

# TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



## CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER Chapter News – June 2006 Editor, Mary Helen Israel

### Message from the President

Howdy (wait, that's Rich's Line)!! I've been able to accompany Carolyn May-Monie on a few partner agreement meetings lately and it's been a blast. Why? Well our partners are so excited about us helping them out with projects. Folks, we are really appreciated for our help and expertise. We have identified several great projects that need to be worked on but we need project leaders. Currently we need leaders for:

- Innovene (INEOS) who wants to restore about 1/2 acre of prairie and wetlands for their Environmental Education program
- Innovene (INEOS) Environmental Education program with Angleton School district and to expand to Danbury School District
- ConocoPhillips Environmental Education program with the Sweeny School District
- Brazoria County Parks Camp Mohawk Interpretative Trail Signs

So if you are interested in helping our partners on these important projects please contact Carolyn or myself. We have 80+ talented Master Naturalists in our chapter, so the odds of finding some project leaders are good.

Thanks and have a great summer,  
Ed Barrios

Texas Master Naturalist – Cradle  
of Texas Chapter

<http://grovesite.com/tamu/tmn>

**Board of Directors Meeting  
May 8, 2006 – Minutes**

**Opening:** Attendees Carolyn May-Monie, Alice Sieling, Ed Barrios, Tom Morris, John Boettiger, Barbara Burkhardt, John Thayer, Jerry Eppner, John Marshall, Jan Kater, Jerry Krampota, Rich Tillman, and Marty Cornell were welcomed to the meeting by President Ed Barrios at 8:10 AM.

### **Interest Group Communication to Membership:**

Barbara Burkhardt and Marty Cornell presented their Common Interest Group draft to the board. The open availability of Common Interest Groups to all members was stressed and the language of the draft was corrected for clarity. Tom Morris made a motion to approve the draft as amended. Rich Tillman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The draft will be presented to the general membership for discussion May 10, 2006.

### **Volunteer Service Coordinator**

**Update:** Carol May-Monie announced that TMN-COT has signed its first ever Partner

Agreement and Project Form with Varner Hogg State Park with an appendix for the Levi-Jordan Plantation Project. The parks will be surveyed four times during the year to obtain a comprehensive list of plants and animals on the sites. This list will be used as a guide for visitors to the parks. Jim Renfro suggested that such a Project Agreement would be a better fit for our relationship with Brazosport Community College than our current Partner Agreement. The Project Agreement would allow TMN-COT to develop just a project for an organization without being a partner. Barbara Burkhardt made a motion to approve the agreement. Tom Morris seconded. The motion passed. TMN-COT does not have a partnership agreement with ConocoPhillips. Thursday, May 11, 2006 will be a meeting between the Sweeny teachers and ConocoPhillips. Carolyn May-Monie suggested a new contact person be assigned from our group to work with ConocoPhillips. Phil Huxford was just assigned the survey of the site. Sandra Clarke felt the Sweeny teachers wished to be passive participants. Carolyn feels the teachers do wish to take an active role in the project. TMN-COT has 35 active members west of the Brazos who could volunteer for this project. Ed Barrios agreed to attend the May 11th meeting. A suggestion was made to have the Sweeny teachers visit the Discovery Center at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge to see what is possible for their project.

**Changes in Advanced Training Policies and Procedures:** John Thayer clarified that item E (Provide natural resource management issued and information applicable to Brazoria County and Texas where applicable) under Guidelines for Advanced Training pg. 17 in our TMN-COT Policies and Procedures is not part of

the state guidelines. John presented a draft of proposed changes to page 17. His proposal stresses that pre-approval is needed for all advanced training opportunities. However, advanced training opportunities presented by an approved list of state and local sponsors and chapter partners would be pre-approved. These advanced training opportunities would not need to be approved on a case by case basis. The approved list of state and local sponsors and chapter partners would be posted on our website. The state requires COT to approve advanced training hours. John Thayer will present a final copy of proposed changes at our next board meeting. An advanced training survey was suggested to help determine what our membership would like to see offered at our monthly meetings next year. A question to be included is whether members would be willing to pay between \$5 and \$20 for a speaker. Many of our regular speakers are reaching retirement age and will need at least trip expenses reimbursed. John Thayer is picking out what outside advanced training opportunities are available in other TMN chapters such as Golden Gulf Coast and Galveston Bay. These opportunities are listed on our website to increase the availability of this information to all members.

**Volunteer Service Survey Results:** Carolyn May-Monie presented the compilation of responses to questions #3 and #5 on her Volunteer Service Survey. The three top types of volunteer service activities in which members indicated interest (Question #3) were: 1) Habitat restoration - 8 responses, 2) Citizen Science - 9 responses, and 3) Environmental Education - 6 responses. Five respondents were interested in any project where there was a need for

volunteers. The new advanced training members indicated they would like to try (Question #5): Any needed for a new activity, was the top response - 10 responses. The results show varied interests among our members and a willingness to volunteer where needed.

**Member Resignations:** Ed Barrios announced that two resignations have been received by the board. Tracie Teague is joining the TMN Mid Coast Chapter and we will miss her greatly. Dr. Schwebel is resigning due to increased responsibilities with the National Heritage Site in Brazoria. This is the old Brazoria School. He will be setting up an environmental education room for the site. A suggestion was made to ask Dr. Schwebel to become inactive status instead of resigning. Barbara Burkhardt made motion to accept Tracie Teague's resignation and ask Dr. Schwebel to become an inactive member. Rich Tillman seconded. The motion passed.

**Treasurer's Report:** Jan Kater submitted the final budget for 2006. 2006 Class Revenues and Expenses: 25 trainees are projected for the 2006 class resulting in a projected income of 25 x \$130 per trainee or \$3250.00. 25 copies of state mandated curriculum, inserts and binders for the 2006 class are our largest expense: \$1250.00. This expense must be incurred in advance to prepare for the training class. \$125 was also budgeted for advertising this year to promote the class. This was not done in 2005. All food expenditures in 2006 were combined as class expenditures as the majority of food purchased is for class activities. \$2876.50 is the total projected class expense. A \$373.50 surplus over 2006 class expenditures is budgeted (\$3250 - \$2876.50) Non-class

revenues and expenses add up to a projected deficit of \$356.43, resulting in a projected profit of \$17.07 for 2006. However, this is not an acceptable surplus to budget. Sources of additional income should be researched. The assessment of dues is the solution used by most TMN chapters. Voluntary contributions are another possibility. The balance of the TMN-COT chapter bank account as of 4/30/2006 is \$2099.10. Jan Kater will send a copy of the 2006 budget to any interested member.

Barbara Burkhardt made motion to approve 2006 budget. Alice Sieling seconded. The motion passed.

**Volunteer Hours Discussion:** TMN Regional Meeting, February 3, 2006, handed out new guidelines for Volunteer Service Hours. We need to replace our old guidelines in our member handbooks. The Actual Volunteer Service Examples: page in our newsletter comes directly from these new guidelines. The board has had some questions concerning what is not approved in these examples.

Examples: Grant writing is only approved volunteer hours if the TMN Chapter is the immediate recipient of the grant. Greeters at Sea Center Texas or Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge are not approved volunteer hours. A suggestion is to divide this time into 1) wait time – no visitors and 2) docent time – when actively lecturing to visitors. Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue allows the first 3 hours of time spent on waiting for call as volunteer hours. All time spent picking up and driving birds are volunteer hours.

Barbara Burkhardt will write down each issue we have with these guidelines and contact Michelle Haggerty, TMN Volunteer State Coordinator. Members should send their volunteer hour concerns to

Barbara Burkhardt with copies to Tom Morris and Carolyn May-Monie.

**Background Checks:** Sandra Smith, Brazoria County Cooperative Extension Office Secretary, will collect the background forms each month and give them to Larry Miles, 4-H Extension Agent who will submit them to state. Ed Barrios will set up the collection process with Sandra Smith.

The next General Meeting will be held June 14, 2006 at 9:00 AM in the Brazoria County Cooperative Extension Office. Social ½ hour will be 8:30AM. The speaker is Kathy Adams Clark on "Wildlife Photography". The meeting adjourned at 10:18 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alice Seiling

Advanced Training, John Thayer

The advanced Training Committee has reviewed AT opportunities listed on nearby TMN Chapter Web Sites and has approved the advanced training opportunities listed in Attachment 1. If you find other opportunities not listed that you would like to attend, please submit a Request for Advanced Training form. This form can be downloaded from the FORMS page of our website.

<p align="center"><b>COT Texas Master Naturalist Awards May 10, 2006</b></p>
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**2006 Certification – 8 hrs AT and 40 hrs VT**

Georgia Monnerat

**Re-Certification- 8hrs AT and 40 hrs VT**

Barbara Bruyere  
Barbara Burkhardt  
Ellis Burkhardt  
Beura (Al) Childs\*  
Carl Dodson  
Jerry Eppner  
Anna Hay (2005)\*  
Sandy Jespersen (2005)\*  
Archie Pratt  
John Thayer  
Bob Woods

**Silver Award – 500 hrs**

Ellis Burkhardt  
John Marshall

**Gold Award – 1000 hrs**

Maurice Monie  
John Thayer

\*Absent previously

From the VP, John Boettiger

**\*\*What to Do Before a Hurricane \*\***

- 1) Take along the phone number for the Claims Department of your Insurance Company and your Insurance Policy Number.
- 2) Make a written inventory of the items in your home by room. Take photos in each room (a digital CD is easy to take with you).

***Attend our June 14th Monthly Meeting and get answers to your photo questions from our speaker, Kathy Adams Clark.***

- 3) Send a copy of your records to at least three friends (at least one who is not your next door neighbor).

- 4) Pay your bills at least two-days before you leave (the post office will not pick up mail within 24 hours of a storm).
- 5) Take along your credit cards (with at least \$1,000 available credit) and get some cash before you leave to take with you.
- 6) Protect the weakest points of your home (house & garage doors, windows) against storm damage.
- 7) Put away the loose stuff in your yard to minimize wind-driven damage.
- 8) Charge your cell phone and consider getting a phone charger that will work in your car (and, take the cell phone with you).
- 9) Tell several people where you and your family are going.

**Source:** USAA Insurance "Are You Prepared" (2006); Boy Scouts of America; my family and The Brazosport Facts.

### Please Recruit New COT Members, Marty & Carole Cornell

We have begun to accept applications for the 25 available spaces of our 2006 training program. The most effective method to attract new members is by personal contact, so current members are encouraged to actively help in recruitment.

The fall training classes will start on Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup> and will continue for the following ten Wednesdays, culminating in graduation on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Archeology, the twelfth class, will be held on Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup>. To certify as a Master Naturalist, interns are required to attend ten of these twelve classes, including their associated field trips. In addition they must perform 40 hours of volunteer work

and obtain eight hours of advanced training within the year following their training. This year, nine of these twelve classes will be held at the location of the field trips to minimize travel time and to maximize the exposure to the venues of our partner organizations. Once again, our speakers are all recognized experts in their subject, so these classes remain a bargain at \$130.

To sign up for the 2006 fall classes, have your friends contact Sandra Smith at the Brazoria County Texas Cooperative Extension at 979-388-1564 or at [sandrasb@brazoria-county.com](mailto:sandrasb@brazoria-county.com). Or, have them browse our web site to download an application form and the detailed class schedule.

### VOLUNTEERS AT THE REFUGE – IF WE CAN DO IT, SO CAN YOU!

“Hi! I’m Jan – and my wife is Jean! We’re your guides this morning on the Birds By Bus tour. We’re going to see some birds this morning you probably haven’t seen before, or at least haven’t known much about. But we bet that you’ve seen other birds and known how to identify them! What are your favorite birds?”

Hands fly in the air and bird names fill the bus! After a moment’s appreciation of each of their favorites, Jean and I comment as to whether we’re likely to see their favorites this morning.

And then we tell them the names of six to eight birds that they will be much more likely to see – White Ibis, Great White Egrets, Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks, Little Blue Herons, Black-Necked Stilts, Snowy Egrets, Killdeer Plovers – and maybe Roseate Spoonbills. And we assure them that we will see some alligators too!

Then we ask how many of them have used binoculars before. Most have, but a review of how to form one viewing circle by moving the barrels closer together, or farther apart, is followed by their experimenting with the focus wheel to see things up close and far away.

“What is one thing you don’t do with binoculars” we ask? A chorus shouts out – “we don’t look at the sun!” We emphasize that truism - before moving on to the birding areas. Already birds are flying singly and in formation within view of the bus. And red-winged blackbirds and grackles make up the majority.

As the bus starts us on our twenty-five minute tour of the Cross-Trails wetlands of Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, we bring up the subject of alligators again – a favorite subject for the kids - commenting that in most bodies of water they’ll see a nose, or the protruding eyes, or the back of an alligator. And Jean shares some lore about alligators – how long they get, where their nests are, how they get their young from the nest to the water, and what the cry of the young sounds like. Most recognize the plaintive cry from the Discovery Center, where one or two small alligators populate the fish tanks. No matter that they’ve heard the small alligators before! Repetition is one of the methods of education. And their enthusiastic love of participation has these fourth graders trying out their ability to produce the young alligator whimper. Now, we assure them, they’ll see much larger alligators!

Then we see an alligator just across the road, moving through the water slowly toward his favorite spot. And we see a whole gathering of Roseate Spoonbills and White Ibis across the pond, standing around discussing their latest shallow water feeding experience and how nice they all look in their distinctive plumage -

at least that’s what we imagine they are saying! And we ask the children, “How do these birds understand each other, and sometimes fly in formation together when they look so different – different bills, different colors except for white, and different wing tips?” Gets them thinking even if we don’t have the entire answer. At least we can say that both families are wading birds with bills, which though different, are used for the same purpose.

We’ve identified Eastern Kingbirds defending their territories, Meadowlarks blasting off to get away from the approaching bus, Killdeers protecting their nest full of eggs (4) in the pebbles on the roadside just twelve inches from the wheels of the bus - trying to lead the bus away from the area with their “broken wing” maneuver, a pair of Caracaras on the perch near the water pump as well as swooping over the wetlands, Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures standing around over some dead animal or soaring while looking for more, Northern Harriers, White-Tailed Kites, Red-Shouldered Hawks, and many others.

Watch for more info in our newsletters on the fun programs at the other learning stations at BNWR and the consummate teaching ability of your fellow COT members in manning these stations each week during the school year. Some learning stations function with a team of two or more docents, and others, like the bird bus tour, need only one docent each morning and one each afternoon – or you can serve mornings and afternoons!

If Jan and Jean can learn and impart this information in a short period of time, so can you! Marty Cornell’s informative Docent’s Guide with colored photographs of native birds and descriptive text was the

foundation we built on. And, Laura Brandes' gift of communication showed us many ways to share interesting facts with the kids. Marty has docent guides on the other learning station subjects too. Choose your subject and climb aboard the docent train. The refuge program needs you, the kids need you, and you need this thrill of learning through the eyes of a wonderful group of children.

An appreciative teacher wrote to all of us: "Thank you for such a wonderful day at the refuge. The kids really had a great time! As usual you all went past our expectations and brought a new part of the world to the kids' attention. Everyone I know that visits the refuge goes home a new person...adults and kids alike. Thank you for your dedication."

And Bryan Adams, Education Specialist at the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, put his appreciation of the contribution that we COT Chapter members make in these words: "Y'all

have done a phenomenal job at the refuge this year. Henry Adams said 'A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops' and you have certainly impacted children's lives in more ways than you can ever know. I feel greatly honored to be associated with people that really care about the future of our children and the environment."

Docent training can be any time, but beginning next September you'll have the advantage of the outdoors and indoors learning stations at which to hone your skills. This summer Marty Cornell can fill you in about school-year learning stations (979-297-2235). Give him a call or chat with him at one of our monthly COT chapter, board, or AT meetings. Bryan Adams will be around the BNWR Discovery Center the rest of the summer beginning the last week of July (979-299-9213), and will be drawing up a teaching schedule for the fall program. See you there!

### CRADLE OF TEXAS OFFICERS

President	Ed Barrios
Vice President/Program	John Boettiger
Secretary	Alice Sieling
Treasurer	Jan Kater
State Representative	Barbara Burkhardt
Past President	Carl Dodson
Membership Chair	Tom Morris
Training Chair	Marty Cornell
Volunteer Service Chair	Carolyn May-Monie
Resource Library	Jim Renfro
Advanced Training	
Coordinator	John Thayer
Outreach Chairman	Jane & Jerry Eppner
Chapter Hosts	Jerry Krampota & Archie Pratt
Web-site Manager	Neal McLain
Newsletter Chairman	Mary Helen Israel
Sponsors:	Connie Stolte (TP&W) and Rich Tillman (Extension)