



Texas Wetland News

and WETLAND CONSERVATION PLAN UPDATE

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

J U L Y 2 0 0 7

MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM SEEKS APPLICANTS

Are you interested in learning how to take an active role in conserving Texas' natural resources? Consider joining a local chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program, which enables a corps of well-informed citizen volunteers to educate their communities about the wise management of natural resources.

The main qualification needed to become a certified Texas Master Naturalist is an interest in learning and taking an active role in conservation. Volunteers will receive a minimum of 40 hours of training in interpretation and management of natural resources, ecological concepts, ecoregions of Texas and natural systems management from educators and specialists from universities, agencies, nature centers and museums. Volunteers are expected to give 40 hours of service a year in community education, demonstration and habitat enhancement projects. They are also expected to pursue a minimum of eight hours of advanced training in areas of personal interest.

Texas Master Naturalist chapters offering volunteer training this fall are listed on page 11 with contact information. Enrollment is limited in most chapters, but if a deadline has passed, contact the chapter to see if seating is still available.

Sign up today!

Texas Paddling Trails

Shelly Plante, Melissa Parker, Lisa Korth

The Texas Paddling Trails is a new program to develop public inland and coastal paddling trails throughout the state and support these trails with maps, signage and other information. These trails provide well-mapped, accessible day trips in a variety of settings and for all levels of paddling experience. There are currently seven coastal paddling trails and four inland paddling trails, with several communities preparing their trails for fall debuts.

With more than 3,700 named streams, 15 major rivers and some 3,300 miles of tidal shoreline along the Gulf Coast, Texas offers many opportunities for paddling adventures of all types. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, kayaking participation nationwide doubled between 1998 and 2004, with recreational and sit-on-top kayaking the fastest-growing segment of the sport. Participation in canoeing also remains very strong, so the Texas Paddling Trails program is a great program for local communities, TPWD, liveries, river authorities and especially paddlers!

Texas Paddling Trails are an exciting way for landowners and communities to partner with Texas Parks and Wildlife to conserve habitats while providing recreational opportunities for the traveling public. The paddling trails of Texas promote sustainable economic development and build public support for conservation of waterways and wildlife.

(Continued on the next page)



Texas Paddling Trails, continued

As Texas becomes more urbanized, it becomes ever more important that there are public places to enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities, such as canoeing and kayaking. The Texas Paddling Trails program provides these opportunities while also helping to conserve rivers and bays.

This program offers communities in Texas a way to partner with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the purpose of benefiting their own areas while also helping build an extensive network of paddling trails across the state to be enjoyed by Texans and out-of-state tourists for many generations to come. TPWD continues to seek partnerships with communities interested in developing a paddling trail in their area. Please see the information on the next page for information on the responsibilities of TPWD and partner communities.

If you have an interest in developing a Texas Paddling Trail in your community, please contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's nature tourism coordinator, Shelly Plante, by phone (512-389-4500) or by e-mail (shelly.plante@tpwd.state.tx.us).

Visit us on the Web to learn more about our first 11 Texas Paddling Trails. New trails will be added soon, so check back frequently! www.tpwd.state.tx.us/paddlingtrails

- Armand Bayou Paddling Trail
- Christmas Bay Paddling Trail
- Columbus Paddling Trail
- Galveston Island State Park Paddling Trail
- Goliad Paddling Trail
- Lighthouse Lakes Paddling Trail
- Luling Zedler Mill Paddling Trail
- Mustang Island Paddling Trail
- Port O'Connor Paddling Trail
- South Bay Paddling Trail
- Victoria: Riverside Park Paddling Trail

Trails due by end of 2007:

- Bastrop Paddling Trail
- Upper Guadalupe – Nichol's Landing Paddling Trail
- Waco: Bosque Bluffs Paddling Trail and Brazos Bridges Paddling Trail
- Webberville Paddling Trail





About Paddling Trails...

Desirable Texas Paddling Trail Characteristics

- Public access that is a minimum of four paddling miles to a maximum of 12 paddling miles for each segment
- Presence of natural or historical attractions such as rapids, mature trees or unique habitat, wildlife diversity, historic sites, etc.
- Adequate water quality, river flows or water depth (seasonal flows acceptable)
- Population center within 100 miles
- Local partner(s) to maintain put-ins/take-outs and keep them clean
- Canoe and kayak rentals from local sources
- Designated parking
- TPT marker signage and kiosk

Ways TPWD Can Help with Texas Paddling Trails

- Work with the local community partners.
- Promote your paddling trail as part of the Texas Paddling Trails program online and in publications. (Every trail gets its own Web site!)
- Provide kiosk design plans and estimated costs.
- Develop trail map and local interpretive information for use in marketing materials.
- Provide river conservation and river ethics information for trails.
- Provide official road signs for put-in/take-out locations.

Community Partner Helps with the Following

- Develop (if necessary), maintain and oversee put-in and take-out public access points.
- Provide a summary of important historic information and local attractions for use on Web site and kiosks.
- Provide list of local liveries for use on Web site.
- Construct and maintain an approved informational kiosk at all put-in/take-out locations and install TPWD-provided paddling trail road signs.
- Draft and distribute a press release upon completion of the trail.
- If needed, organize a public meeting to discuss the trail and address any comments, questions, and concerns of the local community.

On the Water Safety and Ethics

State and federal laws require operators of paddlecraft to have:

- a personal flotation device for each person aboard the vessel (ask for a USCG-approved Type III-V PFD)
- an efficient sound-signaling device—an approved whistle would suffice
- a white light source visible from 360 degrees if paddling in reduced visibility or from sunset to sunrise

Recommended Safety Tips

- Never paddle alone.
- Always file a “float plan”: tell someone where you are going and when you are expected to return.
- Check weather forecasts.
- Carry a map of the stream or chart of the bay so you can find your location at any time.
- Carry a cell phone or a handheld VHF radio in coastal areas.
- Carry a handheld Global Positioning System unit; it will help you determine where you are and how to get back to a launch site and—in the event of an emergency—allow you to pinpoint your position for rescuers.
- Wear protective footgear and carry drinking water, sunscreen and insect repellent.
- Plan your trip so that your paddling skills are equal to the water conditions.

More tips on river safety are available in the Texas River Guide: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/riverguide/



The Shifting Conservation Paradigm: Integrated Bird Joint Ventures

Jeff Raasch, State Wetland and Joint Venture Program Leader
Chad Boyd, Oaks & Prairies Joint Venture Coordinator
Mary Gustafson, Rio Grande Joint Venture Coordinator

“Joint venture” is a term usually associated with the workings of big business and found in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, but that changed in the mid-1980s. It was at that time that waterfowl populations were in crisis. A 10-year-long drought and the draining of wetlands for agricultural and other uses were taking their toll on the birds’ habitats and, subsequently, on the birds. Because waterfowl were then (and are now) North America’s most prominent and economically important group of migratory birds, the U.S. and Canadian governments took action. Scientists from inside and outside the governments were asked to identify “waterfowl habitat areas of major concern” across the continent and to develop a conservation plan. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan was signed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and the Canadian Minister of the Environment in 1986.

The scope of the conservation effort needed left no room for doubt—acting alone, the two federal governments did not have the resources needed to save these vital habitats. It was from this dilemma that the concept of conservation Joint Ventures was born: Private- and public-sector partners would work together to conserve the continent’s waterfowl populations and

their essential habitats. Texas has three Joint Ventures that came out of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan: Playa Lakes, Lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast Joint Ventures.

Conservationists concerned about other migratory bird groups—landbirds, shorebirds, colonial waterbirds, upland game birds—saw the success of the Plan model and adopted it as they developed conservation strategies for their species of concern. Rather than reinvent the wheel, they looked to the Plan’s Joint Ventures to help implement their plans. Within their established geographic areas, the Joint Ventures, when possible, have integrated the conservation of shorebirds, landbirds, and other waterbirds into their planning processes.

A Conservation/Habitat Joint Venture (JV) is a regional, self-directed partnership of government and non-governmental organizations, corporations and individuals that works across administrative boundaries to deliver science-based avian conservation. JVs work in support of national and international bird conservation plans by helping step the larger plans down to regional or landscape scales. They are organized (built) on the biological foundation of Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs)



that encompass landscapes having similar bird communities, habitats and resource issues. They focus on a broad spectrum of tools including conservation planning, “on the ground” projects, outreach, monitoring and research, and they raise money for these activities through partner contributions and grants. Joint Ventures are not regulatory and do not directly compete with other conservation entities; in fact, these partnerships should enhance and facilitate the success of existing conservation efforts.

But “white spaces” remained on the map of North America—areas of habitat needing conservation attention where no joint ventures exist. New joint ventures, not associated with the Plan, have formed. From the long-established joint ventures to those in various stages of development, there are nearly two dozen such partnerships at work across the continental landscape. To date, joint ventures have invested \$4.5 billion to conserve 15.7 million acres of waterfowl and other bird habitats.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has taken the lead to fill in those “white spaces” in Texas by leading an effort to start the Rio Grande and Oaks and Prairies Joint Ventures.

The Oaks and Prairies JV (OPJV) is one of 20 habitat JVs in North America and focuses on promoting avian habitat conservation across administrative and geographic boundaries. The Edwards Plateau BCR provides habitat to a rich diversity of bird life, including the endangered Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warbler. However, pressures from urban development, agronomic uses and plant community changes in the absence of natural disturbance regimes threaten critical habitat resources. Within the Oaks and Prairies BCR, avian habitat in the Cross Timbers Ecoregion has suffered from a lack of fire, which has reduced native shrub habitat availability and allowed for invasion of existing woody plant and grassland communities by eastern redcedar. Redcedar invasion results in habitat used by few bird species. In Texas, most of the Blackland Prairie habitat has been converted to urban or agricultural uses, with the remnants occurring in small, isolated patches. These changes have driven a reduction or elimination of native grassland habitat in much of Texas and declines in, or local extirpation of, associated species (e.g., Northern Bobwhite, Loggerhead Shrike).

The Rio Grande Joint Venture includes the U.S. and Mexican portions Chihuahuan Desert (BCR 35) and Tamulipan Brushlands (BCR 36) Bird Conservation Regions. The RGJV Region has exceptionally high bird diversity, and many of these species are found nowhere else in the United States, or have only limited ranges elsewhere. Issues of concern in the RGJV include water issues ranging from stream channelization to xerification; invasive plants; changing fire regime; lack of population trends or basic natural history for many resident and breeding bird species; riparian corridors, often impacted by

human use or livestock; fragmentation of natural habitats and the loss of natural habitats in the highly developed and agricultural areas of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.



Joint Ventures are fairly unique in their strategic approach to avian conservation. In this model, biological planning is used to identify and prioritize conservation needs of bird species, set population objectives, and develop working models that link population abundance to habitat condition.

This information serves as the basis for a spatially targeted conservation design or plan. Mechanisms for conservation delivery are then put together based on science and experience/intuition with both the natural and social systems in play. Follow-up monitoring provides a reference for gauging the success of conservation planning and delivery. Research is primarily centered on testing the assumptions underlying biological planning and conservation design. This process results in an increased understanding of the biology and management of bird species, and that increased understanding can be plugged back into the planning and design elements. The importance of this framework is that it links (and strengthens) different conservation tools as a repeating cycle of planning, doing and learning. Ultimately, the specific direction of Habitat Joint Ventures is a function of the goals and priorities identified by the Management Board, working with JV staff and technical committees and the resources available to pursue these goals.

Texas Master Naturalists – Heart of Texas Chapter

PHOTOS: ANNETTE JONES

During the spring semester, students from Waco ISD middle schools took field trips to the Lake Waco Wetlands, where they participated in various hands-on learning activities. These field trips were made possible through the sponsorship of Marsh Madness, a GEAR UP Waco program that provides a science adventure focused on wetland environments. The GEAR UP Waco partnership, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, focuses on increasing the number of students and families prepared for education after high school. Partners include Baylor University, the City of Waco, Texas State Technical College, McLennan County Youth Collaboration, Waco ISD and others.

The Master Naturalists, along with other volunteers, first went through a training class on a cold day in February to become familiar with the planned field exercise, an investigative detective-type activity designed to help participants determine if the site of the field trip is, in fact, a wetland area.

Janet Wallace is in training to prepare for the upcoming Marsh Madness endeavor on a chilly February day.



Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employee Heidi Bailey conducts an Animal Tracking class at the Lake Waco Wetlands for Cub Scouts and Master Naturalists.



Melissa Mullins, Marsh Madness program coordinator and Master Naturalist.

The Marsh Madness program coordinator is Melissa Mullins, formerly an employee of TPWD, and now a graduate student at Baylor and also a Master Naturalist. Helping Melissa with the program is Nora Schell, the program coordinator at the Lake Waco Wetlands and a Master Naturalist. Since these field trips usually involve bringing groups of as many as 60 students to the wetlands at one time, Melissa and Nora sought the help of Master Naturalists to serve as guides and instructors. This allowed the students to be broken up into groups of seven or less for their walk around the Lake Waco Wetlands.



Master Naturalist Jeanette Kelly leads a group of students through the field exercise on a walk through the wetlands on Monday, May 21, 2007.

Master Naturalist Jeanne Betros shows students how to recognize a wetland during the Marsh Madness program.



Nora Schell, program coordinator at Lake Waco Wetlands and Master Naturalist.

This spring was the first for the Marsh Madness program. Under the grant, the program will continue for about five more years, and Melissa and Nora plan to meet this summer with teachers to work on future curriculum.

Scott Simon directs students in the removal of cattails, a native but invasive wetland plant that competes with other wetland plants for habitat. Removal of the cattail promotes vegetative diversity within the Lake Waco Wetlands area.

To learn more about the Marsh Madness program, please contact:

Melissa Mullins
Marsh Madness Program Coordinator
melissa_mullins@baylor.edu

Nora Schell
Program Coordinator
Lake Waco Wetlands Project
noras@ci.waco.tx.us
(254) 848-9654



How the Wetland Restoration Team Was Born

Diane Humes, Galveston Bay Area Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists

Way back in 2000, Marissa Sipocz, Texas Cooperative Extension agent, began preparations for a stormwater treatment marsh being planned in Mason Park, east of downtown Houston. She enlisted Master Naturalist volunteers Dick Benoit and Carolyn Lovell to collect plants to populate three marshes proposed for the Brays Bayou Urban Wetland Project. As soon as construction was complete, the marshes would be planted with native species chosen for their adaptation to the site and their habitat, wildlife and aesthetic value.

This project, conceived, funded and carried out by a consortium of partners—Harris County Flood Control District (HCFC), Houston Parks & Recreation, Texas Sea Grant, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP), Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Natural Resources Conservation Services, Texas Master Naturalists, TX Genco (now NRG), etc.—was designed to shunt water from an existing neighborhood storm drain through a

series of treatment marshes before entering Brays Bayou. The wetland soil and plants would clean and slow the flow of runoff. In addition, the riverbank levee was to be removed, widened and flattened to better accommodate flooding conditions during storm events.

Marsh plants—southern blue flag, powdery thalia, native cannas, rushes, arrowheads, grasses, and lilies—waited at the nursery ponds in Baytown (the NRG site) for construction to begin ... and end. The wait turned into a long wait, and the team of plant collectors became plant-sitters, regularly weeding, separating, re-potting, and watering and making more collecting trips. “How many times are we going to change their diapers?” said one.

Spider lily team on a May 2007 collecting trip at a Trinity River site. From left to right: Dick Benoit, Jim Waligora, Sue Sutterbee, Mary Beth Arnold, George Regmund, Ian Kress, Chris Mattox, Liz Gimmler, Ellen Gerloff, Diane Humes, Charriss York.



This dedicated group expanded and became the Wetland Restoration Team, staffed with Master Naturalists from the Galveston Bay Area, Gulf Coast, and Cradle of Texas chapters. Wetland Wednesday became a regular fixture on the calendar, and the team honed its skills with plant ID classes and became a hard-core team, that cheerfully suffered heat, cold, wind, rain, riding in the van, pushing the van, waders, and gloves in the quest to “git ’er done.”

The team practiced its skills in 2003 at San Jacinto State Park, first on a shoreline restoration project, then on a pond creation. Its mettle was tested in the creation of a series of prairie ponds at Sheldon Lake State Park in 2004. Finally, by fall 2005, everyone was ready for the team to plant the marshes in Mason Park! The “great-grandchildren” of some of the original plants were going to their home!



PHOTO: CHARRISS YORK

From October 2005 through June 2006, the 10,000–12,000 marsh plants found their places. With over 50 planting days and 2,755 volunteer hours, the Master Naturalists of the Wetland Restoration Team doggedly kept at it, mentoring students from Chavez and Stephen F. Austin high schools and other youth groups, planting alongside other partnership members, and enlisting “paid muscle” from ApachEco to finish the project. With much fanfare, the marsh was officially dedicated in a grand celebration ceremony for all involved—one year later in October 2006.

Today the marsh ponds are thriving. Bulrushes have expanded in the deep holes in the shallow marsh and are nesting ground for red-winged blackbirds and ducks. The marsh is home to wading birds—great blue heron, American egret, snowy egret, tri-colored heron, and yellow-crowned night heron. Cormorants and osprey fish the ponds, and red-eared sliders lay eggs. The marsh is home to bullfrogs, water snakes, dragonflies, butterflies, and black-bellied whistling ducks, with evidence of beavers—in downtown Houston!

Vic Madamba stands in the shallow marsh in May 2007.

Liz Gimmler attacks the cattail plants in the marsh in May 2007 in an attempt to keep the invasive species under control.



PHOTO: CHARRISS YORK

Wetland Restoration Team, continued

Judging by the results of monthly water testing (including *E. coli*), conducted by volunteers, it appears that the treatment marsh is working as planned. Although the stormwater source is frequently quite contaminated and Brays Bayou exceeds acceptable bacterial levels, the water coming from the treatment marsh is much cleaner and mostly within acceptable standards.

The Wildlife Restoration Team continues its monthly monitoring of water and visits the site to check invasive species such

as cattails and water hyacinth and perform needed maintenance. The habitat is still growing and filling in; plants will probably take two more years to become fully established. But the marsh has successfully weathered two major storm events and is now home to myriad species both welcome and unexpected in the heart of the fourth largest metropolitan area in the country. And this project points the way to the future—maybe we can work together to lessen flooding, clean our water, and enjoy nature in the city.

**To find out more or to join the team, see the team blog:
<http://wetteam.blogspot.com>**

From left to right, Diane Humes and Allison Buchtien participate in the first planting days at Mason Park marsh in October 2005.

PHOTO: MARISSA SIPOCZ

Diane Humes enters the tunnel that carries stormwater to the marsh to take water samples from the first pond.

PHOTO: CHARRISS YORK



WANT TO GET ON THE MAILING LIST?

Send your name and physical mailing address to jennifer.key@tpwd.state.tx.us to receive *Texas Wetland News* twice a year free of charge.

HAVE AN ARTICLE YOU'D LIKE TO SUBMIT?

If you would like to submit an article or announcement concerning wetland-related activities, initiatives, or workshops* for the next *Texas Wetland News*, please e-mail the editor at: jennifer.key@tpwd.state.tx.us

**Please note that the newsletter cannot include announcements of for-fee seminars or workshops for which Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is not a sponsor.*

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Your input is a valuable resource and we're always open to suggestions.

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jennifer.key@tpwd.state.tx.us

Master Naturalist Training Classes

ANGLETON—Cradle of Texas Chapter

Training begins September 5 and applications are due August 17. For detailed information, phone (979) 265-3813 or e-mail dbrandes@houston.rr.com

BALMORHEA—Tierra Grande Chapter

Class begins September 7 with applications due July 31. For information, e-mail selfring@bigbend.net or call (432) 364-2673.

BASTROP—Lost Pines Chapter

Class begins August 13 and applications are due no later than August 7. E-mail butler@mdanderson.org or call (512) 321-1308 for details.

CLEBURNE—Rio Brazos Chapter

Training begins on September 6 with registration due on August 15. Details available by calling (817) 558-1553 or e-mail rlnatheimer@sbcglobal.net

COLLEGE STATION—Brazos Valley Chapter

Classes begin September 6 and registration is due August 1. More information is available by e-mail to kittyoncole@msn.com or call (979) 886-8381.

DENTON—Elm Fork Chapter

Classes begin September 4 and applications are due no later than August 24. For more information, phone (940) 349-2883 or e-mail donna.wolfe@co.denton.tx.us

HOUSTON—Gulf Coast Chapter

Classes begin August 25 with applications due on August 10. Phone (713) 781-9553 or e-mail milliemorgan@hotmail.com

KERRVILLE—Hill Country Chapter

Classes begin August 30 and applications are due July 12. For specific information e-mail jhuecksteadt@earthlink.net

LA GRANGE—Gideon Lincecum Chapter

Training begins September 17 and registration is due by September 10. Details available by calling (979) 247-4504 or e-mail cvogel@cvtv.net

LUBBOCK—South Plains Chapter

Classes start September 8 and deadline for registration is August 29. Call (806) 785-5079 or e-mail swhitehe@tceq.state.tx.us for more information.

NEW BRAUNFELS—Lindheimer Chapter

Classes begin November 5 and the application deadline is October 25. For information, phone (830) 227-5010 or (512) 389-8760.

ROBSTOWN—South Texas Chapter

The fall class begins on September 4. For additional information, call (361) 767-5217 or e-mail mpotter@ag.tamu.edu

ROSENBERG—Coastal Prairie Chapter

Training will begin on September 6 and applications are due August 30. For information, phone (281) 633-7042 or e-mail classes@coastalprairie.org

SAN ANTONIO—Alamo Area Chapter

Classes start September 6 with applications due July 31. Come and be a part of the 10th anniversary class of the very first Master Naturalist chapter in Texas! For information, phone (210) 842-7967 or e-mail pball0908@earthlink.net



The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas Cooperative Extension co-sponsor the Texas Master Naturalist Program statewide.

For more information about existing chapters or forming a new chapter, contact Sonny Arnold, Assistant Program Coordinator, 111 Nagle Hall, 2258, TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-2258, call (979)458-1099 or e-mail sarnold@ag.tamu.edu



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