



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 Virginia Vineyard*

Hello Chapter Members,

Another quarter is about to come to a close, and I imagine that you're looking forward to a change in the weather. It seems as if the biggest concerns across the state are hot, dry conditions, and the danger of fire. We have also had to say good-bye to friends because of cuts to the Texas Parks and Wildlife budget. I'm hoping that we get some good news at the TMN State Meeting in October.

Chapter members continue to positively affect parks, nature centers, and schools as they volunteer in various capacities. Several members attended the public hearing at UT Brownsville on the planned offshore wind farm, and on September 27, there will be a Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum where, we hope, an update on the clearing of the Arroyo Colorado will be given.

Chapter programs continue to offer interesting and timely advanced training. Topics have included using GPS in nature, having fun with fungi, rescuing cold-stranded turtles, and red tide training.

Finally, as the last quarter begins, please consider serving our chapter as an officer, an at-large board member, or committee member. Elections will be held in December, and in order for the chapter to continue to thrive, your help and dedication are needed.

Thank you.

Virginia

Certified Interpreted Guide Training, August 2011

by Jean Pettit

According to the National Association for Interpretation (2007), interpretation is a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource. During four days in August, Jennifer Owen-White guided trainees through an extraordinary classroom experience sponsored by the National Association for Interpretation.

Two of our RGV Texas Master Naturalists enrolled: Beth Wargo and Jean Pettit. Jesus Franco and several employees of the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge also attended.

The purpose of the workshop was to introduce trainees to the “Art of Interpretation,” its basic principles, and their application/adaptation to whatever topic we want to share with our audience. Interpretation is like P O E T R Y — It must have a **Purpose** and be **Organized**, **Enjoyable**, **Thematic**, and **Relevant**, and it must include **You**, your passion for the subject, the “art” part of the Art of Interpretation. The workshop also covered how to assess an audience and incorporate that assessment into a program, knowing resources, program development, and delivery.

Five different texts were covered by the 50-question open book exam. Authors included Freeman Tilden, the first person to formalize and record the original six principles of effective interpretation in his book, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, published in 1957. Expanding on the original principles were Joseph Cornell’s *Sharing Nature with Children*. Other authorities included Douglas M. Knudson, Ted T. Cable, Larry Beck, and William Lewis.

One of the requirements for graduation and certification was to give a ten minute presentation using the principles learned in the course. Beth’s presentation was on the Hawk Watch, and Jean’s was on Man’s Impact on Sea Turtles, based on information from Sea Turtle, Inc.

The training was educational, enlightening, and filled with confidence-building techniques. And, of course, the classroom experience was even more special because we were fortunate to have Jennifer Owen-White, interpreter extraordinaire, as our teacher. I can testify that I saw immediate results four days later leading a nature walk at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. It was a more enriching experience for me and those attending. ♦

Escaping the Texas Heat

by Steve and Joyce Fowler

We spent our summer in Alaska celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary after booking a cruise/land tour with Holland America to Alaska in June. We enjoyed the opportunity to see the Alaska interior, but the tour was very structured and we missed the opportunities for private, personal nature observations. We decided that Alaska and Northern Canada deserved much more time than we had arranged. So using our 50th wedding anniversary as an excuse to extend our adventure, we flew back to Seattle, loaded up our Camper Van where we had stored it, gathered up Harley, our yellow lab, and headed north again.

The extended trip gave us a much more intimate experience with the landscape and animals. We camped away from RV Parks where possible to allow us the opportunity to quietly share the landscape with the animals in their natural habitat. Our favorite times were observing two young Grizzly Cubs sparring and playing with each other on the Chilkat River.



We also had the opportunity to see gray wolves. Close encounters occurred, but we tried to respect their territory as much as possible. We did get to see one gray wolf close enough to get a nice photo.



We would go again in a minute as there is so much natural beauty to explore. (As a side note, there is no dotted line at the Arctic Circle—only a sign and picnic table)

Sea Turtle Celebration

by Jean Pettit

Sea Turtle, Inc.'s, 12th Annual Celebration, held in the ballroom of the Hilton Garden Inn on South Padre Island on Saturday, September 3rd, was a tremendous success. More than 240 people attended and raised approximately \$26,000.

Featured attendees include Beth Fedigan, a South Padre Island artist,



...and Dave Cromwell, a Sea Turtle, Inc., staffer whose new book premiered at the Celebration.



Also present was Allison, of special interest to our Texas Master Naturalist chapter. Tom Wilson was also present; he developed the first and subsequent prosthetics for Allison.



Allison



Barry Patel with Allison

A goal this year was to prove to Barry Patel, who operates the South Padre Island Hilton Garden Inn Beach Resort, and other prospective sponsors that the Celebration could fill a room. It certainly did! ♦

Ramsey Report – October 2011

by Linda Butcher

Work goes on at Ramsey Nature Center in spite of the drought and heat. A lot has happened this month. We have repaired the ruts in the trail by the hummingbird garden, which should make for easier walking. The pond at the bottom of the hill by the Sabal Palm grove has been cleaned—no more cattails. You can now see the pond from the bird blind, and we will be filling it with water soon.

While removing the cattails I was fortunate to witness an event that is rarely seen: a young indigo snake was trying to eat a coral snake. This battle for life went on for about an hour. However, since the coral snake was as large as the indigo snake, it was able to escape.



I am starting to see some fall migrants, mainly warblers and orioles. Also on the Arroyo trail, I saw several groove-billed anis. I am starting to see some butterflies as well. They have been few and far between lately. Watering is an on-going chore but is paying off with blooming plants for all the critters. As always, you are invited to come by and enjoy the wildlife. ♦

