



The Chachalaca

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RGV TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS

THIS CHAPTER IS AN AFFILIATE OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM JOINTLY SPONSORED BY TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION AND THE TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Steven Lanoux

It is an honor and a privilege to be your President. Although I have been with TMN for only a little over a year, I am amazed at the enthusiasm, depth of expertise, and desire to help others learn about our marvelous Valley that everyone in the Chapter exhibits. You are a shining light for everything environmental in our area, and we need to continue using your knowledge to make this a better place for us and for future generations.

Some biographical information that you may find of interest (or not):

- Deli (your Chapter Secretary) and I share time between our homes in Brownsville and Port Aransas.
- We have four adult children and six grandchildren, none in the local area.
- I was born and reared in New Orleans, and Deli is a native Texan from Brownsville.
- I have a Ph.D. in Human Systems Management (Strategic Planning), and Deli has an Ed.D. in Education (Gifted Education).
- I retired from the US Navy as a Commander with 25 years in surface ships, systems engineering and operations.
- I was the Assistant Director of the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas for 15 years. I managed the physical plant and maintenance of the three campuses, research vessel operations, the UT marina, all construction, and all auxiliary services. I was co-Principal Investigator for a multi-year, multi-million dollar research grant conducting biological and chemical research in Alaska's Chukchi Sea for the Department of the Interior before the US opened the region to oil exploration.
- I served three terms as City Councilman for Port Aransas.

There are three areas that I would like to emphasize over the coming year. The first one is to better understand and define our "core" as Texas Master Naturalists. Yes, our core activity is volunteerism. I'm also looking to define the projects that make up our core. We spread ourselves thin at times, but what makes up our heart and soul?

The second objective is to increase our visibility and public presence through speakers, workshop offerings, and projects. We do a lot, but we neither ask for nor take credit for many of them. We need better announcing before and better reporting after we participate. We work for others, but little of the credit goes to us.

Finally, we need to find innovative and better means to finance our operations. We have a lot of things going on, and most call for support from our Treasury. Much of the money we bring in is earmarked for particular uses. None of us joined TMN to become fund-raisers, so we need to think about how we run the Chapter. This is tied to the visibility objective. Any grant-writers out there?

I'm looking forward to a productive year. Many thanks to all of you for your support!

THE TWIG GIRDLER

by Frank Wiseman

In the fall we may find twigs littering the ground under our huisache trees. This is the handiwork of the female twig girdler beetle. The twig girdler is most common in the southern states but is known as far north as New England, and west as far as Arizona. In our area of the Rio Grande Valley it is most prevalent on the Huisache Tree, *Acacia farnesiana*.



Huisache Girdler

The huisache girdler, *O. pustulatus* is 11/16 to 1-1/8 inches long, brown with a light brown band across the middle of the upper surface of the body and peppered with small shiny black dots. It is found in the Gulf Coast Prairie, south Texas and the Rio Grande Valley and prefers mimosa and huisache.



Huisache Tree (Acacia farnesiana)

In late summer the female twig girdler lays her eggs in the branch tips of the huisache branches. She then crawls along the twig a foot or two toward the trunk and cuts a groove almost completely through the wood, girdling the twig. Girdled twigs are usually 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter at the girdle. The cut from the twig girdler is the only one made from the outside and is seldom complete, leaving a small central cylinder of wood attached. This creates conditions in the twig for the development of her larvae which spend the winter in the twig and emerge the following summer. The larvae feed inside the dead injured tree part, tunneling toward the severed end of the twig by feeding only on the wooden portion and leaving the bark intact. Because of this method, the twig girdlers are not a threat to

tree health. Leaves on the girdled branches turn, die and fall, and the branches often fall from the tree during high winds and storms.



Girdled Huisache Branch

Girdling does affect the beauty and aesthetic quality of ornamental plantings. Natural controls are important in keeping the twig girdler population low; desiccation of the eggs is apparently the greatest single mortality factor. In orchards and nurseries, the severed twigs are gathered and burned during fall, winter and spring when the eggs and grubs are in the twigs. Using this method populations can be greatly reduced in one or two seasons.

For our personal yards, it is best to gather up the fallen branch or branches and burn them. Thus, the problem is solved for a bit until the next girdler decides to attack. Some people call this girdler beetle Nature's Pruner.

WHAT AM I?



Sally Merrill took the photo of this colorful little critter in her yard not long ago. For a bit of fun she suggested that you might try to identify it. No cheating now but you can check your answer on the back page . Remember, no peeking until you have done your research.

BIOBLITZ 2018 CITY CHALLENGE

April 27 - 30

The City Nature Challenge is an initiative launched by the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. It has been a nationwide challenge to see which city/region has the greatest interest in nature and the environment. The reward is prestige and recognition.

The contest consists of individuals photographing plants and/or animals and uploading them to iNaturalist during the contest window. The easiest way to do this is by using a smartphone and the iNaturalist app, but digital photos can also be uploaded using a PC and the desktop program. The photos may not be from archives however but must be taken during the contest window.

The competition categories are Total Observations, Species Identified, and People Participating. The winners for 2017 were:

#1 Dallas

#2 San Francisco

#3 Los Angeles

#4 Austin

#5 Houston

The contest for 2018 will go international for the first time.

The Rio Grande Valley is being included as a single contestant. The area runs from Falcon to the Gulf Coast and includes all of Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo and Starr Counties.

Given the incredible diversity of plant and animal life in the RGV, we have an advantage, but we need you to participate. The organizers here in the Valley are gleefully anticipating knocking Dallas and San Francisco off their top perches.

Here are the basic guidelines on how to participate.

- If you have an iNaturalist account, you're good to go. Get out and about during the contest period and take as many photos as possible. If you are not sure about the identity of your plant or animal, don't worry—do the best you can, but log it!
- For those who do not have an account, download the iNaturalist app to your Android or iPhone and create your account following the prompts. It takes just a couple of minutes.
- For more serious nature photographers who intend to upload photos taken with a digital camera, you can go to www.inaturalist.org and create an account there. The web site will coach you on how to load your photos.
- An advantage to using a smartphone is that once you record your observation (simple: launch the iNaturalist app and take a photo of the plant or animal), the app will provide

several identification suggestions to help you figure out what it is. But don't get overly concerned—you can enter “plant” or “bug” and others will help. And it counts in both observations and people categories as well as possibly being the only one of that species observed.

You can make observations in gardens as well as the wild, but please try to pick native species rather than exotics or invasives. And you need to make sure you specify that these are “cultivated” rather than a wild landscape.

If all of us spend an hour or two in one of our parks or wilderness areas, we can win this thing going away. Imagine what you can capture in plants, butterflies, birds, bugs, turtles, lizards and more simply by strolling through Ramsey Park or the Weslaco Nature Center or the SPI Birding Center. Both of our Valley chapters of the Texas Master Naturalists are participating, and the organizers are asking schools, garden clubs, ACAS, the Sierra Club and other environmental groups to participate. If you have a neighbor who is a supporter, ask them to join us. Even a few minutes in your backyard or empty lot next door will rack up the count.

Even better, this all is part of citizen science and contributes to the body of knowledge about the species populations in our metropolitan areas. It's a contest, sure, but it's also a collective scientific effort.

Load up iNaturalist, and see you out and about April 27 – 30!

SHARING PLANTS AND KNOWLEDGE WITH OUR SISTER CHAPTER, STBC-TMN

by Christina Mild

In December, I presented “Planting Guidelines for Deep South Texas” to the South Texas Border Chapter of TMN (STBC-TMN), invited to do so by 2nd VP Elizabeth Perdomo. They are a wonderful bunch of highly-interested people with diverse talents, and making their acquaintance has led to several unexpected outcomes. I am friends with several of these members on Facebook, so our interactions have been fairly consistent.

In my talk, I included the need to reintroduce our native grasses in places where they've been lost, and that became a hot topic for several of the attendees. I mentioned that we have plenty of Plains Bristlegrass in Ramsey Park, more than enough to share with interested parties.

I've been growing several kinds of native grasses successfully at Ramsey Park, as well as cultivating three species in backyard pots. Seed sharing from those native grasses has brought a lot of interest at Native Plant project meetings over the past year. With Plains Bristlegrass, it's simple to dig specimens and transplant them, so I've not worked with seed collection for several years. Whenever we have to dig out Plains Bristlegrass at Ramsey Park, we've tried to transplant it to other sites as a replacement for exterminated guinea grass. It's shade-tolerant, so it does just fine in the understory of Ramsey's brushy interior spaces.



Bristlegrass Seed Heads



Entire Bristlegrass Plant

Not long after my talk for STBC-TMN, Elizabeth Perdomo contacted me about a possible chapter fieldtrip to Ramsey Park. Between the weeks of her initial request and the planned fieldtrip, several things happened which caused the Harlingen visit to blossom into a multi-faceted visit. Over the winter, several of their members posted Facebook photos of butterflies nectaring on Chomonque and requests for information about where the plant can be acquired. I responded that few native growers supply it and that we have giant specimens in Ramsey Park, also that I would be glad to lead a group to see them and that cuttings could be made for possible propagation. That sped up their interest in taking a guided fieldtrip thru Ramsey Park. Several of their members are actually expert propagators who have held several workshops on the topic.



Red-bordered Pixie (Melanis pixie) nectaring on Chomonque

Photo: Mike A. Rickard

Their chapter also contacted me about plans for a butterfly garden and the need for plants, with little or no budget for acquiring them. Harlingen had just received one of the few rains which fell this winter/spring, so I invited Elizabeth to bring volunteers to rescue plants from my Clifford St. yard, where many native species have long-colonized the wildscape.

During that time, work was progressing on a stepwise approach to rejuvenate a space in Ramsey Park which had been a monoculture of Plains Bristlegrass. The group was ready to dig that grass from the space in order to reclaim it with new diversity, a project which was funded by Town & Country Garden Club following a park tour. It was perfect timing for us to save the dug specimens for STBC-TMN.

RGVCTMN 2nd VP Barbara Peet was interested in the upcoming plant rescue and fieldtrip, in the interest of creating a working relationship with the border chapter. She was a vital participant on the day, having remembered such things as a sign-up list for participants, providing information to the very large group, and showing the relevant information in Plants of Deep South Texas, which many of the border chapter members were not yet aware or owners of.

Barbara and I met a partial contingent of border chapter members in late morning at my Clifford St. yard, where I had soaked some of the bristlegrass specimens in a shallow tray to demonstrate how clump grasses can be separated into many smaller, well-rooted clumps prior to planting or potting. She also helped us point out and identify the many native species throughout the front and back yard which could be dug for member's yards and the intended butterfly garden sponsored by their chapter. She was able to have lunch with the plant rescue team, which led to all kinds of additional information exchange.

Following the plant rescue/fieldtrip Elizabeth sent out an email to the STBC membership offering free native grass sets collected from my yard to be used at local nature centers, nature sites and ranches.

I had no idea how far-reaching this "grass sharing" would be. Elizabeth sent me this list of "Bristlegrass Recipient Sites" not long after the trip to Harlingen:

Deep South Texas Chapter, Texas Master Gardeners, Demonstration Garden, San Juan, TX
St. George Orthodox Church – TMN Butterfly Garden Project, Pharr, TX
Edinburg Wetland World Birding Center – Native Plantings, Edinburg, TX
Oleander Butterfly Gardens, Native Planting Sites, Mission, TX
Old Hidalgo Pumphouse & World Birding Center – Native Plantings, Hidalgo, TX
McAllen Nature Center – Native Planting Sites, McAllen, TX
Three ranch sites in Hidalgo County, TX
Quinta Mazatlan Nature Center, Ebony Grove – McAllen, TX
Nursery – National Butterfly Center – Mission, TX
El Meseño Ranch – Ranch in Northern Hidalgo County, Puerto Rico, TX.

The plant rescue supplied most of the plants needed for their chapter butterfly garden, as well as natives for the members' backyards. I look forward to the possibility of attending one of the propagation workshops offered by their members. Hopefully we'll see lots of bristlegrass gracing the various gardens and parks which received the dug specimens we would have likely composted from the Ramsey Park intended garden site.

The tour of Ramsey was an eye-opening experience for our visitors; they were fairly amazed at all the diversity they witnessed. They've expressed an interest in another Ramsey fieldtrip, which we'll be pleased to provide!

TEXAS BLUE BONNET

No flower is more associated with the Lone Star State than the bluebonnet. The flower lines Texas highways during the spring, making for scenic drives across the state. Keep reading below to learn how the bluebonnet became the Texas state flower.

On March 7, 1901, the Twenty-seventh Texas Legislature adopted the bluebonnet as the state flower. The flower's popular name derives from its resemblance to a sunbonnet. It has also been called buffalo clover, wolf flower, and, in Spanish, el conejo ("the rabbit").

On March 8, 1971, the legislation was amended to include *L. texensis* and "any other variety of bluebonnet not heretofore recorded." At least four other species of bluebonnet grow in Texas: *L. havardii*, *L. concinnus*, *L. perennis*, and *L. plattensis*. Contrary to various folk stories and legends claiming that the plant originated outside the state, *L. texensis* and *L. subcarnosus* are native to Texas.



Field of Texas Bluebonnets
Photo: bombay2austin on Flickr

In 1933 the legislature adopted a state flower song, "Bluebonnets," written by Julia D. Booth and Lora C. Crockett. Also in the 1930s the Highway Department began a landscaping and beautification program and extended the flower's range. Due largely to that agency's efforts, bluebonnets now grow along most major highways throughout the state. The flower usually blooms in late March and early April and is found mostly in limestone outcroppings from north central Texas to Mexico. Its popularity is still widespread today.

Although early explorers failed to mention the bluebonnet in their descriptions of Texas, Indian lore called the flower a gift from the Great Spirit. The bluebonnet continues to be a favorite subject for artists and photographers, and at the peak of bloom, festivals featuring the flower are held in several locations.

WORTH THE FOUR-YEAR WAIT!

Story and Photos Anita Westervelt

It all started one April when I was asked to help lead a guided walk through Ramsey Park for a science high school field trip. A most amazing flower was blooming along the edge of Ebony Loop at about waist height. The flower seemed to be suspended in air, so tall was its stalk. It was a real attention-getter. I snapped a hurried shot for later research.

This beauty is aptly named **basket flower** (*Plectocephalus americanus*) [*Centaurea Americana*]. The name basket flower refers to the basket weave pattern that holds the lower portion of the flower (known as phyllary), giving appearance of a bloom in a ready-made basket.

A week or so after seeing that lone flower beside the trail, and finding information on it, I'd walked down the path below Ebony Loop, at Lily Agave Hill, turned toward the river and saw an entire savannah of basket flower in full bloom. It was love at first sight.

Sadly, the next year, there was nothing but guinea grass, downed mesquite limbs and granjeno where once it was vibrant with violet flowers, heads toward the sun. I've been trying to recapture that vista again in Ramsey park with the help of several of the other Ebony Loop volunteers.

The following February, we cleared the area of guinea grass, granjeno and cleaned up the fallen tree. Toward the end of summer, we began collecting seed from basket flowers we found growing between the Upper Arroyo Trail and the Arroyo. In December, we broadcast the seeds in our previously cleared area, swished a light covering of soil over them and waited for the spring rains. They never came.

Later that third summer, there weren't even half a dozen basket flower plants in an area where there should have been hundreds. Those that did come up were less than six inches tall. One sad little plant tried a tiny bloom, but alas, there had been no rain and any park water hydrants were too far away to have trailed hoses and given the garden water.

This tail has no ending -- yet. I'd still like to see a field of blooming basket flowers in Ramsey. In the meantime, a couple of us are keeping the species vibrant by planting in our home habitats and collecting seeds.



Basket Flower Basket



Open Basket Flower



Basket Flower



Basket Flower Plant

The above photographs are from my first successful attempt at growing these beauties in captivity, if you will. I planted the seeds in the fall, before the snow and freezes. The stand is about four feet tall. This first bloom will soon be joined by about a dozen others.

Basket flower's erect growth habit and striking beauty add to the aesthetics of a native landscape as easily as it can enhance a cultivated formal garden.

Blooms can reach to four inches in diameter and will be held through the summer. The large flower heads have a cream colored center; the outer petals can range from pink, purple or lavender. The plants can reach a height of five to six feet. A regular watering schedule helps promote blooming.

Basket flower is found in the wild throughout much of North America from Texas, north to New York, west to Arizona, east to Carolinas and south into central Mexico.

Basket flower blooms provide nectar high in sugar and amino acids. Pollen is high in protein. The plant is visited by a wide variety of hummingbirds, songbirds, butterflies, moths, bees, beetles and a host of other insects. Stamens are reported to suddenly contract and push pollen onto pollinator when touched. Also an excellent seed source for game birds such as bobwhite quail and song birds.

Bumblebees are major visitors to basket flowers

Plant in full sun.

Seedsources.com, Native American Seed provided much of the descriptive information.

EVER WONDER HOW OUR CHAPTER'S SPEAKER BUREAU WORKS?

by Anita Westervelt

Or have you been wondering how it's progressing? The answer to that is, it's becoming quite popular.

Fourteen requests have been filled since it was launched just a couple of months ago. Native plants/native landscaping is tops, with birds and bird photography being the next most popular topics.

"Our speakers have been enthusiastically welcomed by many Winter Texan organizations and gatherings. Our information and stories will be spread throughout the U.S. and Canada as our winter visitors travel home for the summer," said Chapter President Steve Lanoux, who set this program in motion last fall, compiled a list of topics and speakers and got it up and running with the help of chapter Webmaster Jimmy Paz.

Anyone with a topic about which they have some detailed knowledge and are willing to get up and talk to others about it, please contact our new speakers bureau coordinator, Lou Osborne, to register with the bureau. "Speaking engagements are an essential part of our mission to reach out to others and educate them about our marvelous Valley," Lanoux said.



Eileen Mattei (center) demonstrates the interconnectedness of an ecosystem with a skein of yellow yarn. Each person in the circle had a dot on their face as either plant, carnivore, herbivore or bacteria. Anita Westervelt (at right) represented the sun in the center of the circle.

Lou Osborne also is editor of the Chachalaca. Please contact him at rgvtmn@live.com to be included in the speakers bureau presentation list.

Here's how the speakers bureau works, for those who are new to the chapter and might consider adding their names and topics to the lists.

Our Website has a list of topics that the public sees; the chapter speakers bureau coordinator has a list of topics and the corresponding chapter members' names and contact information who can present on each topic.

Media releases are periodically sent informing the Valley and Winter Texans about our speakers bureau. The public can fill out a form from the chapter Website which is then electronically

delivered to the coordinator. The coordinator gets in touch with possible speakers until the gig is booked, at which time, the coordinator's job is done and the detailed coordination is handled directly between the requester and the speaker.



Deli Lanoux designed a hand-out for her presentation and taught participants to "Think like a scientist."

Many of the speakers present using PowerPoint. The Website establishes guidelines for those requesting speakers, explaining that the requesting group be able to provide a projector, computer and screen so that the speaker needs to have only a PowerPoint on a flash drive.

The most challenging gig to date was a request by the Harlingen Library staff looking for workshop leaders for four afternoons during spring break. Linda McGonigle, Heidi Linneman, Deli Lanoux and Eileen Mattei stepped up to the plate, filling the week with Nature Journaling and Sketching (art instruction/workshop), Monarchs and Milkweed, Bloom into Nature (field trip/workshop), and Skins and Skulls, respectively.

The workshops were popular with local children and parents, with a four day total of 126 children and 64 adults. Linda McGonigle's art workshop drew 55 children and adults.



Steve Lanoux presents to a group of Winter Texans in Mercedes.

The Thing With Feathers

by Mark Salvatore

When I am convinced that Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) classes could not be better, the next one brings another lesson by a presenter passionate about his/her subject. The TMN program is superior to any other educational opportunity I have seen. I leave classes and field trips exhilarated, overtopped with ecological

enthusiasm. I vow to declare my adherence to environmental education, to crusade for habitat restoration, for native plants, for ocelots, for milkweed, for monarchs and for water quality.

That may sound rather dramatic. Notwithstanding, *plant native plants* is my new mantra.

After class I contemplate what I have absorbed. The Lower Rio Grande Valley—not a valley but a delta— is the only place in the country where four zones meet. Three percent of the native habitat remains. I visualize the river heavy with collars of concrete and steel, her hydrilla-choked flow measured and no longer meandering and replenishing resacas or depositing rich sediment, no longer feeding sand to the beach of the barrier island. I imagine Guinea grass racing north. To the south the border fence limits the range of the coyote that, in its excrement, disseminates the seed of the Sabal Palm.

Asphalt and concrete replace open space. The Arroyo Colorado travels with its load of herbicides and pesticides to the hypersaline Laguna Madre. “Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means of going backwards,” Aldous Huxley said more than a half century ago. The TMN program accelerates us forward by cultivating ecological awareness through education and volunteering.

So let us applaud the Rio Grande Valley TMN education committee members who organize the field trips and obtain the fantastic parade of class and field trip presenters. We are grateful for your prodigious service.

To name a few, Joni Gillis, New Class Director and a reservoir of information, starts each class and does much more. Alicia Cavazos, Advanced Training Director and mentor, shares from her well of understanding and her birding, too. Barbara Peet, Mentor, introduces presenters and is a fountain of native plant facts. And those who provide the snacks, which are more often well-planned meals, keep us fed: thank you so much. Many more make a difference, from those who take attendance to others who accompany us on field trips. Thank you all.

Texas Master Naturalists give us hope for our environment like Dickinson’s “Hope is the thing with feathers.” With optimism and through education and work we make a difference and hear it in the symphonic chirrups, coos, peeps and the whoosh and rustle of the wind moving dry Sabal Palm fronds in the morning.

YOU MIGHT BE A NATURALIST IF....

by Drew Bennie

1. YOU PLANT STINGING NETTLES IN YOUR LANDSCAPE TO ATTRACT RED ADMIRAL BUTTERFLIES.
2. YOU FINISH MOWING AND EVERYONE MAKES FUN OF YOU MOWING AROUND THE WILD FLOWERS.
3. YOU NEED A MACHETE TO GET TO THE MAILBOX AND BACK SAFELY.
4. YOU SPEND MORE ON BIRDSEED, POPCORN AND FRUIT FOR THE BIRDS THAN AT RESTAURANTS.
5. THE READING MATERIAL AT HOME CONSISTS OF NATURE ID BOOKS AND LITERATURE FROM THE AUDUBON SOCIETY, NATURE CONSERVANCY, SIERRA CLUB, NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION, ETC.
6. YOU SPEND LOTS OF TIME TALKING TO THE CRITTERS IN YOUR YARD AND LISTENING TO THEM REPLY.

7. YOU HAVE TROUBLE GETTING TO WORK ON TIME BUT MAKE IT TO THE TURTLE RELEASE AT 5:30 AM.
 8. ON A ROAD TRIP, YOU CHECK OUT THE FRONT GRILLS OF THE TRUCKS IN THE PARKING LOT FOR DEAD BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES BEFORE YOU ENTER A RESTAURANT.
 9. THE LINT FILTER IN YOUR DRYER HAS MORE LEAVES AND SEEDS THAN LINT.
 10. YOUR CAMERA HAS MORE PHOTOS IN IT OF BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND PLANTS THAN PEOPLE.
 11. THE AMOUNT OF GREEN LAWN AT YOUR HOUSE GRADUALLY IS GETTING SMALLER ANNUALLY.
 12. IT TAKES YOU 50% LONGER TO DRIVE TO FORT DAVIS STATE PARK FROM HOME BECAUSE OF ALL THE STOPS TO LOOK AT BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE.
- MAYBE YOU CAN THINK OF OTHER SIGNS THAT MIGHT INDICATE YOU MIGHT BE A NATURALIST!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY FOR TRAINEES AT PALO ALTO BATTLEFIELD

by Carolyn Cardile

Several members of the new class cleaned out more than 500 seed tubes for Palo Alto's restoration project, so that they can be reused. Rolando Garza gave us an interesting program about Palo Alto's efforts to restore the battlefield to its original vegetation. The program included a short film about the battle, a presentation about the battlefield's vegetation, and a tour of what they are trying to restore. The volunteer work was much appreciated. Rolando is looking for volunteers to assist him with this continuing project. If you are interested in helping him restore the battlefield's grasses, call him at Palo Alto.



Rolando Garza and Migdalia Lopez at Palo Alto

THANK YOU, TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS, FOR YOUR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION OF TIME AND TALENT TO THE WINTER OUTDOOR WILDLIFE EXPO

by Carolyn Cardile



The 23rd Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo (WOWE), held at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center on January 23- 27, 2018, was very successful this year. Members of the RGV Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists contributed to WOWE's success in several ways. Fifteen of our chapter members presented programs during WOWE. Six chapter members worked all year on the steering committee. More than 21 chapter members volunteered each day at the Expo, working as room monitors, taking tickets, doing surveys, leading bird walks, and helping at exhibit tables. That's more than 105 volunteer positions filled by our chapter members during this 5 day event. WOW-E!

This is not the first time that our chapter members have stepped up to help at the Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo. Some have presented programs or volunteered at exhibit tables in the past. When the event expanded in 2014, our chapter members answered the call to help, and they've been an important part of WOWE's success ever since. Once again, thank you for your participation in WOWE this year. We are looking forward to seeing you again next January.

Here are just a few of the chapter members who participated. Cristin Howard with the owl is the Director of SPI Birding and Nature Center. Greg Storms shared his talents as a photography teacher on two different days. Mary Jo Bogatto received the environmental award presented each year at WOWE. Paul Cardile, a member of the steering committee and TMN, presented the award this year.



Philip Dodson sold really cool tattoos. Kat Lillie, recipient of the environmental award in 2017, gave an excellent presentation about sea turtles. Shelby Bisette did a presentation about the Coastal Monitoring program and made the Ridley trip possible. Alicia Cavazos spoke about Beginning Birding.

I AM

I am the larva of the Silvered Prominent Moth, *Didugua Argentilinea* Druce.



I am a native of Deep South Texas and make my home in the counties of Hidalgo and Cameron. Can't get much further south in Texas than that.