half pink, it means it has recently molted the first half of its exoskeleton.

Pill bugs breathe with gills, like their ancestors, that have been modified to work in air. They are not ideal on land because they can dry out. To preserve moisture and avoid desiccation, pill bugs are active at night and spend daylight hours in wet, damp areas under things like logs, mulch and stones, where they can roll into a ball to protect any moisture they have on their gills or when disturbed or frightened. This visually delightful defense mechanism is called conglobation.

They have a high tolerance for ammonia gas, so don't urinate, but excrete waste fluids through their shells. As for solid waste, their diet includes self-coprophagy (eating their own feces), which allows them to obtain nutrients they may have missed in the first digestive cycle. When it comes to drinking, roly-polies either drink from their mouths like most creatures, or use tube-shaped structures that jut out of their rear ends.

Pill bugs are not harmful to humans but may eat a few of your plants. Their preferred food is dead organic plant matter, so look no further for a great composting partner. They chew up rotting vegetation and return it to the soil, which helps speed up decomposition and provides an incredible, free service to gardeners. Their gut bacteria aids in processing dead fruits, leaves and other vegetation, returning it to the earth or compost heap to be digested by more fungi and bacteria.

Roly-polies also play important roles in the environment. They can take in heavy metals such as copper, zinc and lead, then crystallize them in their bodies. This also makes them an ideal test subject in studies of pollution and related environmental research. Their unique ability to remove heavy metal ions from contaminated soil allows them to thrive in polluted locations where other species cannot. (See *Roly-Polies – The Beneficial Decomposer*, continued Page 5)

**Roly-Polies – The Beneficial Decomposer**

(continued from Pg. 4, Entomology Corner)

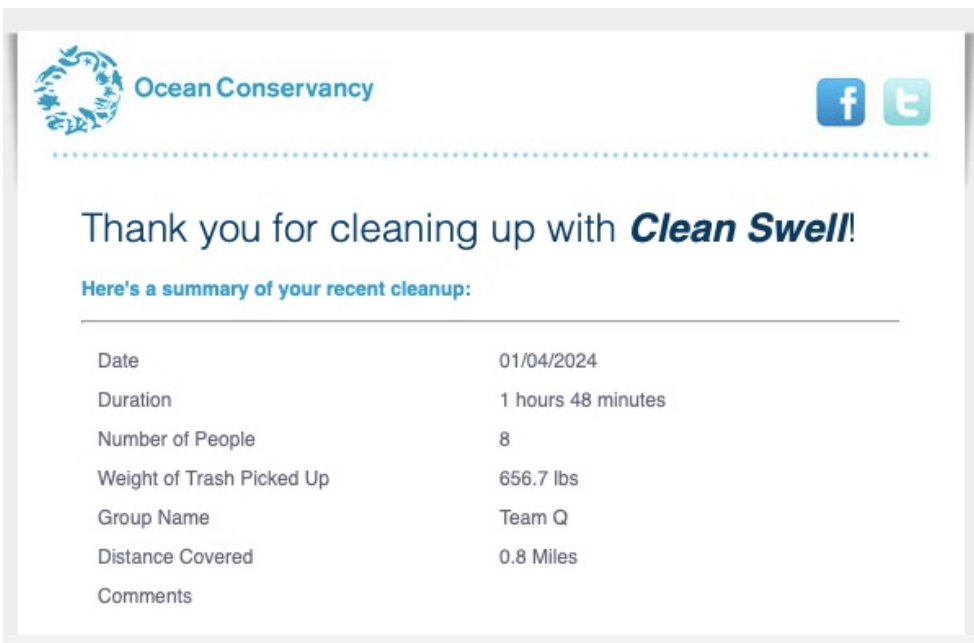
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Szlavecz, Katalin, et al. "[Terrestrial Isopods in Urban Environments: An Overview](#)." *Zookeys*,  
vol. 801, 2018, pp. 97-126., doi:10.3897/zookeys.801.29580  
"[Pill Woodlouse](#)." *Encyclopedia of Life*.  
Edney, E.B. "[Transition from Water to Land in Isopod Crustaceans](#)." *American Zoologist*. 1968.  
TreeHugger, Sustainability for All



Joao Paul Burini/Getty Images

## April Beach Sweep at Quintana Jetties



The screenshot shows the Clean Swell app interface. At the top left is the Ocean Conservancy logo. To the right are social media icons for Facebook and Twitter. The main heading reads "Thank you for cleaning up with **Clean Swell!**". Below this is a sub-heading "Here's a summary of your recent cleanup:". A table follows with the following data:

Date	01/04/2024
Duration	1 hours 48 minutes
Number of People	8
Weight of Trash Picked Up	656.7 lbs
Group Name	Team Q
Distance Covered	0.8 Miles
Comments	



Photo of Clean Swell app data & participants courtesy of Jimmy & Luanne Salinas (cover photo, too!)

## A Story About Outreach: Brookside Village Farmers Market

- Article and Photos by Marlon Nation



Under partially cloudy skies and pleasant temperatures, an energetic group of volunteer members from the Cradle of Texas (COT) Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists™ (TMN), gathered at E.A. Lawhon Elementary School in Brookside Village, a neighboring community of Pearland, TX., located in the Northern part of Brazoria County. A county of more than 1600 square miles, Brazoria is far-reaching and has rich and diverse flora and fauna. Kathy Pittman, Chapter president, says it is important that the most populous part of the county is aware of the beneficial activities of the Texas Master Naturalist program. Outreach activities like this gives program exposure to the underserved parts of the county.

Part of the day's outreach activities included a tree giveaway along with planting instructions. Approximately 200 seedlings were generously provided by "Trees for Houston" -- a non-profit organization dedicated to planting, protecting, and promoting trees." Species provided were the American Sycamore, Live Oak, Overcup Oak and Bald Cypress.

The outreach experience allowed for a mutually beneficial interaction with the public. Among the many visitors to the TMN-COT booths were Mr. Michael Peaches—"no pun intended," for there is an interesting story behind that name, of Fresh Life Organic who operates three (3) farms in the Brazoria County area and is an advocate for "grounding yourself with Mother Nature," and a "supporter of food sustainment and clean eating." Also visiting was Mrs. Judith Williams who traces her family heritage back to the "Old 300" original settlers of this part of Texas. When it was mentioned that the history of Brazoria County is often a topic of discussion in the Master Naturalist program, she was delighted to share a generous part of her family history. Both visitors provided an exchange of ideas and conversation that echoed the ideas and values of the Master Naturalist program.

Not to be overlooked as part of the outreach experience was the teamwork, fellowship and conversations with fellow Master Naturalists. Some of the topics of conversation could easily be titled, "Rat Snake Wrangling" and the "Adventures Big City Nature Girl." Or the "Indescribable Description of Eclipse Totality", or even "The Perils of Forgetting to Log Your VMS Hours." Every Naturalist has a story about his or her experiences, and the sharing added to the pleasure of the outing. It was a good day, culminating with successful community engagement, learning activities, the seedling giveaway and the sharing of Master Naturalist information. Finally, the representatives of the Brookside Village Farmers Market whose mission is, "To promote the sustainable production, marketing, and consumption of local agricultural produce and provide a community gathering place," were excellent hosts in providing ample space and support for this Texas Master Naturalist, Cradle of Texas Chapter northern outreach event.



## Volunteer Opportunities – Oron Atkins

- Exploration Green Workday – every Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; contact Christie Taylor.
- Trash Collection/Disposal Analysis Project – self-directed.
- Beach Sweep, Quintana Jetties – Monday, May 6 (weather permitting), 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.; contact Jimmy or Luanne Salinas ([jimmy.salinas217@gmail.com](mailto:jimmy.salinas217@gmail.com); [msluhu@gmail.com](mailto:msluhu@gmail.com)).
- Nurdle Beach Patrol – self-directed; contact Jace Turnell.
- Brazoria County Comprehensive Spider Survey – self-directed; contact Melanie Hollenshead.
- Adopt-a-Loop for TMN – self-directed; contact Debbie Nance.
- Sea Turtle Patrol (PAIS & local training required) - daily, April 1 - July 14, contact Roland Davis.
- City Nature Challenge - April 26 - 29 (photos) and April 30 - May 5 (identification) - self-directed.
- Bat Monitoring Project - contact Mickey Dufilho ([dufilhos@hotmail.com](mailto:dufilhos@hotmail.com)).
- Urban Wildlife Monitoring Project - contact Oron Atkins ([oronatkins@comcast.net](mailto:oronatkins@comcast.net)); on-hold pending further information.

## Outreach Opportunities

- DEEP - May 14 and 16, 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.; contact Ed Barrios ([ed77566@comcast.net](mailto:ed77566@comcast.net))
- Migration Celebration, April 27 - 28, 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.- Volunteers are needed. Contact Barbara Whaley, Volunteer Coordinator, for information ([babswhaley@gmail.com](mailto:babswhaley@gmail.com)).
- Spring Fling (registration required) - April 6 - 5/05, two (2) shifts daily (9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) and (12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.), contact Celeste Silling ([csilling@gcbo.org](mailto:csilling@gcbo.org)).
- Old Pearland Farmers Market - May 18, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Independence Park (topic TBA). Contact Kathy Pittman ([pittmankw4@aol.com](mailto:pittmankw4@aol.com)).
- Summer Reading Series (TMN-COT Texas Reptiles Programs at BCLS) – Sign up today!

**PUBLIC OUTREACH — Ruby Lewis** [rublewis77515@ymail.com](mailto:rublewis77515@ymail.com)



## Kudos to Our Graduates!



Photos by Dick Schafthausen





## Unexpected Birding ... Adventures in Birding Along the Texas Central Coast

-Submitted by Debbie Nance

“So how was your outing?” my friend Cindy asked.

A disappointment. And a delight.

Two friends and I made plans months ago to learn to be sea turtle rescuers. Sea turtle rescuers patrol the beaches for Kemp’s Ridley turtles from April to July along the seashore on the Texas Gulf Coast. To become a certified member of the Sea Turtle Patrol, a person must complete a six-hour (6 hr.) online training about sea turtles, a two-hour (2 hr.) online training about driving the UTV, and then a four-hour (4 hr.) in-person training where you practice driving. We did the online trainings, then reserved an Airbnb and drove four (4) hours to Corpus Christi for the training, only to learn high tides had covered most of the beach; we wouldn’t be able to do the training this weekend. That was the disappointment. It was a huge disappointment.

But, we pivoted and decided to use the weekend to go to sites along the [Great Texas Wildlife Trails](#) and report back to Texas Parks and Wildlife via iNaturalist and eBird. That way, the weekend wouldn’t be a total loss, we thought. And, oh my, the weekend was far from being a total loss... the weekend turned out to be a delight! We visited six sites along the GTWT, along the [Central Texas Coast](#) (CTC). Here are my thoughts about these spots:

[Matagorda County Birding and Nature Center](#). CTC-005A.

We stopped here on the way to Padre Island, before we knew the training was canceled. We walked the trail through some wooded areas and to the water, and there were birds everywhere. A flock of a couple hundred sparrows were in the trees, and lots of water birds. But here was the highlight ... yes, a Bald Eagle!



[Packery Channel](#). CTC-062.

The next day we scoped out where our training was to take place on Padre Island National Seashore (or not take place, as it turns out), then headed for Packery Channel. There were a lot of water birds wading in the shallow water. I snapped photos of some of them, including a Great Blue Heron and a Great Egret.



[Padre Island National Seashore](#). CTC-063.

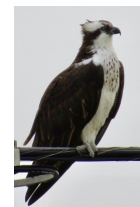
We got the bad news that it was too dangerous to do our driving training. We were crushed —we’d driven 250 miles and we’d spent a lot of money—but we decided to use our stay to do work on the Great Texas Wildlife Trails for our naturalist group instead. Since we were already at Padre Island, we spent time looking for wildlife there. Again, we saw a lot of birds I’d seen before along the Upper Texas Coast—Herring Gulls, American White Pelicans and Brown Pelicans, Black-bellied Plovers, Royal Terns, Sanderlings—but I also saw some new-to-me birds... a Red-breasted Merganser, a Long-billed Curlew, a Great Yellow Legs and a Vermillion Flycatcher, my favorite find (no photo).



(See *Adventures in Birding Along the Texas Central Coast*, continued Page 10)

(Continued from Page 9, *Adventures in Birding...*)

Packery Channel Park. CTC-064.

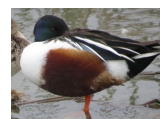
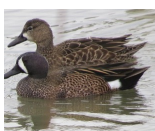


To cap off the day, we visited Packery Channel Park in the evening, which was walking distance from the townhouse where we were staying. Yellow-rumped Warblers filled the trees along the path. And when we left to head back to the townhouse, we were delighted to see an Osprey at the exit.

It was on our last day that we found ourselves in Bird Heaven. A couple of birders at Padre Island National Seashore recommended driving down Mustang Island to a site there, so we did. All I can say is, “Oh my”.

Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center. CTC-057.

If you are a birder, this is a place you must go, I think. Enormous flocks of birds, and a lovely wooden boardwalk to get up close to all of them. Here are the new-to-me birds I saw Blue-winged Teals, Green-winged Teals and Northern Shovelers.

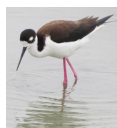
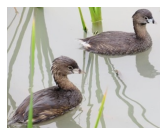


We were overwhelmed with birds, counting for eBird, taking photos for iNaturalist and then I looked up; what did I see flying overhead? Whooping Cranes!!



Two adults Whooping Cranes and a young one walked around the grasslands eating. I watched in wonder. I never thought I'd get a chance to see Whooping Cranes. They were magnificent.

We walked the trail and saw lots and lots of other new-to-me birds: Pied-billed Grebes, Black-necked Stilts, Long-billed Dowitcher and American Avocets.



Then, we met a birder who recommended we stop at one more site, and we couldn't resist.

Goose Island State Park. CTC-048.

There's a big live oak tree at Goose Island State Park, the birder told us, and near it is a spot that a colony of Whooping Cranes live during the winter. Off we went, and sure enough, he was right. The Big Tree (official name) was truly big, and nearby was a little colony of Whooping Cranes.



A Whooping Crane flew up as we drove off, giving us a lovely send off.



## Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

President	Kathy Pittman, Rosharon
Vice President/Programs	Jimmy Salinas, Freeport
Secretary	Kathy Purvis, Richwood
Treasurer	Donald Sabathier, Pearland
State Representative	Connie Stolte, Palacios
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Outreach Director	Ruby Lewis, Angleton
Hospitality Director	Rose Wagner, Sweeny
Communications Director	Larry Peterson, Manvel
Training Class Representative 2023	Marlon Nation, Pearland

<b>Non-voting positions:</b>	Debbie Nance, Alvin
Chapter Librarian	Dave Brandes, Lake Jackson
Data Manager	John O’Connell, AgriLIFE Extension Service
Chapter Advisors	Jordan Kieffer, TPWD Sea Center Texas

Newsletter Editor	Kathy Purvis, Richwood
Newsletter Contributors	Dave Brandes, Kathy Pittman, John Boettiger, Oron Atkins, Dick Schaffhausen, Jimmy Salinas, Luanne Salinas, Marlon Nation, Melanie Hollenshead, Debbie Nance & Barbara Whaley

Website	<a href="https://txmn.org/tmncot/">https://txmn.org/tmncot/</a> <a href="http://facebook.com/TMN-COT">http://facebook.com/TMN-COT</a>
Facebook	
Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/tmncot">https://twitter.com/tmncot</a>
E-mail Listserv	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail">http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail</a>



## Master Naturalist Email Lists

### **TMN-COT Chapter list**

- Instructions <https://txmn.org/tmncot/organization/email-lists/>
- Send messages to [TMN-COT@googlegroups.com](mailto: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](mailto:listserv@listserv.tamu.edu)
- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator.

*Chapter News* is published monthly on or before the first day of the month by the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Submissions are welcome; submission deadline is the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month preceding issue. Send submissions by e-mail to *Chapter News* Editor at [news@tmn-cot.org](mailto:news@tmn-cot.org). Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.