



Chapter News

January 2025

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Chapter News is published by Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Contact us at:

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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.

Cover photo shared by Patty Brinkmeyer Juvenile American Alligator at Brazos Bend State Park.

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

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

President's Message



Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us.

~Hal Borland

And just like that, it's 2025! HAPPY NEW YEAR and welcome to another year of Education, Outreach, Fun and Fellowship with your Texas Master Naturalist™ family!

The New Year can bring with it hopes for new experiences, better health and prosperity, or, for some, a continuance of the "same old, same old." Like our attitudes, it's up to each of us to decide how we approach the next twelve months that lie before us. **If you are one for making resolutions (and hopefully keeping them!), I ask that you resolve to try something new, especially in your volunteer activities.** Never been to Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge? Consider volunteering for DEEP or at an Open House event. Need something on "your time"? Consider Adopt-a-Loop trail surveys, rain monitoring, or working with one of our pollinator garden areas at Camp Mohawk or Resoft Park. Have an idea for an event or project? **CONTACT US** and let's talk about it!!!

Please plan to attend our next Chapter meeting on Wednesday, January 8th, at 6 pm. Social time will start at 5:30 pm. David Heinicke will talk to us about snake identification. I hope to see you there, and **BRING A FRIEND!!!**

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

COT-TMN 2025 Officers

Thank you for continuing to serve COT!

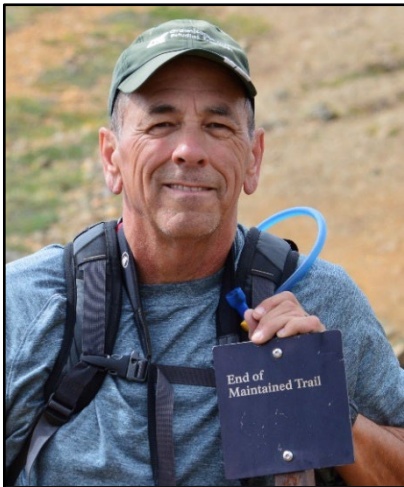
President	Kathy Pittman
Vice President	Jimmy Salinas
Secretary	Kathy Purvis
Treasurer	Don Sabathier

January Chapter Meeting

The January 8th 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 pm	Social Time and Refreshments
6:00 – 6:15 pm	Welcome and Awards
6:15 – 7:15 pm	Speaker: David Heinicke Advanced Training: Snake Identification for the Upper Texas Coast Ever wonder "What kind of snake was that? Was it venomous? How can I tell? ". This program will go through the 2 dozen or so species of snakes found in and around Brazoria county and how to identify them. We'll talk about where they live, how they act and what they look like. <i>(Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting)</i>
7:30 – 8:00 pm	General Membership Meeting <i>(Hours for Volunteer Time (VT) TBD at close of meeting)</i>



Speaker – David Heinicke

David started out with Texas Parks & Wildlife as a volunteer at Brazos Bend State Park in 1992. After a few years of volunteering, he decided to make a career move and join TPWD as a full-time employee. David was hired as a park naturalist in 1996. In 1997 he was named head naturalist for Brazos Bend State Park.

David was responsible for environmental education & interpretation, Nature Center operation and works closely with the park's volunteer organization and coordination of research projects in the park. David was also a commissioned State Park Police officer and provided law enforcement in and out of the park.

David is an ACA & USFWS kayak instructor, federally permitted bird bander, "Leave No Trace" instructor, NIA Certified Interpretive Guide, certified TCOLE law enforcement instructor, holds an advanced police officer license and has earned certification as a TPWD Master Interpreter.

Since retiring in early 2020 David does some private consulting work and volunteers at several conservation organizations and other local nonprofits. David's hobbies are hiking, paddling, mountain biking, wildlife watching, surfing, backpacking and just about anything outside and human powered.

Chapter Fellowship

19th Annual Hog-Wild Holiday Feast

Chapter Member, Ed Barrios hosted “Hog-Wild” at his home on December 11th. The traditional meal of smoked wild hog was prepared by Marty Cornell and crew. Borracho beans by Ed Barrios. Guests brought delicious sides and desserts. The weather was fabulous!

COT Hog Wild Party; A 20-Year Tradition

It began in 2004, when graduates of that year’s training class noticed that our four-year-old chapter had yet to have any occasions for members to get to know each other, outside of chapter meetings and dispersed volunteer activities. And so, the idea was hatched by Ed Barrios, Marty Cornell, John Marshall, Roy Morgan and Carolyn May-Monet, all class of 04, to have an end-of-year party celebrating our chapter’s accomplishments, but really to strengthen personal bonds between members.



The name? “Hog Wild” was inspired by a chapter presentation on feral pigs. Since wild pigs were being harvested by several members, they also became the focus of the meal.



Outreach Opportunities

Spring Break BNWR Discovery Center Open House – 3/8/2025 to 3/16/2025 11 am to 4 pm

Public Outreach Director - Text, phone, or email [Ruby Lewis](mailto:Ruby.Lewis); ph. 979.583.7903

TMN-COT Calendar <https://txmn.org/tmncot/events>

Volunteer Opportunities

Beach Sweep – Tuesday, January 7, and Monday, February 3 (weather permitting), 8:00 am – 10:00 am, Quintana Jetty; contact Jimmy or Luanne Salinas (jimmy.salinas217@gmail.com; msluhu@gmail.com)

Exploration Green Workday – every Wednesday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; contact [Christie Taylor](mailto:Christie.Taylor)

Trash Collection/Disposal Analysis Project – self-directed; Brazoria County Parks

Nurdle Beach Patrol – self-directed; <https://www.nurdlepatrol.org/app/>

Brazoria County Comprehensive Spider Survey – self-directed; contact [Melanie Hollenshead](mailto:Melanie.Hollenshead)

Adopt-a-Loop for TMN – self-directed; contact [Debbie Nance](mailto:Debbie.Nance) or Cris Tobola.

Deck Construction Project at GCBO - Dates/times TBA – contact [Oron Atkins](mailto:Oron.Atkins) if willing to help.

DFNC Educational Pond and Native Garden Habitat Workdays – future date(s)? – contact [Kathy Pittman](mailto:Kathy.Pittman)

TMN-COT iNaturalist Data Collection Project; contact [Amanda Gabehart](mailto:Amanda.Gabehart)

Did you know?

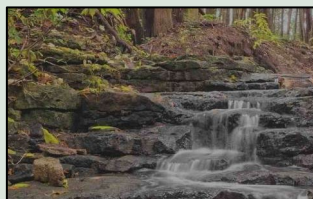
Texas A&M AgriLife offers online courses through the AgriLife Learn Program! Many courses qualify for AT and Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Credits.

Examples...



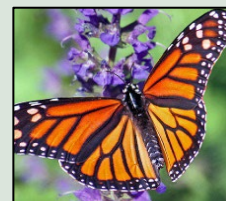
Beekeeping 101

Explore how to start a beehive with this online beekeeping course for beginners. Learn how to start a beehive, honeybee biology, beekeeping equipment needed and more.



Texas Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Training

This course will inform participants about riparian and watershed processes, the benefits that healthy riparian areas provide, and the tools that prevent and/or resolve degradation and improve water quality.



Butterfly Gardening

This online course covers the types of butterflies in Texas and how to attract them. Homeowners or garden enthusiasts will learn to invite new fluttery friends to the neighborhood.

VT Opportunity Spotlight

Contributed by Patty Brinkmeyer

Great Texas Wildlife Trails Adopt-A-Loop Project

Adopt-a-Loop is a citizen science project by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. and Texas Master Naturalists (TMN) to better understand the distribution of Texas' wildlife. The Great Texas Wildlife Trails (GTWT) are used by many to visit sites across the state for birding and other wildlife viewing. By adopting a loop on the GTWT, each TMN chapter will help collect data on our Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and wildlife in general. This info will be used as a guide for informing visitors on what species to look for when they are at a particular site. Observations are logged on eBird and iNaturalist.

What is a "Loop" versus a "Trail" versus a "Site?"

The entire Great Texas Wildlife Trails is referred to as a "trail." It originated in 1996 as the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail and was the first trail system of its kind. As more sites were added, the GTWT grew to a statewide driving trail for people to drive from site-to-site. People can stop at each site and spend some time birding/viewing wildlife there and then drive to the next site. The GTWT is organized into a trail system of 124 separate loops and over 900 sites. It was originally envisioned that people would choose a "loop" to visit, as a vacation, and spend 2-3 days visiting each of the sites on that loop and staying at local lodging along the way. Each numbered stop along a loop is referred to as a "site." Each site has its own information on the TPWD website with a description, directions, and contact information. Sites vary greatly; they may be on public land or privately-owned property. They may be a park, a historic site, a driving tour, a roadside stop or scenic overlook. Note: Not all sites have hiking trails available (although most do.)

[More GTWT Adopt-a-Loop Project FAQ's](#)

[iNaturalist GTWT Adopt-A-Loop Project](#)

TMN-COT Adopted Loops:

Clear Lake Loop

(18 sites)

Brazoria Loop

(12 sites)

Coastal Plains Loop

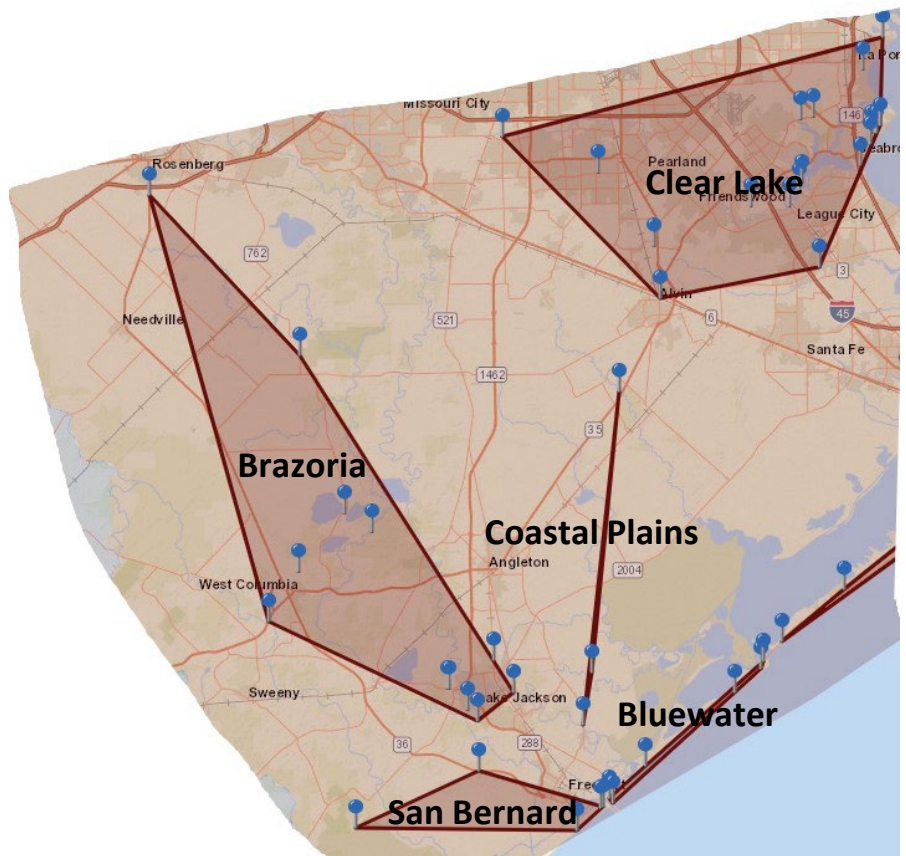
(3 sites)

Bluewater Loop

(6 sites)

San Bernard Loop

(5 sites)



Certifications November/December 2024

Congratulations to all!

Initial Certifications

Glen Cullinane

Milestones

Sheree Muzny
1000 Hours!

David Dungan
250 Hours!



2024 Pin

John Boettiger, Membership Director



Recertifications

Jerry Eppner
Cindy Goodrum
Mike Hampy
Paula Hanson
Christina Hartman
Denis James
Chris Kneupper
Ruby Lewis
Carolyn May-Monie
Sheree Muzny
John O'Connell
Kyle Purvis
Donna Rich

Photo by Richard Schaffhausen



Kathy Pittman, Chris Kneupper, Ruby Lewis, Donna Rich,
Glen Cullinane, John O'Connell, John Boettiger

Outreach

Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge

Each year COT members volunteer for the annual Open House at the BNWR. The event runs from the day after Christmas, through New Year's Day.

Activities this year included, the always popular snakes, alligators and turtles, animal pelts, bird beaks and feet identification, microscope pond life, animal tracks, butterflies, and wingspan measuring. The event draws people from all over the country and beyond that are here visiting their families for the holidays.



OPEN HOUSE



Photos shared
by Patty Brinkmeyer



Entomology Corner

Fall Garden Cleanup, or Not

By Barbara Whaley



Well, fall has finally arrived in our neighborhood and the trees have started to shed their leaves. You are looking at your yards and flower gardens and itching to clean them up. The plants in my native garden are all in pots. I thought it would make for an easier clean up in the fall, when the buds and stems turn brown, and the leaves are invading the pots. I would dive in as soon as the leaves fell and clean them all out, cut the stems down and weed until everything looked nice and tidy. But that was a few years ago, no more. The little critters that live in our yards and gardens are getting ready for the long, cold winter (??), when the temps drop (???) and their food supply dwindles. Below are some interesting facts and a few tips from Bee-Friendly Gardening, to help them along:

1. Toads, turtles and other small critters rely on fallen leaves and twigs to insulate them in cold weather. Leave the leaves where they fall or gently move them to garden beds.
2. Instead of buying compost to improve your soil, put the fallen leaves in the garden beds where they turn into compost, and it doesn't cost a dime!
3. Fallen leaves are like sponges. They soak up excess rain and reduce flooding. As they decompose and mix with the soil, they also help soil become more absorbent.
4. Native bees need more than flowers. They also need places to lay their eggs. Some native bees lay their eggs underground, some use dead flower stalks. Others lay their eggs under brush piles or in holes drilled by beetles in stumps or logs.
5. Most bumblebee queens nest just below the ground or under piles of brush in the winter. Leave the leaves, ban the leaf blower. In the spring, avoid raking, tilling and mowing until the queens emerge from their winter nests in May.
6. Don't remove those oak leaves. The Red-Banded Hairstreak butterfly lays its eggs on fallen oak leaves. When the eggs hatch, the caterpillars eat the leaves. Leave the leaves where they fall or gently move them into garden beds.
7. In winter, chickadees eat seeds, spiders, spider eggs, insects and insect larvae, including frozen caterpillars. To help chickadees survive winter, avoid pesticides.
8. Leaf blowers destroy soil quality. They blast away the rich top layers of soil, they kill beneficial insects that aerate the soil and deliver nutrients to plant roots. Leave fallen leaves permanently to add nutrients and improve soil structure. Avoid pesticides.
9. Create a brush pile in your yard to provide shelter for insects and other small critters.
10. Many butterflies and moths spend the winter in the pupa stage, wrapped up in a warm cocoon made of leaves. Don't shred, burn or bag up fallen leaves. Leave them where they fall, or gently move them to garden beds or a wild area.
11. As days get shorter and nights get colder, plants prepare for winter. Don't cut back perennials too early. They need their leaves for converting sunlight to energy, which they will store in their roots and use during the winter. Some plants should be left for wildlife: seed heads for birds and hollow stalks for native bees.

Lastly, something for you: You should sit in nature for twenty minutes a day.

Unless you're busy; then you should sit for an hour!

Note: Barbara will be taking a break from Entomology Corner. Submissions by members are welcome.

Save the Date

Spring AT Day

"Species of Greatest Conservation Need"

When: February 15, 2025
Where: 1st Presbyterian Church
130 S. Arcola St., Angleton

We need YOU to help plan the event and make it a success!

Contact [Kristine Rivers](#) if you'd like to help with planning!

Spring Intern Training

When: Orientation February 1, 2025
Where: Angleton Library Mtg. Room
401 E. Cedar St., Angleton

Registration opens January 13

Classes: Tues evenings 5:30 – 8:30
Sat. 9 am – Noon

Field sessions: Saturday Noon – 3 pm

Please consider being a mentor or helping with field trips
Contact [Melanie Hollenshead](#)

Impact Data Through December 2024*

		November	December*	YTD
Hours	VT	808	867	14,470
	AT	77	43	2,212
	Total	885	910	15,229

Impact Data	Adults	47	0	8,485
	Youth	184	0	25,808
	Total	231	0	34,293

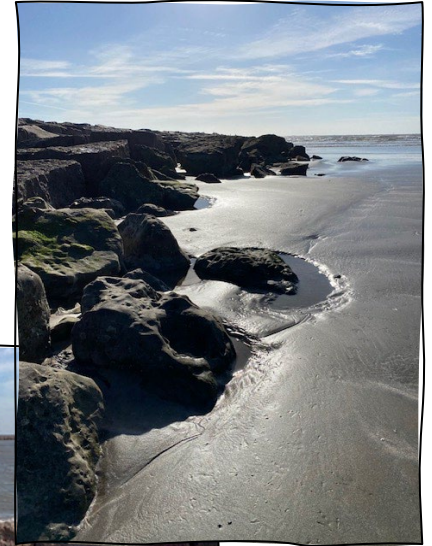
*will not be considered final until mid-February 2025

Dave Brandes, Data Manager

December Beach Sweep

Well, we had an interesting Beach Sweep, with some unusual items, i.e., shoe rack (see pics) and an epiphany moment by Luanne when she realized she could fill three buckets if she used her red wagon! We met a traveling nature photographer from Kerrville, TX., who was photographing the beauty that is inherent with beach ecology, and may be one of our future speakers. Hope you enjoy the pics that Luanne took of the beach flora and fauna.

*Blessings,
Jimmy & Luanne*



 Ocean Conservancy

**Thank you for cleaning up with
Clean Swell!**

Here's a summary of your recent cleanup:

Date	December 02, 2024
Duration	1 hours 48 minutes
Number of People	3
Weight of Trash Picked Up	84 lbs
Group Name	Team Q
Distance Covered	1.1 Miles



Your cleanup makes a difference! Thank you for being part of a global community, identifying ocean trash and helping find solutions. Check out what others are cleaning and more ways to get involved at <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/icc/>. (Reprint courtesy of Ocean Conservancy)

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
Immediate Past President	Mickey Dufilho, Brazoria
Training Director	Melanie Hollenshead, Brazoria
Membership Director	John Boettiger, Lake Jackson
Advanced Training Director	Kristine Rivers, Manvel
Volunteer Service Director	Oron Atkins, Lake Jackson
Outreach Director	Ruby Lewis, Angleton
Hospitality Director	Rose Wagner, Sweeny
Communications Director	Larry Peterson, Manvel
Training Class Representative 2024	Donna Rich, Angleton

Chapter Advisors	John O'Connell, AgriLife Extension Service Jordan Kieffer, TPWD Sea Center Texas
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Non-voting positions:

Chapter Librarian	Debbie Nance, Alvin
Data Manager	Dave Brandes, Lake Jackson

Newsletter Editor	Patty Brinkmeyer, Brazoria
Newsletter Contributors	Kathy Pittman, Dave Brandes, John Boettiger, Oron Atkins, Ruby Lewis, Jimmy Salinas, Luanne Salinas, Patty Brinkmeyer, Barbara Whaley, Richard Schaffhausen

Website	https://txmn.org/tmncot/
Facebook	http://facebook.com/TMN-COT
Twitter	https://twitter.com/tmncot
E-mail Listserv	http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail

Texas 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 the weekend following the monthly Board Meeting (first Wednesday of each month) by the Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter. Submissions are welcome; submission deadline is the day after the monthly Board meeting. Send submissions by e-mail to *Chapter News* Editor at news@tmn-cot.org. Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.

