

# Mid-Coast Chapter



August 2023

## Save the Dates

**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**October 14, 2023 at 10 AM**  
*All members are welcome to attend.*  
*Location To Be Determined*

**Chapter Meeting**  
**November 11, 2023 at 10 AM**  
*Watch for details on the Mid-Coast*  
*Chapter Website Calendar*

**IN THIS ISSUE**  
**Fulton Learning Center**  
**Garden**  
Page 1

**Local Mid-Coast Chapter of the**  
**Texas Master Naturalist**  
**to Host Native Plant Sale**  
Page 3

**About Texas Master**  
**Naturalist**  
Page 3

**Out of Rhythm**  
Page 4

**A Hummingbird and Mon-**  
**arch Balcony Garden**  
Page 4

**From the Archives**  
Page 5

**SPECIMEN SPOTLIGHT**  
Page 6

**CHAPTER MEMBERS'**  
**AWARDS**  
Page 7

**2023 Annual Meeting**  
Page 8

**VOLUNTEER AND AD-**  
**VANCED TRAINING OPPOR-**  
**TUNITIES**  
Page 9

**CHAPTER RESOURCES**  
Page 11

## Fulton Learning Center Garden

By Martha McLeod

I retired as an elementary [grades 3 - 5] science lab teacher after 30 years in the Rockport-Fulton ISD (formerly known as Aransas County ISD). During my tenure, I strived to have the perfect science classroom program both indoors and outdoors. State standards required that students knew the differences between inherited traits and learned behaviors, the interactions in food webs, and various life cycles of both plants and animals along with their many adaptations and instincts for survival. Trying to teach these foundational scientific concepts to elementary-aged students was a daunting task without hands-on learning and real-world examples to complement the abstract learning from textbooks and the Internet. Therefore, I sought to create outdoor learning areas whereby students could see firsthand the relationships of pollinators and flowers and real food chains in action.

In 2014, our school was renovated and large barren open areas were available for me and the students to use to create gardens for wildlife. I jumped at this opportunity! At that time I was unfamiliar with the Texas Master Naturalist program. However, the TMNs found me and donated an array of native and adapted plants left over from the HummerBird Celebration plant sale that year. The kids and I got to work improving the soil by mulching and enriching it as we planted over 20 shrubs and trees from the TMN organization. Over the years we added to our garden area with annual native wildflower seeds and fruiting trees such as mulberries. We implemented a maintenance program using soaker hoses to cut down on evaporative losses and we took in bags of oak leaves in the spring from local landscapers to use in the gardens as we prepped for hot summers. The layers of oak leaves would help mediate the soil temps from the hot sun while providing a slow release of nutrients into the ground for the roots to absorb. Yearly the kids would help unload over 50 bags of oak leaves from local yards.



Garden in 2014



4 trees donated by Sterling Structures Crew



Master Naturalists donate plants to the FLC Science Dept in 2014



24 more butterfly weed plants

Our gardens became established and flourished! We were even invited to be on the annual Hummer Home Tour of the HummerBird Celebration of gardens for tourists to witness the migration of the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Professional bird banders used our school's gardens as a "bird-banding-site" during the Celebration.

Fast-forward to September of 2023: it was a great honor to have Texas Master Naturalists Kris Kirkwood and Ray Kirkwood visit the school gardens in person on Labor Day to see how those original shrubs from 2014 have now flourished. A variety of pollinators regularly visit the many flowering plants that had their beginnings in our gardens over 9 years ago.

Thank you, TMNs, for having the vision and foresight many years ago to donate to a science teacher who had an idea to bring wildlife and nature straight to the students of RFISD rather than having to bus the kids to a park. Seeing the hummingbirds continuing to visit our gardens on their yearly migration in the fall makes me smile. Job well done!

The photos below are from the FLC Garden in 2023



Kris Kirkwood visits the FLC gardens in 2023

# Local Mid-Coast Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist to Host Native Plant Sale at the Rockport-Fulton HummerBird Celebration

Fall is the perfect time to plant. Mark your calendars and plan on coming out to the annual Native Plant Sale at the HummerBird Celebration located at the Rockport-Fulton High School Commons located at 1801 Omohundro St, Rockport, TX 78382 Friday, Sept. 15th through Sunday, Sept. 17th .

Why Go Native? Native trees, shrubs, ivies and perennials require less water once established. They are more drought- and cold-weather tolerant. Many attract hummingbirds and butterflies, and some are even deer-resistant. We will be on hand to help you with your selections.

The plant sale is the only fundraiser for our local Mid-Coast Chapter program, which comprises 8 counties. We cordially invite you to visit our Mid-Coast Chapter Outreach booth to hear more about the conservation work we are doing along with other area conservation organizations: the South Texas Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas will have a Monarch Butterfly Tent, there will be a Friends of Aransas/Matagorda Islands Store, and Wings Rescue and Aransas/San Patricio County Master Gardeners will have booths.

That same weekend - Friday to Sunday, from 10:00 to Noon, our Master Naturalists will be out Connecting to Nature with the public at both the Linda S. Castro Nature Sanctuary - 4041 TX-35, Rockport, TX 78382 and the Bent Oak Rookery Park - Maple Street at Broadway.

To learn more about the Mid-Coast chapter’s resources and opportunities or to get involved with your local chapter visit: <https://midcoast-tmn.org/>



## About Texas Master Naturalist

### THE MISSION

“To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.”

### THE PROGRAM

Master Naturalist volunteers receive in-depth training in wildlife and natural resource management, customized to focus on their local ecosystems.

In return, volunteers provide service in the form of community education, conservation and demonstration projects, while pursuing advanced training in areas of special interest.

Master Naturalist training is provided by educators and specialists from universities, agencies, nature centers, museums and other organizations who donate their services. The Master Naturalist Curriculum is developed by experts and provides a standardized base of knowledge and skills for all volunteers across the state. The Master Naturalist volunteer program is sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and can be supported by a variety of local organizations.

After its founding in San Antonio, the Master Naturalist program became a statewide initiative in 1998. Today, more than 12,000 Texas Master Naturalist volunteers serve in 48 local chapters across the state, and new chapters are developing all the time. Since the organization’s founding, Texas Master Naturalists have contributed more than 4.5 million hours of service on more than 200,000 acres of wildlife and native plant habitats and have developed or maintained 2,500 trail miles. Master Naturalists have reached more than 6 million Texas residents of all ages. These volunteer efforts are worth more than \$102 million.

Each year the Texas Master Naturalist program

- Trains about 750 new Master Naturalists
- Provides about 350,000 hours of service
- Offers about 46,000 hours of advanced training
- Reaches about 160,000 youth, adults and private landowners through direct-contact even <https://txmn.tamu.edu>

## Out of Rhythm

Poem by DA Crane

It's incontrovertible  
My rage nigh uncontrollable  
When I witness the inconceivable  
Way people treat our irreplaceable  
Planet.

Those inconsiderate  
Who think it inconspicuous  
As they trash incontinently  
Thinking it inconsequential  
Dammit.

## A Hummingbird and Monarch Balcony Garden

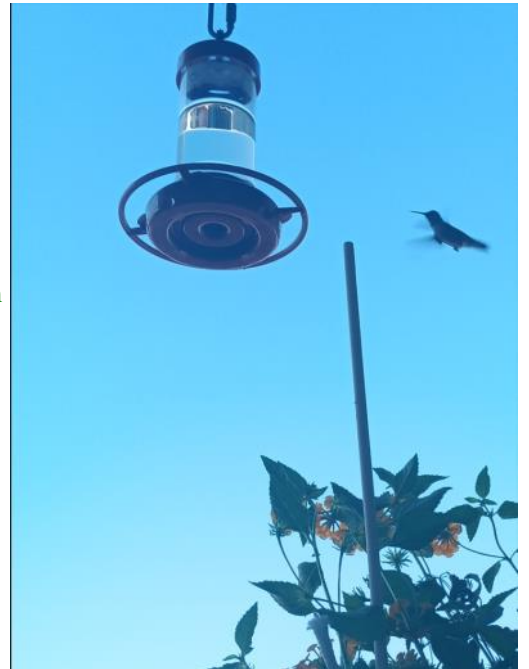
By Mary Ann Carr

Photos by Mary Ann Carr of her balcony hummingbird and monarch garden.

Greetings fellow Master Naturalists,  
Following the Hummingbird and Monarch interest I acquired from belonging to our chapter. I started a new adventure. The first idea was to hang feeders from my 2nd story balcony. From that, grew the idea to have a little garden up here for the monarch butterfly. It was more than just going out and buying plants. What I have learned is planning for the appropriate plants, soil, watering, sunlight, and fertilizer is important. The fun part is propagating the morning glory seeds, I nick, soak them in water over night, and sure enough they sprouted. I planted seeds 1/2 inch in their bed of potting soil, no problem. When they looked like they wanted to climb I used a little apartment-friendly trellis.

I know it is late in the season to be planting seeds, but with our longer, warmer temperatures and reading that they will give me some months of beautiful blue and pink morning glories, I planted them. After checking what other plants that Hummingbirds and monarchs like, the Lantana. I have always admired the lantana but never had one but here it found a home on my balcony. For now, the hummingbird samples the flower nectar but the feeder it likes the best. Later, I will be propagating the zizotes milkweed (*Asclepias oenotheroides*) seeds I have. I will be acquiring more from Patrick Hartigan, Master Naturalist, he has so much information about the monarch and monarch host-plant world.

Thanks for opportunity to share. Hope to hear from others who have done similar gardens.



# From the Archives—Rare Fly Found by Paul Meredith

This article was originally published in the Mid-Coast Chapter Newsletter for March 2018.

Paul Meredith Finds Fly Not Seen Since 1928  
By Pat Garland

Master Naturalist Paul Meredith found an insect no one has documented since 1928 or ever photographed in the United States. Since retiring in 2003 from running a research lab at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, he moved to Victoria and spends much of his day studying and photographing nature. Paul found the unusual insect on a Carolina Buckthorn (*Frangula caroliniana*) in his yard in July of 2017. The blooms of this plant are only 1/8” across and only a few species can nectar on such small blooms. As one of the four curators for Bees and Wasps of Texas, Paul was interested to try to identify the species, which initially looked like a wasp.

Paul noticed the antenna were club-shaped and that the insect had two wings on either side of the thorax. He knew that wasps have four wings and the antenna are not club-shaped, so he was able to rule out this insect as a wasp and determine it was some type of fly. He posted a picture on [Bugguide.Net](#) and let the expert entomologists help him identify it.

The first expert to look at it moved it into the Syrphid fly family. Ken Wolgemuth refined it to Cerioidini, a tribe within the syrphids. Over six months later, Martin Hauser, a PhD dipterist (fly expert) made the final species id. He referred to the *Polybiomyia* key in Shannon (1925) and found that the fly matched to *Polybiomyia macquarti* species.

The fly Paul photographed is likely a female because the eyes are well-separated and the prescutellar spot between the eyes takes the form of a *single* trapezoidal spot. The range of *P. macquarti* was listed as Texas and Mexico. Shannon (1925) gave a specimen record from Brownsville, TX on June 5, 1904; while Hull (1930) gave an August 30th, 1928 specimen record from Beeville, TX. Meredith speculates that global warming has caused the species to expand its range further north.



Rare *P. maquariti* fly on Carolina Buckhorn

This fly has ever before photographed in the U.S., nor documented since 1928.

Photo by Paul Meredith



Mary and Paul Meredith

Paul made his rare discovery in July 2017.

Photo by Earl Nottingham, TPWD Photographer

No picture had ever been submitted of this species in the United States, nor had it been identified or published on [iNaturalist](#), [BugGuide](#), or [Discover Life’s](#) websites. This species is described as a Central and South American species spotted in South Texas only twice. Paul stated there are several morals to this story. “*Always take a camera to the field, be patient and take a lot of pictures when you find something interesting, and if you don’t know what you found, ask the experts. Most are nice folks and happy to help.*”

Paul Meredith and his deceased wife, Mary, have been Master Naturalists in the Mid-Coast Chapter since 2005. Both were members of the Matagorda Island Turtle Patrol team and found the first nest of the endangered Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle on Matagorda Island. Paul and Mary collected the first specimens of neurotoxin-carrying *Pseudonitzschia pungens* ever found in the Gulf of Mexico. They also wrote articles about the natural world for the Victoria Advocate.

# Specimen Spotlight

By Bobbie Lee



Texas Horned Lizard

## Texas Horned Lizard vs Texas Spiny Lizard

Scientific Name for the Texas Horned Lizard is *Phrynosoma cornutum*. With an average lifespan around 7 years. It is also commonly known as the horned toad or horned frog even though it is neither.

The Texas horned lizard is one of the 14 species of spikey-bodied reptiles that can be found in North America. The range of this lizard is from northern Mexico to Colorado and Kansas as well as Arizona, Texas and in some isolated areas of the Carolinas, Florida, and Georgia. These animals used to be popular pets in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas around the

mid-twentieth century. Some areas are stable in population and habitat but most populations are in severe decline, especially in Texas and Oklahoma.

The average weight of a Texas horned lizard is between 25-90 grams and they run around 2.7-4.5 inches in length. The Texas horned lizard has 2 or 3 dark lines that come from each eye as well as across the top of the head. This is the main difference that helps to identify the Texas horned lizard versus other horned lizards. The underbelly is usually a cream or white color. These guys tend to live in the grasslands. Most of the diet for a Texas horned lizard is the harvester ants with some termites, beetles, and grasshoppers mixed in.

The Texas horned lizard has an incubation period of 6 weeks and usually has a clutch of 14-37 eggs.

It is often confused for another lizard known as the Texas Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus olivaceus*) due to the fact that the two lizards' habitats overlap and are similar in appearance.

The Texas Spiny lizard's scientific name is *Sceloporus olivaceus*. It too has a lifespan of around 7 years. It is native to the south central United States which include Texas, Arizona, and Oklahoma. It can also be found in the northeastern area of Mexico. They are very common in this area and are often found in trees or on fences.



Texas Spiny Lizard

The average weight of the Texas spiny lizard is 15 grams and the length runs around 7.5 to 11 inches. The Texas horned lizard tends to weigh more and is bigger in size but shorter in length. The Texas spiny lizard is usually gray in color with black, white, or some red-brown patches down the back. The underside is typically a grey color however some males may have a few blue patches on the side of the belly. The scales resemble a spiny texture and they have long toes with sharp claws that aid in climbing. You will typically find them in the shrubs or forest area. The Texas spiny lizards eat beetles, grasshoppers, wasps, and other insects.

The Texas spiny lizard has an incubation period of 60 days and has a clutch of anywhere from 1-20 eggs.

Both lizards are active during the daytime and are inactive or sleeping at night. This does depend on factors such as temperature and how well they were able to gather food.

They are both also carnivores, insectivores, terrestrial, solitary, and non-migratory. Both of their young are mobile and relatively mature from the moment they hatch. Both of their young are referred to as hatchlings and are independent from birth. The Texas horned lizard is a burrowing animal while the Texas spiny lizard is not. The Texas horned lizard may also go into hibernation compared to the Texas spiny lizard.

Unlike the Texas spiny lizard who currently has no population threats, the Texas horned lizards have been decreasing in numbers in over half of their habitats. Most of this is due to the loss of habitat and the ant population being killed off as their main food source. They also suffer from their past history as a pet.



# 2023 Annual Meeting



It is finally that time! **Registration is NOW open** for the 2023 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting!

Our Texas Master Naturalists are invited to attend the 2023 Annual Meeting – to be held **Thursday, October 12th through Sunday, October 15th** this year at the southernmost point of the South Texas Plains ecoregion, surrounded by mesquite and prickly pear brush country in McAllen, Texas. Join us for a long weekend of naturalist trainings and adventures with your fellow master naturalists from across Texas!

**Registration link available on our website now -** <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/>

## Note that there are several Registration Types:

Early Registration – Closes August 31st

- Early Full Event Registration – \$400.00
- Early Two Day (Thurs & Fri or Fri & Sat) – \$375.00
- Early One Day (Thurs or Fri or Sat) – \$210.00

Standard Registration – Open September 1st – September 29th

- Full Event Registration – \$450.00
- Two Day (Thurs & Fri or Fri & Sat) – \$425.00
- One Day (Thurs or Fri or Sat) – \$260.00

Guest Registration Add-Ons

- Guest Meals Only Pass – \$300.00

For more details, visit our website - <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/#Registration>

## Check out our full Agenda before registering:

A big thanks to the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas Border Chapters for helping to recruit some AMAZING speakers from the area and for setting up some INCREDIBLE field sessions. This year's meeting is packed full of a huge diversity of sessions, topics, and speakers – “the makings of a truly great annual conference!” (Thanks Rick, BPC).

We also have an agenda matrix view for the advanced training classroom sessions that helps show all the AT sessions happening on Thursday and Friday - <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/#Agenda>

## Eclipse Field Day at El Sauz Ranch:

Registered attendees of the Annual Meeting will be transported to the East Foundation's El Sauz Ranch to view the Annular Solar Eclipse on Saturday October 14<sup>th</sup>, learn from various topic speakers, eat lunch and host hands-on field-based advanced training sessions. The El Sauz Ranch hosts a unique diversity of landscapes and land management practices with active sand dunes, thorn scrub brush, ocelots, an active cattle herd, university research projects, burn management plans, and so much more. Learn with us with boots on the ground! \*Registration required through event registration system.

Learn more about our Eclipse Field Day Event on our website - <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/#Eclipse>

## Getting to McAllen:

For our 24th Annual Meeting, we are excited to gather at the McAllen Convention Center, which sits between multiple nature centers and wildlife refuges along the Rio Grande Valley. McAllen also offers a unique opportunity this year as a close location to view an annular solar eclipse!

Knowing this year's meeting is at a far reach for many of our traveling Master Naturalists, we've put together some ideas for you to consider as you plan your travel to McAllen - <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/#Transportation>

### Plane

- McAllen Airport – <https://mcallenairport.com/> – services American, United, and Allegiant airlines
- Harlingen Airport – <https://flythevalley.com/> – services American, Delta, Southwest, Sun Country, and United

### Bus

- Greyhound Bus – <https://www.greyhound.com/en-us/bus-to-mcallen> – offers bus trips from \$50 from many Texas bus hubs
- FlixBus – <https://www.flixbus.com/> – offers bus trips from \$50 from central locations in San Antonio, Houston, and Austin

### Carpool

- Check with your local chapter members, or chapters in your surrounding area and carpool together! Share the driving responsibilities and learn more about your master naturalist friends.

## Lodging

This year's Annual Meeting will be hosted at the McAllen Convention Center, situated in the center of a multi-facility complex of hotels, restaurants, and shopping centers. Conference lodging arrangements have been made at five (5) hotels within walking distance to the Convention Center. Lodging reservations can be made through the links below, and room blocks are being held at first come, first serve. Some room types may be limited in quantity (i.e., king vs. queen), please select any available room!

Get your room booked now as our hotel block - <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/#Lodging>

# VOLUNTEER HERE!

## **VS: Adopt-a-Beach Clean Up in Palacios, TX**

Saturday, September 23, 2023, 9:00 AM

Beach adjacent to the Palacios Pavilion at 311 Henderson, Palacios, TX 77465

Report as RM: Other Locations

The Adopt-A-Beach cleanup will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 Noon. Please check in between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. and get your cleanup supplies. Complimentary lunch following the event sponsored by the Palacios Fire Department. <https://www.texasadoptabeach.org/volunteer/cleanups/index.html>

Sponsoring Agency: Adopt a Beach-GLO; Matagorda County AgriLife. Project Leader: [Amy Nowlin](#)

## **Save the Dates—San Antonio Bay Partnership**

### **San Antonio & Espiritu Santo Bay Shorelines Annual Cleanup #4**

Tuesday, Sep 26, 2023—Seadrift

Saturday, Sep 30, 2023—Port O'Connor

Plastic pollution in the marine environment is a problem.

The San Antonio Bay – Guadalupe Estuary system is of national significance, given that it is the winter home of the endangered whooping crane. While a relatively undeveloped segment of the Texas Coast, it too is subject to plastic pollution.

Last year we mobilized to address this problem: 183 people in 33 teams left 54 miles of shoreline cleaner by removing 4 tons of garbage. Much of the trash was also counted and entered into the NOAA Marine Debris Tracker: 11,883 items in total, including 2,276 plastic drink bottles and 907 plastic bags.

## **Mark your calendar for Clean-up #4. Recruit your team!**

Planning is underway. **Volunteers and boats** are needed for a systematic and comprehensive approach to cleaning these shorelines—all of which are accessible only by boat.

Check the [Chapter Calendar](#) for other possibilities!

## WRITE FOR THE NEWSLETTER

At this time I am resigning from the newsletter for health reasons and we need someone to take over. If you are interested please reach out to D'Ann Williams for information. The Newsletter Editor is responsible for publishing a periodic newsletter for the chapter, preferably quarterly as well as soliciting members to write articles for the newsletter.

Email Newsletter Submissions to: [newsletter@midcoast-tmn.org](mailto:newsletter@midcoast-tmn.org)

# ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**AT: HummerBird Celebration**

Rockport-Fulton High School, 1801 Omohundro St & other locations  
Sep 14-17, 2023  
Report events individually as AT: Lecture Series presentation

The following events are approved for AT:

All guided bus and boat tours, field trips, nature walks, bird photography, banding demonstrations, Sky King Falconry demonstrations, and bird panel discussions. [Registration and additional cost.](#)

- Seminars (Walk-ins \$5 each; All-Speakers pass \$30):
- Birding in Texas State Parks–Your Other Backyard: Ben Horstmann
- Rockport's Blessings, the Beauty that Surrounds Us: Cissy Beasley
- Monarchs, Milkweed and Migration on the Texas Coast: Christine Anastas
- Whooping Cranes: Joan Garland
- EASY! Ways to Attract Butterflies and Other Pollinators to Your Garden: Neli Spurrell
- Hummingbird 101–The Basics: Brent Ortego
- Hawk Watching Basics: Dane Ferrell
- Where the Crawdads Sing–The Spectacular Stopover of Whimbrel on the Texas Coast: Samantha Wolfe
- Gulf Coast Whooping Cranes: Paityn Bower
- Host a Hummer Fiesta in Your Yard: Ginger Easton-Smith
- Past, Present and Future: Richard Crossley
- Birding by Ear: Kelsey Low
- There and Back: Richard Crossley
- The Hummingbird Family: Glenn Olsen
- 

More Information & Registration: <https://www.rockport-fulton.org/HB>

[See MCTMN Volunteering Opportunities at HummerBird](#)

Check the [Chapter Calendar](#) for other possibilities!

**AT: Live Oaks & Native Plants Root Our Community**

AgriLife Extension Office, 892 Airport Rd, Rockport  
Friday, September 22, 2023, 9:00 am–2:30 pm  
Fee \$10, lunch served  
Report as AT: Single Presentation

Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension are pleased to invite you to our fall symposium where **Doug Tallamy** and two area experts will discuss the vital role native plants play in rooting our Coastal Bend Community. **This is a special invitation event with limited seating**, designed for horticulture educators and community leaders. You **MUST** register to attend. **No walk-ins.**

More Information and [aspmgstore.org/sept-22-2023](https://aspmgstore.org/sept-22-2023)

[REGISTER TODAY! Limited Seating - Lunch Served](#)

registration: <https://products/invitation-symposium->

## CHAPTER RESOURCES

### ***OFFICERS FOR 2022***

President - Bob Cunningham  
Vice President - Bill Burge  
Secretary - Ele Chew  
Treasurer - Julie Hejducek

### ***BOARD MEMBERS***

Advanced Training Director - Debbie Kucera  
Communications Director - D'Ann Williams  
Membership Director - Dee Mahaffey  
Training Class Directors– Jeremy Miller & Kate Geer-Miller  
Projects - Ray Kirkwood  
Immediate Past President - Claire Barnhart  
Chapter Advisor– Trey Barron  
Class Rep 2023 - Amy Nowlin

### ***Committees and Contacts***

Newsletter -  
Website Editor - Kris Kirkwood  
Webmaster - Ray Kirkwood

### ***Volunteer Project Leaders***

Mad Island Marsh Preserve - Brigid Berger  
San Antonio Bay Partnership - Allan Berger  
Linda S. Castro Nature Sanctuary - Laura Clark or Vickie Wilson

### ***Sponsor Contacts - Texas AgriLife Extension Service***

Aransas County - Ginger Easton-Smith  
Calhoun County - RJ Shelly  
Matagorda County - Nicole Pilson

### ***Sponsor Contacts - Texas Parks & Wildlife Department***

[TPWD Website](#)

Michelle Haggerty, Texas Master Naturalist Program Coordinator

[MCTMN Website](#)

[MCTMN Facebook page](#)

[MCTMN Instagram](#)

