

Mid-Coast UPDATE

Newsletter of the Mid-Coast Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists

SPRING 2022



UPCOMING

**Mid-Coast Chapter
Board Meeting**

April 9, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

*All members are welcome to attend.
Fulton Mansion Education Center*

**Mid-Coast Chapter
General Membership Meeting**

May 14, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

*Bauer Exhibit Building, Calhoun County
Fairgrounds, 186 CR 101 Port Lavaca,
TX 77979. Advanced training and
volunteer opportunities to be
announced.*

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MARCH 31
Annual Dues Deadline

OYSTER CONSERVATION EFFORTS

By Bill Burge

Efforts to protect oyster reefs in the mid-coast area are ongoing. The most recent news is Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's proposal to ban oyster harvesting in Ayers, Mesquite, and Carlos Bays (aka Mesquite Bay Complex). The proposed closure is intended to protect the ecologically important and unique oyster habitat from increased harvest pressure. Oyster reefs provide habitat for many fish and invertebrate species, protection against erosion, and improved water quality via filter feeding. Conserving healthy oyster reefs benefits fisheries and the overall health of the habitat. The proposed closure has generated a tremendous amount of interest from members of the Oyster Industry and Conservation groups. TPWD held in-person meetings in Rockport, Port Lavaca, and Galveston to solicit public comments. Public comments are very important to the process. You can express your opinion until March 23rd to:

[TPWD: Statewide Oyster Fishery Proclamation](#)

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission will hear final public comments, and render their decision on March 24th. I'll be attending that meeting and providing comments.



FREE MILKWEED SEEDS FOR MCTMN MEMBERS!

If you want to help the Monarch butterfly population recover, grow native milkweeds in your yard! Patrick Hartigan is offering free *Zizotes* milkweed seeds to MCTMN members interested in creating "Monarch Waystations" at their homes. The seeds were locally collected in Aransas County, so are well-adapted to growing in coastal sands. Each packet will contain 20 seeds, with growing instructions. Patrick will offer to deliver the seeds in person, in order to assess your site conditions, or they can be mailed to you by contacting him at pdhartigan4321@gmail.com.

Participants will also be asked to collect *Zizotes* seeds from their Waystations, in order to build up the seed bank for these hard-to-find natives. While creating a Waystation in your yard is not eligible for TMN reportable hours, you can get credit if you grow milkweeds for the MCTMN plant sale (PO: MCTMN Plant Sale); also if you conduct monitoring of Monarch larva and adults (FR: Insect Life).

Photo: Monarch caterpillar on native Zizotes Milkweed in Aransas County.



CONGRATULATIONS to Chapter Member Vickie Wilson, who wrote and was awarded a grant from The Native Plant Society of Texas for the “Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas Garden Grant Proposal” for assistance with the Rockport Post Office Pollinator Garden. It was one of 52 grants awarded from 94 applicants.



GISP VOLUNTEERS

The **Goose Island State Park Ranger Team** held a Volunteer appreciation luncheon on Wednesday, March 10th. Edwin Quintero, Park Superintendent, organized the luncheon which featured a slider cookoff competition amongst the Park staff. As part of the event, Ranger Quintero presented certificates, hats, and pins to volunteers who

have reached important volunteer milestones in support of the Park. Included in these presentations were several MCTMN members. Greg Simmons and Sally Scroggs were recognized for their support of the Parks kayak program. Bill Burge was also recognized for work at the Big Tree Nature Area.

Take a Walk on the Wild Side

Aransas Pathways (<https://aransaspathways.com/>):

Saturday, March 19, 10 am

Ivy Lane Nature Walk led by Kris Kirkwood

Saturday, April 2, 9 am

Cove Harbor Wetland Bird Walk (with demonstration of eBird app) led by Patrick Hartigan

Saturday, April 9, 10 am

Linda S. Castro Nature Walk led by Patrick Hartigan

Saturday, April 23, 10 am

Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary Nature Walk led by Neli Spurrell



MCTMN Newsletter - President's Column Bob Cunningham, March 1, 2022

Writing these thoughts on March 1st—we've just emerged from a few weeks of colder, wetter weather that passes for winter here in the Coastal Bend. Today is sunny and bright (for Election Day!) and poised to leap into Springtime. Resist the urge to pull all the dandelions sprouting up in your landscaping, as many pollinators rely on those early blooms!

First things first: If you haven't yet paid your annual dues, please quit procrastinating! We cherish every one of our members. Just drop a check in the mail or use the link on the website: <https://midcoast-tmn.org/members/dues/>.

Attendance was great for the Chapter meeting on Feb 12th at the new education center in Texana Park & Campground in Edna, where we received 3 hours(!) of AT in Herpetology from Outreach Coordinator Michael Price. Time just flew by! Seems we've found our go-to expert in herps. Dee Mahaffey is point of contact to become involved with volunteer opportunities at Texana.

Cathy Koenig reported on early progress by the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, recommending improved outreach to Victoria and underserved areas of our region for recruiting new members and to better highlight our work. That is great advice, but we sorely need an Outreach Coordinator working with our Communications Director, Diane Forrest (nee Roseberry) to meet this goal! That position is vacant, so please contact me or Diane if you have these skills to share.

Also contact me to serve on an expanded DEI committee, and especially if interested in taking over as Chair. Cathy is stepping down from that position as she assumes responsibilities as Plant Propagation Team Coordinator for the annual Native Plant Sale.

Donna Bailey reported on reorganization of Plant Sale leadership responsibilities. That event serves not only as our main fundraiser, but also as a major opportunity to educate the public. Interested in taking on the Educational Coordinator aspects? Please contact Donna.

Initial Training Directors, Gregg Simmons and Sally Scroggs, are bringing along a full new class in hybrid virtual and field work activities, with help from many of our usual partners and from Chapter-member "ambassadors" at many venues. Graduation is planned for June 4th, daring to hope for return of the full-membership potluck to welcome our new members. Stay tuned.

VP Bill Burge reported on TPWD's proposal to permanently close oyster harvesting in Carlos, Mesquite, and Ayers Bays, with public hearings on March 3 in Rockport and Port Lavaca. Public comments are accepted until March 23rd for consideration at the next TPW Commission meeting on March 23-24: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/newsmedia/releases/?req=20220218a>.

We're eager to expand meeting venues to farther reaches of our region, so contact Bill if you know of a suitable location for the Chapter meeting in May. Bill is also working with TMN to "borrow" equipment that will let us experiment with allowing members to virtually attend live meetings later this year. Members are always welcome to attend the quarterly Board meetings, with the next one scheduled April 9th at the Fulton Mansion. Hope to see many of you there!

Advanced Training at the Membership Meeting

Herpetology:
Presented by Michael Price, Outreach Coordinator
Texana Park & Campground in Edna

Michael Showing Various
Alligator Jaws



Ele Chew



Ray Kirkwood holding a shell of a Eastern
Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*).

How long would it take to
swallow a mouse?



11:16:30 AM
Speckled Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis holbrooki*)

Ele Chew

Speckled Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis holbrooki*)



11:17:02 AM



11:17:34 AM

Ele Chew

Welcome, Mid-Coast Chapter Class of 2022



Front: Bobbie Lee, Mary Carr, Steve Marwitz, Janet McCrea, Alan Wilson. Middle: Janie Waghorne, Kayla Clark, Sid Rutkoski, Christi Carmichael, Brigid Murrell, Maureen Crocker, Pam Hayes. Back: Linda Van der Veer, Laura Andersen, Sharen Chatterton, Rhett Parker, Bob Showler, Frank Hayes.
Photo by Greg Simmons

27th Annual Billy Sandifer Big Shell Beach Clean Up



Chapter members Bill Burge and Debbie Minns joined with hundreds of volunteers from across Texas in this annual event that is organized by Friends of Padre. Since the first year, 1995, volunteers have removed over 3 million pounds of trash from this remote stretch of Padre Island National Seashore. Contact Bill Burge if you want to help next year.



***“Look deep into nature, and
then you will understand
everything better.”
-Albert Einstein***

AWARDS



2021 recertifications (sideoats grama pin) presented at the February chapter meeting - left to right: Marilyn Stewart, Debbi Roskey, Janet Price, Robyn Savage, Bobby Garner, Ele Chew, Denise Crane, Rusty Crane, Debbie Dahms-Nelson, Greg Nelson. *Not present to receive the pin:* Karen Benson, Claudia Dorn, Lauren DeLeon, Donna Fiarkoski, Bob Friedrichs, Ken Goodner, Debbie Griffith, Melissa Guthrie, Carla Haskett, Barbara Mathis, Jane Moore, Dianne Nichols, Diane Pletcher, KarenLee Rystad, Ernie Schertz, Phil Stapleton, Rebecca Stapleton, and Barb Threatt. (Other recertification pins were presented in 2021.)

VOLUNTEER HERE!

FAMI–Friends of Aransas & Matagorda Island

Help is needed with the pollinator garden near ANWR's new visitor center. Bring work gloves and your favorite gardening tools The second and forth Tuesdays, 9:00–11:00 am, March through May.

MID–COAST TMN PLANT SALE

Our annual plant sale committee has created new volunteer opportunities. Currently they are seeking a lead volunteer in the area of plant education and outreach at the sale. This volunteer will ensure that the plant sale attendees are educated on the importance of native plants in the landscape. The education leader will work with a committee/team of volunteers to create an educational station at the sale, educational handouts and labeling as well as, staffing the sale with knowledgeable volunteers who can answer questions about specific plants.

ADOPT-A-LOOP

Contact Dee Mahaffey for more information, naturegirl659@gmail.com



Photo by Linda Swickheimer

Linda Swickheimer caught this Great Blue Heron selecting twigs from Silver Leaf Sunflower stalks provided at the Windswept Oaks Rookery by our chapter members. It's good to see the fruits of our labor!

Email Summer Newsletter Submissions to:
Debbie Minns debbienluce@yahoo.com