



Chapter News

February 2025

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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 Queen butterfly on mistflower.

https://facebook.com/TMN.COT https://txmn.org/tmncot/

President's Message



People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument. ~ Will Rogers

Do you feel like we've been riding a crazy weather roller coaster? From a too warm November and December to a (thankfully short) January deep freeze, I'm just waiting for the ride to level off!

After the snow and thaw, what have you noticed that surprised you? What plants made it? Which didn't? I have been entranced by the choruses of frog song, in January. How do they survive the cold? Nature is a wondrous thing.

How are your powers of observation? How often do you slow down by a rice field to watch the sandhill cranes, one of my favorite winter residents? What about the kestrels or vermillion flycatchers? After the snowfall, I observed rabbit tracks on my front porch. Of course, I then bundled up to see where the trail went and then followed it backward to see where it originated. I'm not a hunter, but it brought back so many memories of listening to my father and his father and brothers trading hunting stories around a potbellied stove at their family home. Being a better observer has helped me to slow down and take things in and to learn more. It's a far better experience than rushing by and then trying to learn by reading it on the internet. Try it the next time you're outside.

Please plan to attend our February 12th Chapter meeting at 9 am, social time at 8:30 am. David Gwin with the USA National Phenology Network and TMN will be our speaker. 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

The February 12th 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 am	Social Time and Refreshments
9:00 – 9:15 am	Welcome and Awards
9:15 – 10:15 am	Speaker: David Gwin Advanced Training: Time to Restore: Connecting People, Plants and Pollinators (Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting)
10:15 – 11:00 am	General Membership Meeting (Hours for Volunteer Time (VT) TBD at close of meeting)





David Gwin is the Texas State Coordinator for USA-NPN's Time to Restore. In this capacity, he works with stakeholders across the Lone Star State to identify, setup and monitor sites that generate better information about nectar availability and fruit production to ultimately help inform those working on pollinator restoration to know what to plant and when to harvest seed.

David earned his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science degrees from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. After completing his formal education, he spent over three decades in professional public service with six Texas communities in developing, administering, and refining their local economies. Since leaving municipal service, David has wholly devoted himself to his lifelong passion, which is better understanding, actively appreciating, and enthusiastically conserving our diverse natural resources. He was certified as a Texas Master Naturalist in 2005 and has been an active participant in that statewide volunteer service effort in four different ecoregions of the state. In his free time, David loves hiking, camping, and almost anything else that keeps him out in the wilder parts of Texas.

Outreach Opportunities

DEEP - Thursday, February 20th and Thursday, February 27th. - West Columbia Elementary (3rd grade) Tuesday, March 4th and Thursday, March 6th. Bess Brannan Elementary (4th grade)

Spring Break BNWR Discovery Center Open House – March 8 – 16, 11 am to 4 pm; contact Ruby Lewis

GCBO Spring Fling – Daily, April 5-May 4. Host Station at <u>Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary</u>. The morning shift is 9:00-12:30 and the afternoon is 12:30-4:00. <u>Sign up on the calendar</u> or contact <u>Celeste Silling</u>.

<u>Migration Celebration</u> – April 26 & 27, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm; San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge; Contact <u>Barbara Whaley</u>

Public Outreach Director - Text, phone, or email Ruby Lewis; ph. 979-583-7903

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

Volunteer Opportunities

Great Backyard Bird Count – February 14-17, 2025 – self-directed https://www.birdcount.org/

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

<u>NestFest 2025</u> – Follett's Island, Tuesday, March 11, 9:00 am – noon. Join NestFest to remove marine debris from important coastal habitats that are used by beach nesting bird and sea turtle species. Volunteer participation will require registration. <u>https://www.splashtx.org/nestfest</u>

Exploration Green Workday – every Wednesday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; contact 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

Adopt-a-Loop for TMN – self-directed; contact <u>Debbie Nance</u> or Cris Tobola.

DFNC Educational Pond and Native Garden Habitat Workdays – future date(s)? – contact Kathy Pittman

TMN-COT iNaturalist Data Collection Project; contact Amanda Gabehart



VT Opportunity Spotlight

Beach Sweep



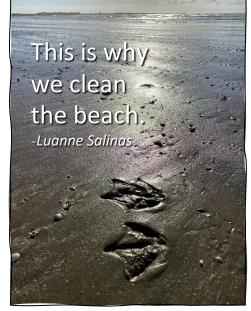


Photo by Luanne Salinas

Click graphic for more info on the CleanSwell app!



Contributed by Patty Brinkmeyer

Chapter Members, Jimmy and Luanne Salinas (dubbed Team Q) lead a beach cleaning effort monthly on Quintana Beach. It has been a project dear to their hearts for many years. They use the <u>Ocean Conservancy</u> Clean Swell app to collect data on the trash that is being found on Texas beaches. Please join the many TMN-COT members of Team Q that regularly assist in the monthly clean-ups, and bring your friends and family as well! What better way to teach children to be good stewards of the earth?

Check out these statistics since Team Q began recording data in 2020 year to date:

	TOP 15				
	ITEM	TOTAL	PERCENT		
1	Beverage bottles (plastic)	6974	15.77%		
2	2 Other waste (metal, paper, etc.) 5907 13.3				
3	3 Beverage cans 4536 10.26				
4	Bottle caps (plastic)	3838	8.68%		
5	5 Other trash (Clean Swell) 3071 6.94				
6	6 Grocery bags (plastic) 2340 5.2				
7	7 Lines, nets, traps, ropes, etc. 2049 4.				
8	Beverage bottles (glass)	1556	3.52%		
9	Plastic pieces	1429	3.23%		
10	Food wrappers (candy, chips, etc.)	1354	3.06%		
11	Cigarette butts	1082	2.45%		
12	12 Plastic/foam pieces 993		2.25%		
13	Bottle caps (metal)	1.54%			
14	Lids (plastic)	617	1.40%		
15	Straws/stirrers (plastic)	589	1.33%		
12 13 14	Plastic/foam pieces Bottle caps (metal) Lids (plastic)	993 679 617	2.25% 1.54% 1.40%		

Data courtesy of TIDES

6,472

8.2 TONS!

LBS OF TRASH

Since 2020

Certifications January 2025

Congratulations to all!

Certifications

Amanda Smith Robin Townsend



John Boettiger, Membership Director

Recertifications

Glenn Cullinane (2024)



John Boettiger, David Dungan, Kathy Pittman At the January TMN meeting David Dungan received the Bronze Dragonfly pin for attaining the 250 volunteer hour milestone.

> NOTICE! 2024 VT and AT hours must be entered into VMS by February 14, 2024 to be counted!

In Memory of...

Our chapter lost 2 members from the Class of 2014; Kim Richardson and Lorna Witt. They will be deeply missed.



Kim Richardson



Nature/Public Access Service Project



On January 11th, TMN-COT chapter members and Friends members replaced platform deck boards at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

A beautiful job as always by this group of guys.

Photos by Richard Schaffhausen





Oron Atkins George Valadez Tom Taroni Martin Hagne Robin Townsend Richard Schaffhausen







Insect Insights

Contributed by Marlon Nation



"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see." - Henry David Thoreau

Hurricane Beryl will not be soon forgotten. Earlier this summer, this storm's fury brought destruction and damage to many in this part of the country. Nearly 3 million schools, homes, and businesses lost power and refrigeration. As a result, like many others, I threw out pounds of food including several pounds of meat. One day during the recovery and cleanup, I stood by as the sanitation truck lifted our full trash containers and placed them gently back to the ground. As I glanced inside before closing the lid, there they were. Maggots. crowded, crawling and creeping, seemingly upset that their food source has been taken away. I stood and looked at them with revulsion for a moment, then I grabbed the water hose.

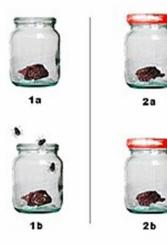
You don't have to be an Entomologist or Naturalist to understand the revulsion that these creatures provoke. Often labeled as despicable, disgusting, and dreadful, maggots, (*Lucilia sericata*, *Phaenicia sericata*) or fly larva play a unique and specialized role in the biosphere. It's appealing to always focus on nature's beauty, majesty, and splendor, but I've never heard those words associated with maggots. More often I hear, "EEWWWW!" But they are a part of creation, described in depth in the field of Entomology. I have no affinity for them one way or the other, but I can respect them as a part of the environment.

Popular culture has assigned the maggot to a place that does little to change its perception. Witness Mr. Archer J. **Maggot**, a repulsive character in the film, *"The Dirty Dozen"* (1967) Or recount the words of Army Gunnery Sergeant Hartman from the movie, *"Full Metal Jacket"* (1987). When addressing a new group of Army trainees at boot camp he screams, "From now on, you will speak only when spoken to, and the first and last words out of your filthy sewers will be "Sir!!" Do you **"maggots**" understand that?" Now, I don't pretend to know how maggots feel but as a Veteran and having witnessed some of these poignant one-way conversations, you can start to feel like one. Nonetheless, these creatures have unique qualities and capabilities that may not be fully appreciated. In fact, for some they are "crime fighters or medical assistants." Demonstrating the efficiency and utility of nature.

As a Naturalist, I'm always surprised at my limited knowledge of the natural world. While new discoveries may decrease my ignorance, it also opens new areas of discovery and inquiry. My Muse is a strange thing, but always worth a listen. I realize that this curiosity may not be shared with many. In fact, prior to this writing, I asked myself, what can I say about maggots other than how to get rid of them?

In earlier thinking, maggots seemed to appear out of nowhere. Having no visible signs of conception or emergence. This theory known as "Spontaneous generation," is easy to assume because I'm certain that there were no maggots in the trash can prior to setting it out. Yet there they were. The natural question is where did these things come from?

Francesco Redi, an Italian physician, naturalist, poet, and biologist disproved this theory by proving that maggots come from the eggs of flies. In short, in his experimentation, "Redi covered the tops of one group of jars containing decaying meat with fine gauze so that only air could get in. He left the other group open. After several days, he saw maggots appear on the objects in the open jars, on which flies had been able to land, but not in the gauze-covered jars. In the second experiment, meat was kept in three jars. One of the jars was uncovered, and two of the jars were covered, one with cork and the other one with gauze. Flies could only enter the uncovered jar, and in this, maggots appeared. In the jar that was covered with gauze, maggots appeared on the gauze but did not survive." Spontaneous generation was disproved. He had strengthened the adage that "all life comes from life." - unless biblically speaking.

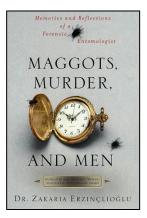


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Dr. Redi's work was revelatory and certainly contributed to Entomology and the varied uses of insects. Specifically, Forensic Entomology. According, to Joseph I, Matthew DG, Sathyan P and Vargheese G., in their article, "**The use of insects in forensic investigations: An overview on the scope of forensic entomology**", "Forensic entomology is the study of insects/arthropods in criminal investigation. Right from the early stages insects are attracted to the decomposing body and may lay eggs in it. By studying the insect population [Insect Succession] and the developing larval stages, forensic scientists can estimate the postmortem index, and any change in position of the corpse as well as the cause of death.

In other words, as mentioned in his work "**Maggots, Murder and Men**," Dr. Zakaria Erzinclioglu says, "As time passes and decomposition progresses, different insect species will be attracted to the body at different stages of decay... Based on the fact that anything that changes with time can be used as a clock, the succession of insects occurring on a dead body can, in principle, be exploited as a measure of time since death."

Further highlighting the utility of these organisms, the Texas A&M Forensic Laboratory for Investigative Entomological Sciences (FLIES), in an article entitled, **"Forensic Entomology: The Utility of Arthropods in Legal Investigations**, the authors write, "The use of entomology in crime scene and forensic investigations has never been more prevalent or useful given the work that can be done with entomological evidence." Therefore, by harnessing and exploiting the natural proclivities and development of these insects we have discovered they can play a key role in solving crimes.



Furthermore, the utilization of maggots is not just resigned to their "crime fighting" roles. They can also be employed as "medical assistants," employed in healing of the human body. "In the 2003 National Geographic Documentary, "**Creepy Cures**", Dr. David G. Armstrong, Professor of Surgery and Neurological Surgery at the University of Southern California and co-Founder of the Southwestern Academic Limb Salvage Alliance (SALSA) says, "maggots have cleaned wounds and rid the body of infection since long before the Civil War, but with the invention of penicillin and other antibiotics were discarded and forgotten, until now." SALSA is dedicated to reducing amputations and improving the quality of life in persons with diabetes and wounds worldwide."



In Maggot Debridement Therapy, sterile maggots are used to breakdown dead tissue and enhance the healing process. Of course, the words "sterile maggots" may seem like a misnomer. However, these type maggots are not found at the bottom of a garbage can. They are bred in a controlled lab setting, where the female flies lay eggs on a sterile food source. The eggs are carefully cleaned and disinfected with chemicals to eliminate surface bacteria before hatching. The entire process, from egg collection to maggot harvesting, is conducted under sterile conditions to maintain cleanliness. All suppliers of these maggots must be licensed, and the process is wholly regulated. Nonetheless, I think that it would take a physician with an exceptional bedside manner to suggest or recommend to a patient that "Maggot Therapy" would be a viable option. I'm sure the words "EEWWWW!' mentioned earlier may be part of that conversation.

Creation continues to provide, and nature continues to surprise. In this case we see that the repulsive maggot can play a role in crime fighting and healing. As mentioned in "The Intellectual Life," by A.G. Sertillanges, O.P., "Everything in nature is exactly measured, without vain effort and without false estimates. Every creature acts according to its quality, its nature, (it's instinct) and its power... "As Naturalists, we look at many things but in echoing Mr. Thoreau's words when it comes to nature, "It's not what you look at that matters, but what you see."

"The Dirty Dozen." Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1967.

Erzinőclio*glu, Zakaria. Maggots, Murder, and Men: Memories and Reflections of a Forensic Entomologist. Thomas Dunne Books, 2000.

"Francesco Redi." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., www.britannica.com/biography/Francesco-Redi. Accessed 17 Oct. 2024.

"Full Metal Jacket." Warner Home Video, 2007.

Depaoli Gustavo, et al. "Who We Are - DF Blog." DF Blog On Diabetic Foot, Wound Healing, Amputation Prevention, and the Merger of Consumer Tech with Medical Devices, 10 Nov. 2022, diabeticfootonline.com/about/.

Save the Date

GCBO Spring Fling

When: April 5 – May 4 Daily AM shifts, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm PM shifts, 12:30 – 4 pm Where: Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary

Spring Fling is one of GCBO's most popular events and they need a lot of help to make it happen! This includes opening/closing the kiosk, selling drinks, snacks, and merchandise, feeding oranges to the birds, and answering visitor questions. You don't need to be a "Bird Expert" to volunteer. It's a great way to learn more from all the experts who drop by and are willing to share. Click for more info and to sign up.

Migration Celebration

When:	April 26 & 27, 11 am – 4 pm
Set up:	April 25, 8 am – 1 pm
Where:	San Bernard National
	Wildlife Refuge

Migration Celebration requires all hands on deck and offers a plethora of activities for volunteers. There is something in everyone's wheelhouse to contribute to, including multiple critter encounters, sporting activities, arts and education. Contact Barbara Whaley for assignments.

Chapter photogs need to start shooting, and thinking about what to submit in the photo contest. Entry deadline is March 1st.

Impact Data 2025*

		January*	YTD
Hours	VT	623	623
	AT	105	105
	Total	728	728
	Adults	0	0
Impact Data	Youth	0	0
	Total	0	0

*will not be considered final until mid-March 2025

Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Acoustic Bat Monitoring Update

Contributed by Mickey Dufilho

2024 Data - The chapter has purchased a subscription to Kaleidoscope Pro Software. We have done the preliminary run of the 2024 data and have used the auto ID function to give preliminary results. Larry Peterson has all the data, and he is playing around with the manual ID verification, using certain criteria defined by Craig. Once he gets comfortable with the manual process, he will get together with Rose Wagner and Hannah Becket and train them on the process. This is not an easy process and requires not only skill, but a certain amount of creative thinking. So stay tuned.

NABat Species Code	Common Name	Scientific Name	SCGN	Brazoria County	Comments	Sites Found in Brazoria County 2024
CORRAF	Rafinesque Big Eared	<u>Corynorhinus</u> <u>rafinesquii</u>	S2-Imperiled	Rare year-round	Needs careful watching because of its scarcity	0
EPTFUS	Big Brown	<u>Eptesicus fuscus</u> <u>2- Subspecies</u>	S5 - Secure	Common year-round	Do not know how it is doing in Texas	7
LASNOC	Silver Haired	<u>Lasionycteris</u> noctivagans	NO	Uncommon Migrant	High Mortality – Wind Turbines	7
LASBOR	Eastern Red	Lasiurus borealis	S4- Apparently Secure	Common year-round	High Mortality – Wind Turbines	9
LASCIN	Hoary	Lasiurus cinereus	S3-Vulnerable	Common Migrant	High Mortality – Wind Turbines	7
LASINT	Northern Yellow	Lasiurus intermedius <u>2 Subspecies</u>	S4- Apparently Secure	Uncommon year-round		7
LASSEM	Seminole	Lasiurus seminolus	S3-Vulnerable	Common year-round		5
MYOAUS	Southeastern Myotis	<u>Myotis austroriparius</u>	S3-Vulnerable	Found in surrounding counties	Species in some states is listed as endangered.	0
NYCHUM	Evening	Nycticeius humeralis	NO	Uncommon year-round		8
NYCMAC	Big Free Tailed	<u>Nyctinomops</u> <u>macrotis</u>	S3-Vulnerable	Common year-round		0
PERSUB	Tri-colored (American Perimyotis)	Perimyotis subflavus 2 Subspecies	S2-Imperiled	Common year-round	About to be listed as endangered	6
TADBRA	Brazilian Free-tailed 2 subspecies	<u>Tadarida brasiliensis</u>	NO	Common year-round	Most common bat in Texas	11

Bats of Brazoria County with Species Code

Continued next page...

2024 - We learned a lot from this pilot year. We learned the Audio moth (small detector) was not very good, was difficult to program, lost its mind periodically and did not pick up very many species. We learned the Mini Bat leaked when it rained and fortunately shut down to protect the electronics, so it did not record when we thought it was on. It also required you to program using an app. It did pick up a lot of species. We also did not have a very convenient way to check battery and SD card levels. We used more SD cards and batteries than we needed because we just did not have that information readily available. We finally established a protocol for programming after several different iterations. The mounting posts and plates worked well and were easy to transport from site to site. Now that we have our own Kaleidoscope Pro Software, we can do evaluation of data as we get it rather than waiting until the end of the sample period.

2025 - So, what is coming up for 2025. We are ditching both detectors we used last year and will have new and improved detectors. These are so much better - see a slide below. It uses D-cell batteries which last a long time. It has two SD cards and may be able to store for the entire sampling period. The unit has a way to check battery life and SD card storage. It programs very easily right on the unit. It has an external microphone, and it is more sensitive and has higher quality recording. Craig Hensley will be coming to present to our Chapter for AT day and will be bringing our units. I am hoping we can schedule an hour or so of training on the new unit. If not, I will do the training. Use this link if you want to read more about it. <u>Song Meter SM4 Wildlife Audio Recorder | Wildlife Acoustics</u>



SONG METER SM4 ACOUSTIC RECORDER

- High quality recordings to maximize detection and fidelity
- Two channels for more recording flexibility
- Easy-to-use scheduling choose a schedule or create your own.
- Large storage capacity to capture terabytes of data

2025 sample period will be April 28 - June 27. Please let me know if you are still willing to participate for this year. I expect it will be the same format with two sessions at each location and it will be a lot less work with programming and worrying about batteries and SD cards. If you have any questions, please send me a note at <u>Mickey Dufilho</u> or call me 979-373-4090.

February Beach Sweep

Great day to be out on the beach!

The fog was in but quickly burned off after the sunrise. We had a good group including Jim, Kyle, Kathy, Scott, Gayle and some new friends, Danny and Dana from the Waco area who also own a home in Freeport, This was their first experience, and they totally enjoyed it. Possible future Master Naturalists!

The beach and parking area at the Quintana Jetties didn't look too bad initially, but when you start doing a "deep clean" trash items surface for sure. Plastic bottles led the count with aluminum cans, and fishing line at 2nd and 3rd. The volume of discarded fishing line is disturbing since these are lethal entanglement traps waiting to ensnare wildlife. Jim Calvert mixed beach sweep with wetting a line.

Enjoy the pics (Shrike photo brought back memories) and March 3, at 8 am will be our next Beach Sweep effort.







Blessings, Jimmy & Luanne





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

Cradle of Texas Chapter Board			
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TEXAS A&M GREENESION 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.			