



Chapter News

January 2026

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Cradle of Texas Chapter

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President's Message



"The old year is worn and tired. Time now to kiss it goodbye. Take with you its wisdom – the authority and the power of all you have learned. Remember the past year with love, but let go of its despair. Live the year that lies ahead with fresh energy and hope. Be strong, have courage. It is time now for something new"

~ Unknown

Happy New Year 2026! I hope that you all had time over the holidays to rest and renew your body, visit with friends and family, and take time off from your "day to day" schedule. While I enjoy the holidays, I long for my "usual schedule" and am looking forward to getting back to my "normal routine"!

How will you remember 2025 and how do you plan to navigate 2026? With everything that vies for our attention, consideration, and time, how do we prioritize what truly matters to us? It is hard to tune out the noise and look at our world with clear vision. January 6th is traditionally known as Three Kings Day or the Epiphany, when the Magi visited the Infant Jesus in Bethlehem. The wise men followed the star for some time and finally arrived at their destination. In our Master Naturalist roles, we have many wonderful role models who have led the way before us. Perhaps we read about Aldo Leopold and John Muir or followed the work of Jane Goodall and many other inspirational environmental heroes. Whose "star" will you follow in 2026? While scanning the daily news blogs, I came across a reference to a research paper that identified "biophobia" or "a fear of nature" as a "new threat" to mental health, as well as to conservation efforts. How is it that this is considered "new"? As Master Naturalists, we work very hard to bring the outdoors to the public and make it understandable. By successfully interpreting and sharing information about our natural areas and about native species and their habits, we encourage the public to have empathy for and to care about Nature around them. We've been educating against "biophobia" for years, and we will continue our work in 2026!

Our next meeting will be on January 14th, at 6 pm at AgriLife. Member Barbara Whaley will speak on "Entomophagy – the Art of Eating Insects." We will also thank our outgoing Board Officers for their service and welcome our new Officers and have a "2025 in review" I hope you will join us!

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

January Chapter Meeting

The January 14th 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: Barbara Whaley Topic: Entomophagy: the practice of eating insects 
7:30 – 8:00 pm	General Membership Meeting <i>(Hours for Volunteer Service (VS) and Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting)</i>



Barbara Whaley is a graduate of the Spring 2023 intern class of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. She loved the training she received so much that she became the Intern Training Director for the Spring and Fall 2025 classes and plans on training a new group of interns in the Fall of 2026. Prior to jumping in with both feet, she worked for the Alvin Independent School District as a junior high teacher's aide and then in the Human Resources Department. Barbara states that she is living her best life and that this is the best thing she has ever done for herself and for others, as the love of nature and volunteering runs through her veins.

Barbara is a member of Gulf Coast Bird Observatory; Houston Audubon Society; Texas Ornithological Society; Native Plant Society of Texas and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (FOBWR) where she is the volunteer coordinator for Migration Celebration. She volunteers at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge during the Winter and Spring Break Open Houses and for the Discovery Environmental Education Program (DEEP) and Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's Extreme Hummingbird Extravaganza and Spring Fling. She is also very active with the Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research where she is part of the Sea Aggie Turtle Patrol and Sea Turtle Rescue and Recovery Team.

February Speaker: Maureen Wilde - Sea Beans

Outreach Opportunities

Spring Break BNWR Discovery Center Open House – Dates TBA; contact [Ruby Lewis](#)

DEEP at BNWR – 2/17 and 2/19 – contact [Lee Gaston](#)

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

Advanced Training Opportunity:

TPWD will be hosting a **Kayaking Certification Training** on **February 3rd through February 6th** at Camp Mohawk in Alvin, TX. This fee is significantly reduced to **\$230 per person** (compared to around ~\$700ish at a standard value). This will afford individuals the opportunity to receive Instructor Certification to teach up to Level 2 Coastal Kayaking Skills. Skills would include water safety, proper paddling technique, and group management skills. Contact [Jordan Keiffer](#)
Here is the course link: [ACA Level 2 Coastal Kayaking Instructor Certification Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](#)

Volunteer Opportunities

Beach Sweep – Monday, February 2 (weather permitting), 8:00 am – 10:00 am

Contact [Jimmy Salinas](#) 979-824-4008 or [Luanne Salinas](#)

Odd months: Meet at the Quintana Jetty parking area.

Even months: Meet on the beach at the Quintana Beach 16th street entrance.

Spring Intern Class – Begins February 7th; Contact [Melanie Hollenshead](#) if you can assist.

Spring AT Day – February 28th, Location TBA; Contact [Kristine Rivers](#) if you can assist.

Dunes Day 2025 – BCPD- January 24, 9 – noon. Stake down recycleed Christmas Trees for dune protection.

Contact: [Nathan Murphy](#) (979)864-1152

Great Texas Bat Bridge Survey – January 18th, Location TBA; contact [Mickey Dufhilo](#)

ONGOING:

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

Camp Mohawk Pocket Prairie – workdays TBA; contact [Dick Schaffhausen](#)

Resoft Park Pollinator Gardens – workdays TBA; contact [Kate Harris](#)

DFNC Educational Pond and Native Garden Habitat Workdays – January 15th & 17th , 9 am – noon

3rd Saturdays and preceding Thursday, Contact [Kathy Pittman](#)

Upcoming Construction Projects (TBA) – contact [Oron Atkins](#)

Citizen Science:

TMN-COT iNaturalist Data Collection Project; contact [Amanda Gabehart](#)

Trash Collection/Disposal Analysis Project – self-directed; [BCPD](#)

Adopt-a-Loop for TMN – self-directed; contact [Cris Tobola](#).

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

Time to Restore Project – self-directed; contact [Kathy Pittman](#)

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- BCPD Dunes Day
- Deck replacement on GCBO birding tower

FEBRUARY

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Spring Intern Training Class
- Sand Dune Native Grass Planting
- DEEP
- Spring Advanced Training Day

MARCH

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Spring Intern Training Class
- Brazoria Heritage Day
- CBF Abandoned Crab Trap Removal
- DEEP
- NestFest - Follett's Island
- Spring Break BNWR Discovery Center Open House

APRIL

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Spring Intern Training Class
- Spring Fling
- Migration Celebration
- DEEP
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

MAY

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Spring Fling
- DEEP
- Acoustic Bat Monitoring Project
- Deck demo and construction at Smith Point Hawk Watch mobile home for GCBO
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

JUNE

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- BCLS Summer Reading Club
- Sea Center Texas - Youth Fishing Day
- BCPD Camp Mohawk Nature Camp
- Acoustic Bat Monitoring Project
- GCBO Smith Point Hawk Watch Mobile Home: install new appliances, lighting and misc.
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

JULY

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- BCLS Summer Reading Club
- Habitat for the Hungry - Construct butterfly flight cage
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

AUGUST

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- SCT Shark Celebration
- SPLASH Freeport Bryan Beach Clean-up
- GCBO - Constructed 9 tabletop easels
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

SEPTEMBER

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Fall Intern Training Class
- GCBO Extreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza
- Sea Center Texas - Youth Fishing Day
- Texas GLO Adopt-a-Beach
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

OCTOBER

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Fall Intern Training Class
- Fall Field Day
- Kids FishFest at Bass Pro Shops
- KBR Kids Day
- First Presbyterian Church Trunk or Treat
- BEES Open Garden Days - Texas Pollinator BioBlitz
- SCT Halloween Spooktacular
- TNC: Construct deck with steps at Dolan Falls
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

NOVEMBER

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Fall Intern Training Class
- Stephen F Austin County Park - School Field Trips
- Agriculture Awareness Day - Captain Shishka Bob
- Keep Pearland Beautiful Plant Thyme Luncheon
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

DECEMBER

- Quintana Beach Sweep
- Wetland Planting - Eagle Nest Lake Unit
- Brazos Bend State Park - Holiday in the Park
- SCT Christmas With the Fishes
- Hog-Wild Holiday Feast
- Christmas Bird Counts
- BNWR Discovery Center Open House
- GCBO: Field house interior renovations
- Eagle Nest Wet Meadows native grass planting
- DFNC Habitat Workdays

Year around as scheduled

- Camp Mohawk pocket prairie workdays
- Resoft Park pollinator garden workdays



2025 CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Kudos to the talented COT members that stay busy all year doing construction projects for our partners. Led by Crew Chief, Oron Atkins, these members take on all manner of projects, from doing small repairs to constructing massive boardwalks. These are just a few of the projects from 2025.



Replaced rotted deck on the birding tower
at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

Work Crew: Robin Townsend, George Valadez,
Dick Schaffhausen, Tom Taroni, Oron Atkins



Butterfly enclosure built for Habitat for the Hungry
Work Crew: George Valadez, David Heinicke,
Tom Taroni, Oron Atkins



Tabletop easels for use by
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
Work Crew: Oron Atkins

2025 CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS



Before and after on this project for The Nature Conservancy.

Construct 10 x 19 ft Deck with steps at Dolan Falls

Work Crew: George Valadez, David Heinicke, Tom Taroni,
Sam Dufilho, Oron Atkins



Demo old, and construct new deck and steps at GCBO Smith Point Hawk Watch Tower Mobile Home

Work Crew: Robin Townsend,
George Valadez, Tom Taroni,
Sam Dufilho, Brian Kolthammer,
Martin Hagne, Caleb Clarkson,
Oron Atkins

Certifications December 2025

Congratulations to all!

Initial Certifications

Susan Barnes
Nannette Daugherty



2025 Pin
Roadrunner
*John Boettiger,
Membership Director*

Recertifications

Sarah Castillo
Alyssa Corona
Brian Hanson
Denis James
Vicki Kirby
Tara Lawrence-Johnson
Sharajane Marcy

November Certifications recognized at the December meeting:



Ruby Lewis, Lynne Ray, Gene Taylor, Sherry Summers, Kyle Purvis
Kathy Pittman; President, Mike Hampy

20TH ANNUAL HOG-WILD HOLIDAY FEAST

On December 10, Chapter members gathered at the home of Ed Barrios for the annual Hog-Wild Holiday Feast. We all waited patiently for the hog to come off the pit, but it was worth the wait. The spread turned out to be a smorgasbord of desserts and appetizers! Next year we will set up a “what are you bringing” chain so we get a mix of side dishes included! The weather could not have been better, and some of us even left with plant cuttings from Ed. It was a wonderful day of fellowship.



Photos by Richard Schaffhausen and Angela Griffin



Welcome our newest Officers for 2026

Donna
Rich
Secretary



Amanda
Smith
Treasurer



Our gratitude to Past Secretary, **Kathy Purvis** and Past Treasurer, **Don Sabathier** for their many years of service to the Cradle of Texas Chapter!

TMN-COT December 2025 Impact Data		December*	YTD
Hours	VT	541	12,573
	AT	69	2,169
	Total	610	14,742
Impact Data	Adults**	1	5,160
	Youth**	3	13,409
	Total	4	18,569

*will not be considered final until mid-February 2026

**Incomplete reporting for December

Dave Brandes, Data Manager

BNWR OPEN HOUSE

COT members joined the Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges at our last outreach event of the year; the annual Open House at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge. 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, microscope pond life, animal tracks, leaf rubbing, owl pellets, and wingspan measuring.



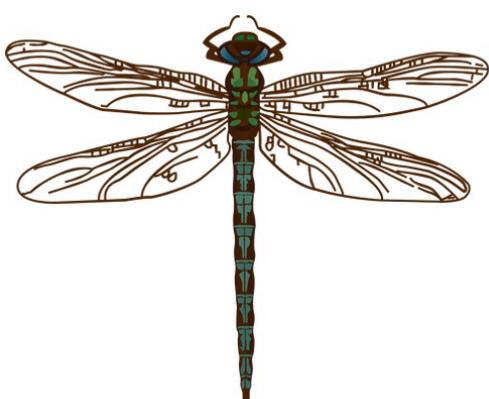


Fall Intern Class of 2025 Graduation

Congratulations!



Front L-R Susan Barnes, Shannon Wilson, Carrie Scott, Julie Orr, Barb Whaley; Training Director
Back L-R Ronald McLaughlin, Nannette Daugherty, Becky Blaylock, Barb Lund, Larry Curtner. Not pictured: Ed Stiles



Fall Intern Class of 2025

Special Thanks to

Training Director – Barbara Whaley

Instructors and Support Team:

John O'Connell

Mary Schwartz

Patty Brinkmeyer

Ed Barrios

Luanne Salinas

Jimmy Salinas

Jim Nance

Debbie Nance

Dave Brandes

Dick Schaffhausen

Mike Mullenweg

Sarah Castillo

David Heinicke

Betty Skweres

David Skweres

Mickey Dufilho

Mel McKey

Alyssa Corona

Susan Conaty

Kristine Rivers

John Boettiger

Marlon Nation

Kate Harris

Brenda Stitt

Cris Tobola

Chris Kneupper

Marty Cornell

Angela Griffin

Amanda Smith



December Beach Sweep

Can you say windy and cold? That's what the brave naturalists had to contend with as we knocked out a lot of trash and entrapment material (see photos) that was just waiting there to entrap wildlife. There were seven of us. I dubbed us "The Magnificent 7" for braving the elements to make a difference. Yes, today was a challenge and our thanks go out to all who came out and witnessed the elements of winter on the beach.

God Bless All of You!
Jimmy & Luanne



2025
Total:
Pounds:
1806
Items:
9272

2025 Top Ten Items — Quintana, TX

	Item	Total	Percent
1	Other waste (metal, paper, etc.)	1849	19.94%
2	Beverage bottles (plastic)	1557	16.79%
3	Bottle caps (plastic)	1207	13.02%
4	Beverage cans	938	10.12%
5	Lines, nets, traps, ropes, etc.	683	7.37%
6	Grocery bags (plastic)	491	5.30%
7	Other plastic waste	385	4.15%
8	Beverage bottles (glass)	234	2.52%
9	Plastic/foam pieces	197	2.12%
10	Cigarette butts	193	2.08%

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	Donna Rich, Angleton
Treasurer	Amanda Smith, Angleton
State Representative	David Skweres, Houston
Immediate Past President	Mickey Dufilho, Brazoria
Spring Training Director	Melanie Hollenshead
Fall Training Director	Barbara Whaley, Alvin
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	Patty Brinkmeyer, Brazoria
Training Class Representative 2025	Betty Skweres, Houston
Training Class Representative 2025	Nannette Daugherty
Chapter Advisors	John O'Connell, AgriLife Extension Service Jordan Kieffer, TPWD Sea Center Texas
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, Barbara Whaley, Jimmy Salinas, Luanne Salinas, Patty Brinkmeyer, Richard Schaffhausen, Angela Griffin

Website	https://txmn.org/tmncot/
Facebook	http://facebook.com/TMN-COT
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 COT members 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 5:00 PM on Thursday before the last weekend of the month preceding the newsletter.

Send submissions by e-mail to *Chapter News* Editor at news@tmn-cot.org.

Submissions may be edited for clarity and spacing.

