



Chapter News – in Brief

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The June 12 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.

8:30 – 9:00 a.m.	Social Time and Refreshments (in person)
9:00 – 9:15 a.m.	Welcome, Awards and Outreach
9:15 – 10:15 a.m.	Advanced Training Speakers: “Prescribed Fire on the Texas Mid-Coast”, Ryan Vice and Curtis Jones, both with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>
10:30 – 11:00 a.m.	General Membership Meeting <i>[Hours for Volunteer Time (VT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>

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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.



Ryan Vice has worked for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service since 2004 and as a Prescribed Fire Specialist (PFS) at the Texas Mid-coast NWRC for the past 13 years. He is responsible for managing wildland fire on the landscape in a responsible and effective manner and remains focused on the safety of all firefighters and ensuring the public’s safety and health. Ryan has dedicated his career to protecting natural resources and the surrounding communities across this country. He enjoys spending time with his family, with weekends and vacations filled with outdoor activities.



Curtis Jones, Refuge Manager at the San Bernard and Big Boggy NWRs has worked for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for 20 years. In that time, he has served in a variety of roles including biology, fire, law enforcement and management. As Refuge Manager at the San Bernard NWR he is responsible for habitat management, land acquisition, infrastructure and public use facilities. This includes all the Columbia Bottomland Forest tracts spread out in a four (4) county area. Curtis spends time with his family doing outdoor activities and developing the next generation of conservationists.

VOLUNTEER HOURS, CERTIFICATIONS & MILESTONES - John Boettiger

Recertifications

Jim Calvert	Malcolm Mosis
Kathy Pittman	Kim Richardson
Don Sabathier	Rose Wagner

Milestones
1,000 Hours!!
Larry Kirby



Kathy Pittman and Rose Wagner with John Boettiger (Photo courtesy of Facebook)

Some of our Spring Intern Graduates received their TMN Dragonfly Certification Pins at the May 8 meeting



Front L-R: Barb Adelsperger, Sarah Castillo, Katie Maddox & Liesa Glover
 Back L-R: Tina Crawford, Robin Townsend, Omar Barbosa & Tara Lawrence-Johnson
 (Photo courtesy of Facebook)

Congratulations!!!




IMPACT DATA REPORT - Dave Brandes, Data Manager



IMPACT DATA - April 2024 *

		<u>Month</u>	<u>YTD</u>			<u>Month</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Hours*	VT	1,794	5,559	Impact Data*	Adults	704	2,780
	AT	159	830		Youth	1,071	8,556
	Total	1,953	6,389		Total	1,775	11,336

* Data not considered final until mid-June 2024

May Beach Sweep at Quintana Jetties – Jimmy & Luanne Salinas



Thank you for cleaning up with Clean Swell!

Here's a summary of your recent cleanup:

Date	06/05/2024
Duration	2 hours 7 minutes
Number of People	5
Weight of Trash Picked Up	407.1 lbs
Group Name	Team Q
Distance Covered	0 Miles
Comments	

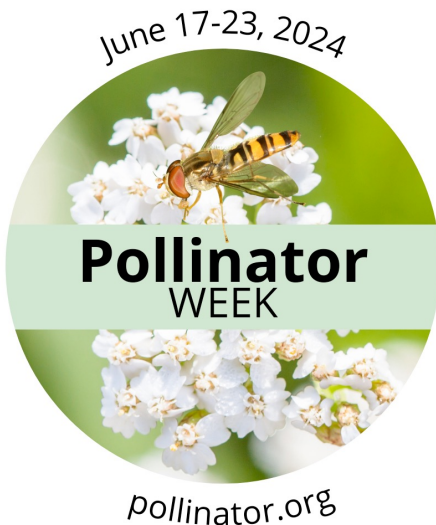
Trash items picked up:

Balloons	1
Beverage bottles (glass)	28
Bottles (plastic)	158
Beverage cans	84
Beverage sachets/pouches	5
Bottle caps (metal)	20
Bottle caps (plastic)	52
Cigarette butts	10
Clothing	9
Cups, Plates (foam)	24
Cups, Plates (paper)	29
Cups, Plates (plastic)	7
Diapers	3
Foam dock pieces	2
Food containers (foam)	9
Food containers (plastic)	5
Food wrappers	30
Footwear (shoes/slippers)	8
Gloves & masks (PPE)	4
Grocery bag (plastic)	48
Lids (plastic)	4



Photos courtesy of Jimmy & Luanne Salinas

The next Beach Sweep at the Quintana Jetties will be held on **Monday, June 3** (weather permitting), 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.; contact Jimmy or Luanne Salinas. Also, Jimmy reported the July beach sweep will likely be **July 8**.



“National Pollinator Week is an annual event celebrated internationally in support of pollinator health”. It began as an effort to address “the urgent issue of declining pollinator populations... promoting the valuable ecosystem services provided by bees, birds, butterflies, bats, beetles, moths, wasps and flies.”

Reprint courtesy of www.pollinator.org and Facebook 



Outreach Opportunities

- Summer Reading Club 2024 in June and July, TMN-COT Texas Reptiles programs will be held at each BCLS location, at least eight (8) volunteers are needed per session; **see the calendar on the TMN-COT website**; contact Ruby Lewis.
- BCPD Nature Camp – June 17-20, 9:00 a.m. – 12 Noon at Camp Mohawk; contact Nathan Murphy at nathanm@brazoriacountytx.gov.

PUBLIC OUTREACH — Ruby Lewis rubylewis77515@ymail.com

Annual AT Day

Saturday, June 15, 2024,
8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church
Angleton

**MICRO-BEASTS: SMALL BUT
MIGHTY INSECTS**

Optional Mothing Activity

Thursday, June 13, 2024
Evening Activity ½ hr. after dark
Brazos Woods

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.
- 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.
- Bat Monitoring Project - contact Mickey Dufilho at dufilhos@hotmail.com.
- Beach Sweep, Quintana Jetties – Monday, June 3, 2024 (weather permitting), 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.; contact Jimmy or Luanne Salinas, jimmy.salinas217@gmail.com or msluhu@gmail.com.
- Sea Turtle Patrol (PAIS & local training required) - daily, thru July 14, 2024, contact Roland Davis, 979.964.3639 or via e-mail, roland_davis@fws.gov.
- GCBO Kid's Summer Bird Camp, June 10 - 14, 2024, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. daily; contact Celeste Silling at csilling@gcbo.org or sign up at the GCBO website.
- iNaturalist - Pollinator Bioblitz, June 17 - June 23, 2024 - self-directed. Go to "Pollinator Bioblitz 2024" and follow the direction. Questions may also be addressed to TMN-COT member, Angela Griffin.

Title of Texas’ Largest Live Oak Returns to Brazoria County!

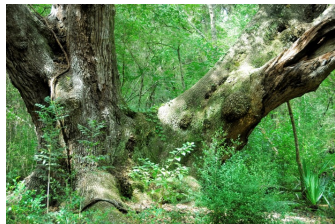
Story, photos and certificate copy submitted by Chris Kneupper

Last month, the Texas Forest Service certified a Live Oak tree in Brazoria County as the state’s largest known specimen of that species. Known botanically as Southern or Coastal Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), this species is very common in the county, especially along the bottomlands of the Brazos and San Bernard Rivers. Large specimens are not unusual in local old-growth woodlands, usually in areas now described as a special type of aboriginal forest named as the Columbia Bottomlands.

Locals may remember a Live Oak tree called the “San Bernard Oak” was previously declared Texas state champion. It is located on a tract of land acquired in 2002 for the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge and was pointed out by the former landowner to the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service. It was soon nominated to the Texas Forest Service and certified state champ in 2003. It can be visited at the end of 1.5-mile-long trail (round trip) known as the San Bernard Oak Trail. Known for its immense trunk, two huge forked branches and ungainly appearance, the true size cannot be appreciated until it is observed closely. Unfortunately, a rule change in 2016 required that only one of the main branches could be measured as the trunk, dropping it in the rankings, such that it was disqualified as champ.

At that time, the second-place Live Oak tree was one located in Columbus, and it assumed the title in August 2016 that is, until recently! So, the San Bernard Oak reigned as the champ in Brazoria County and the state of Texas in the period of 2003-2016. Prior to that, the beloved “Big Tree” at Goose Island State Park in Aransas County was the state champ.

You might ask how the “biggest tree” is determined. Well, it is done by measuring the tree in several ways, and then a formula is used to calculate a score known as the Tree Index. The highest Index wins. These measurements include the trunk circumference measured at about 4.5’ above the ground in inches, the height from the ground to the highest branch in feet, and the average crown spread in feet. The weighted formula adds the first two measurements and one-fourth of the last one.



San Bernard Oak, circa 2005, photo by Dave Brandes



Columbus Oak, circa 2018, photo by Chris Kneupper

Tree Measurements:	Measure Date	Trunk Circumference	Height	Crown	Index
Big Tree	Aug-2016	352”	47’	82’	419
San Bernard Oak	Apr-2003	386”	67’	100’	478
	Sep-2015	240”	67’	90’	328
Columbus Oak	Aug-2016	338”	61’	114’	427
	Apr-2024	344”	59’	103’	428
new Brazoria County Oak	Jun-2023	349”	73’	98’	446

The new state champion tree is yet unnamed (maybe, Cradle of Texas Oak?), but is located between Lake Jackson and Brazoria in a residential neighborhood, growing (mostly) on the public right-of-way near the west end (1800 block) of North Road (also known as County Road 680C). **Visitors are asked to avoid parking or walking on the grounds around the tree, and to respect the privacy and rights of adjacent landowners.**

Although it probably pre-dates the development of this area, beginning with the colony of Stephen F. Austin in 1821-1836, it was noticed in the period of 1999-2000 by the local chapter of Texas Master Gardeners, who declared it the largest Live Oak then known in the county. (see *Largest Live Oak Returns*, continued on next page)



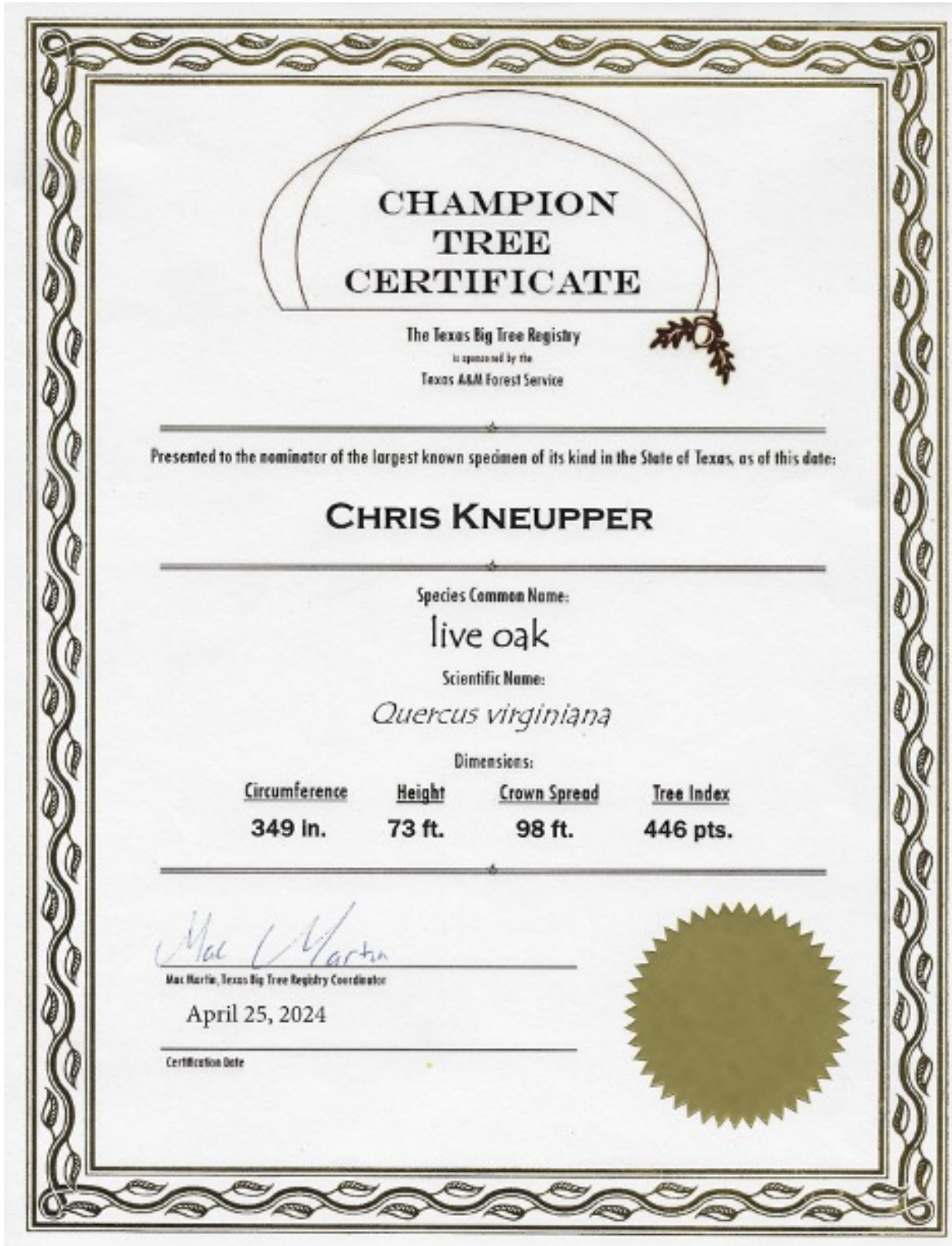
New Texas Champion Live Oak in Brazoria County, circa 2019, photo by Chris Kneupper

The specimen is documented in iNaturalist at this link:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/20162061>

(Largest Live Oak Returns, continued)

Re-measured in 2019 by the local chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, it was realized it might challenge the Columbus Oak, thus bringing the title back to Brazoria County, so was nominated to the Texas Forest Service in April 2022. Official measurements were made by them in June 2023, and it was officially certified as champ in April 2024 after the Columbus Oak was re-measured.



Bug of the Month — by Barbara Whaley

I try to find something in my daily activities to share with you for this article. Recently, as I was watering my plants, I saw what looked like bird poop on a leaf of my citrus tree. Knowing that some butterfly caterpillars look like this, I put it into iNaturalist and sure enough, it was a Giant Swallowtail Caterpillar (*Papilio cresphontes*).



The Giant Swallowtail is the largest butterfly in North America. It is abundant through many parts of eastern North America with populations from western North America and down into Panama. Its life cycle is an example of complete metamorphosis, with four distinct stages: egg, caterpillar (larva), pupa (chrysalis) and adult butterfly.

Egg Stage: The cycle begins when the female Giant Swallowtail lays her eggs, typically on the leaves of host plants, like citrus trees or rue. The eggs are small and spherical, usually yellow or orange in color. The caterpillar can become significant pests in citrus farms.

Caterpillar Stage: Once the eggs hatch, the caterpillar emerges. These larvae are unique in appearance, resembling bird droppings, as a form of camouflage to protect against predators. They feed on the leaves of the host plants and grow rapidly and molt several times.

Pupa Stage: After reaching a certain size and development stage, the caterpillar forms a chrysalis. This pupa stage is a time of significant transformation, where the organism reorganizes into the adult butterfly. The chrysalis is typically brown or green, blending into the surrounding environment.

Adult Butterfly: The final stage is the emergence of the adult Giant Swallowtail Butterfly. Distinguished by its large size and striking black and yellow markings, the butterfly will allow its wings to dry and harden after emerging from the chrysalis. Once its wings are fully expanded and dry, the butterfly begins to fly and feed on nectar from various flowers. The duration from egg to adult can vary, but generally spans several weeks to a couple of months, depending on environmental conditions such as temperature and food availability.

Flight Pattern: The Giant Swallowtail has a strong and graceful flight. It has a distinctive style of flying that includes powerful wing beats and gliding, which makes it quite a sight in gardens and natural habitats.

Migration: Unlike some butterfly species that undertake long distance migrations, the Giant Swallowtail may exhibit local or regional movements in response to changes in weather, availability of food sources and suitable habitat.

Predators: Like many butterfly species, they face a variety of predators throughout their life cycle. Birds, spiders, parasitic wasps and flies, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and other insect predators.

The Giant Swallowtail has developed various defense mechanisms to reduce predation risk. The caterpillar's appearance mimics bird droppings, providing camouflage, and the adult's bright coloration can warn of potential toxicity. Predation is a natural and essential part of their life cycle, contributing to the ecological balance in their habitats.

Sources:

Gardenia, Creating Gardens

Wikipedia

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- Instructions <https://txmn.org/tmncot/organization/email-lists/>
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- 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 or before the first day of the month by the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Submissions are welcome; submission deadline is the 20th day of the month preceding issue. Send submissions by e-mail to *Chapter News* Editor at news@tmn-cot.org. Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.