



# The Chachalaca

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## RGV TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS

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## **President's Message**

*by Alicia Cavazos*

Hello Master Naturalists,

It seems that every year goes faster than the previous year. We are already into the third quarter and it seems that we just celebrated the New Year. For those of us who plan on completing projects before the end of the year, it is time to kick it up a notch.

This summer has been lots of fun for me personally. At its beginning I volunteered at Valley Nature Center with summer camps. Being with 5- and 6-year old children who are learning about nature is very rewarding. It is great to see their reaction when they see the baby yellow-crowned night heron peering from the nest, or see a chachalaca at 5 feet away. I also volunteered with summer camps at the Coastal Studies Lab. On the eco boat, I was surprised to see what was pulled from the Laguna Madre. I have probably crossed the bridge from Port Isabel to South Padre thousands of times and had no idea what was in the waters beneath except for the fish brought in with a line. At the end of the summer sessions, volunteers were treated to lunch and a sandcastle building lesson, so I also learned how to build sandcastles this summer.

Taking part in the Oiled Wildlife workshop at the Gladys Porter Zoo was awesome. I hope we never have to use these newly acquired skills, but if an oil spill happens, we are ready for it. Several members of the RGVCTMN participated in the workshop. We were lucky to have it so close to home. One attendee had to fly in from Houston and pay for her own hotel.

A field trip to the Davis Mountains arranged by Park Hosts Jolaine Lanehart and Jim Navjar was unforgettable. Nan Persinger, Cris Wise, Linda Butcher, and I drove up there. The scenery was breathtaking, and Linda added to her life list of birds. I am now bird watching as a new hobby and have started with a hefty list from this trip. Other members on the trip were Martha and Lee Jones, John and Sue Thaxter, Michael McClure and his grandson Julian. Jackie Fields and his wife had been there the previous week.

Being a Texas Master Naturalist has given me all these opportunities to connect with nature and meet new people. I hope all members will take part in these activities. Remember to volunteer when you see emails that help is needed at our partners functions. You just never know what you will learn, who you will meet, or what you will see that will enhance your life.

Alicia

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## Moments and Milestones

### September 2013 RGVCTMN Meeting

*photos by Nan Persinger*



Alicia Cavazos congratulating Frances Barrera on Coastal Naturalist certification



Alicia congratulating Cristela Wise on completing  
100 volunteer hours



Alicia congratulating Adrian Ramos on completing 250 volunteer hours



Alicia congratulating Shelley Borrayo on completing 250 volunteer hours

## Building an Urban Wildlife Refuge from the Ground Up

*by Jolaine Lanehart*

During our trip to California in June, we stopped by Albuquerque and visited with Jennifer Owen-White, recent Refuge Manager for Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, about her new adventure. We met up with Jennifer and followed her to the site of the new Valle de Oro NWR, and if you didn't think Jennifer enjoys challenges, just take look at the photos below!



View near the Refuge entrance



Another view at the entrance

There are lots of outbuildings, including a milking barn and residences that you might find on a family farm of about 570 acres. As you can see, the land is cleared for farming. A family still farms the property until the various agencies complete the plans for restoration and construction of wetlands, hiking trails, visitor center/education complex and offices. Jennifer runs a mostly one-person operation at this time, working with a number of state, federal, city, and county entities to develop the property. This is the first urban wildlife refuge in the south and the first developed for the purpose of education and protection of wildlife (others are mostly in the eastern US and were initially established to protect a specific animal or plant).



View towards the street and a recycling operation





View to the southeast of the refuge, not too far from the Rio Grande River and near state park property

This view (above) is one of Jennifer's favorite (and it's under a nice shade tree). The Refuge is located in the southern part of Albuquerque in an area that is largely industrial and has no zoning. It's an area that is experiencing economic hardship, and this project, with its focus on bringing new life and energy, is being embraced wholeheartedly by the community. Although, there are irrigation canals for farming, the plans for creating the wetlands will include more natural routes for water.

We had two teenagers with us on this trip, and it was great for them to meet Jennifer and learn about career opportunities that are not often presented to kids.



Jennifer talking to visitors

If you are ever in the area, give Jennifer a call. In the meantime, check progress of the new refuge online (links below).

Here are links to Valle de Oro NWR:

<http://www.tpl.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/new-mexico/valle-de-oro-nwr.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/ValleDeOroNationalWildlifeRefuge> and

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfVDO> ♦

## **West Texas Adventure, August 2013**

*by Cristela Wise*

Jim Navjar and Jolaine Lanehart serve as Park Hosts at Davis Mountains State Park during the months of July and August. As Park Hosts, they supplement park staff and serve as representatives of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Their primary duties are to assist park visitors by providing information about Davis Mountains State Park and providing programs.



Jolaine and Jim

During the last six years, Jim and Jolaine have gained vast knowledge of the area and are eager to share with visitors. They invited our chapter to join them in exploring the history and beauty of the area. The nine members of our chapter who traveled to the Davis Mountains included Alicia Cavazos, Nan Persinger, Linda Butcher, Cristela Wise, Mike McClure, John Thaxter, Linda Desrosiers, and Martha and Lee Jones. Spouses Sue Thaxter and Dick DeRosier also joined the West Texas adventure.

Alicia, Linda B., Nan, and I left the Valley early Saturday, August 3. We stopped in Uvalde for the Market Days and enjoyed lunch under large pecan trees in the town plaza. We stopped to take photos at the Amistad Reservoir, the Pecos River High Bridge, the Vinegarroon (historic railroad bridge), the beautiful canyon at Eagle Nest Creek, and, last, Alpine, where we had dinner.



Nan, Linda, and Alicia at the Pecos River where it meets the Rio Grande

After traveling 660 miles, we finally arrived at the historic Indian Lodge. It is located in such a beautiful setting in Davis Mountains State Park. The adobe brick lodge was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's with pueblo-style 18-inch thick walls. When the lodge was renovated in 1967, the hand-carved cedar furniture and ceilings of pine viga and latilla were retained. The lodge resembles a Southwestern Native American-style, multilevel pueblo village. Staying at the lodge was like stepping back in time. There was no cell service at the Lodge or in the state park, but one could travel 4 miles to the town of Fort Davis for cell service. There is no internet access in the lodge rooms, but there is free WIFI in the lobby/lounge room. Although it was almost dark, our avid birders, Linda and Alicia, went out to explore and saw a fox and skunk. Linda did not want to miss any opportunities to spot her target bird, the scaled quail.

On Sunday, August 4, Alicia, Linda, Nan, and I set off to Balmorhea Lake. The drive to the lake was breathtaking; every curve in the road revealed gorgeous rock formations and green mountain terrain. We were thrilled to witness the mating dance of Clark Grebes at Balmorhea Lake.





Linda, Cris, Alicia, and Nan at Balmorhea Lake

We then visited an unusual desert wetland called San Solomon Cienega in Balmorhea State Park. The once life-giving freshwater oases were destroyed in 1935 during the construction of Balmorhea State Park's spring-fed swimming pool. The Cienega was recreated in 1995 by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to prevent the extinction of two rare and endangered desert fishes. Comanche Springs Pupfish are found only in the Balmorhea area.

Later Jim and Jolaine served up a delicious dinner at their RV site. Guests included our group of eleven from the RGV, park hosts who are members of the Capitol Area Chapter TMN, Park Interpretive Ranger Nina Cardenas, and Jolaine's relatives (Aunt Jo, cousin Carol, and granddaughter Caroline from Austin). After dinner, Jolaine reviewed the itinerary with us and entertained questions. We had a great time enjoying the delicious food and visiting with one another; Jim and Jolaine were gracious hosts. A few of us then hiked halfway up the Indian Lodge Trail and found a raptor nest, but no scaled quail in sight.

On Monday, August 5, we enjoyed breakfast at the historic "Drugstore Restaurant" in downtown Fort Davis. The 15-member RGV group then met at the historic Fort Davis National Site, which was established in 1854 on the site of an earlier Indian village, call Painted Comanche Camp by the earliest Anglo-American explorers of the area. The Fort was named after Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis. During the early years of Fort Davis, most of the soldiers' time was spent tracking down Comanche, Apache, and Kiowa Indians. In the post-Civil War era, about 20 percent of the military in the West was black, but at Fort Davis the combination of black Union veterans and former slaves amounted to about 50 percent of the troops. In addition to protecting emigrants, settlers, mail coaches, and freight wagons during the subsequent Indian Wars, the Buffalo Soldiers explored and mapped large areas of the Southwest. They strung telegraph lines to connect frontier outposts that they were also instrumental in building. In 1880, Colonel Benjamin Grierson successfully forced the Apache, including their leader, Victorio, into Mexico, where they were killed by Mexican soldiers.



At historic Fort Davis site

Fort Davis is one of the best surviving examples of an Indian Wars frontier military post in the Southwest. In 1961, Fort Davis was officially sanctioned as a national historic site and became part of the National Park Service. Today, twenty-four roofed buildings and more than 100 ruins and foundations are part of the Fort Davis National Historic Site. Five of the historic buildings have been refurbished to the 1880's, making it easy for visitors to envision themselves being at the fort at the height of its development. The park has 12 miles of awesome hiking trails, which a few of us used for bird watching. Many of us then met for lunch at Eric's in Alpine. We then traveled back to downtown Fort Davis for an afternoon of sightseeing and shopping. Later that evening, Jim led the "night walk of the wild side" hiking adventure, where we saw a juvenile javelina feeding. Jim and Jolaine's cousin, Caroline, was our nature photo model. Young Caroline also took photos of us for her "ER" book (elderly residents). As Jim led us up some hills to a creek, we saw tons of colorful grasshoppers and wild flowers, but no scaled quail.



Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center

On Tuesday, August 6, our 15-member RGV group toured the tranquil and visually stunning botanical gardens at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center. Our tour guides pointed out the colorful flora and fauna at this most diverse desert in the United States. Can you guess what Linda's question was to our guides? Answer: There have been no recent sightings of scaled quail. Nonetheless, we enjoyed reconnecting with nature in a desert setting where we saw an abundance of bees, butterflies, cacti, and agave, along with pine and hackberry trees. Later that afternoon, Alicia, Linda, Nan, and I spent about an hour bird watching at the Davis Mountains State Park Interpretive Center. We sighted a black-headed headed grosbeak, house finch, lesser goldfinch, and ladder-back woodpecker. Park Interpreter Nina Cardenas arranged for Astronomer Bill Wren to give our group a presentation on "Night Lighting" at the Indian Lodge meeting room. Mr. Wren's presentation was very informative. He spoke about common-sense solutions for night lighting that save energy and increase safety. West Texas is known for its starriest skies, and the communities in the area are proactive in their efforts to minimize light pollution. Immediately after Mr. Wren's presentation, we set off to the Star Party at the McDonald Observatory. The fifth-largest telescope in the world (Hobby-Eberly) is located on the grounds of the McDonald Observatory. A special thanks to Park Interpreter Nina Cardenas for organizing the reservations for our group. Although the skies were cloudy for star gazing, we did get to see a few planets through the telescopes at the Rebecca Gale Telescope Park.



Davis Mountains Preserve with Master Bander Kelly Bryan

On Wednesday, August 7, we were up at the crack of dawn for our excursion to the Davis Mountains Preserve. We got up close and personal with Master Hummer Bander, Kelly Bryan. Everyone listened attentively and watched Mr. Bryan very gently band Black-Chinned and Rufous hummingbirds. Jolaine documented the details of each hummer. Mr. Bryan was very thorough as he explained every step of the process. While he was banding the first Rufous of the morning, he shared the news about a female Rufous he banded on August 27, 2012, at his cabin near the Davis Mountains Preserve. After wintering in Mexico, the female Rufous migrated

north via the west coast. That same female Rufous was caught on July 4 of this year in Chenega Bay, Alaska, by Bander Kate McLaughlin. Mr. Bryan pointed out that this was only the second time that a hummer banded in the lower 48 states has been caught in Alaska. As Mr. Bryan completed the banding and documentation of each hummer, he would lay the hummer on a volunteer's palm. Since the hummers are not accustomed to lying on their back, they just lie there. What an experience it was for us all! Even little Julian (Mike McClure) got to experience holding a hummer.



Newly banded Rufous Hummingbird

A group of us stayed at the Davis Mountains Preserve to do some hiking and bird watching. We hiked the Livermore Vista Trail and reached an elevation of 6,200 feet. While on the Preserve, we sighted wild turkeys, blue grosbeak, western scrub jay, acorn woodpecker, and rufous-crowned sparrow. Alicia, Linda, Nan, and I then visited the McDonald Observatory again for a daytime experience. We took photos of the telescope domes at the Summit of Mount Locke, where the elevation is 6,791 feet, the highest point on Texas highways. This was our last day at Davis Mountains; the adventurous Joneses with their trail map in hand set off to hike the full Indian Lodge trail. As Alicia, Linda, and I were driving toward the scenic overlook at sunset, we saw the Joneses making their way down the trail. This was their 2<sup>nd</sup> vigorous hike of the day, and they were ready for a break. They hopped on and joined us for one last breathtaking view of the Davis Mountains. Once again, no scaled quail in sight.



McDonald Observatory, elevation 6,791 feet



On Thursday, August 8, we had our last cup of coffee at the Indian Lodge and said our goodbyes to Mary Ann, who works the TPW front desk morning shift. We enjoyed visiting with her every morning while drinking our free coffee; she is an amusing character with a beautifully drawling Texas accent. We left while it was still dark, and at sunrise we saw a beautiful rainbow. We also saw several large turkey vultures on fence posts soaking up the morning sun with their wings spread. We stopped for photos at the small town of Langtry, home of the "Old Hanging Tree" which still stands. Langtry has seven Texas Historical Commission historical markers. The town's best known resident was Justice of the Peace Roy Bean. He represented the law openly, but it only gave him a chance to be the most flagrant violator. Although Linda never saw her target bird, she got great photo shots of birds, plants, wildlife, and windmills that had beautiful mountain backdrops.

As we traveled along the border near Roma, we saw drug smugglers loading large bundles! They shut the backdoor of their black GMC SUV as we passed and then followed behind us for five minutes. We were so relieved when they finally turned! Our West Texas trip was no doubt full of excitement and adventure! ♦

## **Introduction/Update Photo Essay** *by Kamala Platt*

It has been nearly a year since I have been in the Rio Grande Valley, and many of you may not recognize my name. For that reason and because I'd like to share my Texas Master Natural activities and related parts of my life from a little further north in Texas, this article may be an introduction. When I came to the RGV in 2006 as an "emergency hire" lecturer in English at the University of Texas Pan American, one of the draws was a return to Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, which I had visited as a child from Kansas. I soon found that Santa Ana was one of many wonderful places where delta wildlife was flourishing in relative peace. In December, I submitted my 1302 writing class with an umbrella topic of environmental justice as a contestant in the Valley Nature Center's Nature classroom contest and won. I was proud. In January, the TMN program became a way for me to acquaint myself with many of these places, with the work being done to help them flourish, and with many of you, who work with them. So while my time spent in the RGV was relegated to the semesters that I, as a contingent faculty member, could secure teaching there, my time there was blessed by my volunteer work with Texas Master Naturalist and other Valley organizations with which I became involved.

In May 2012, my Creative Writing and Composition position of the previous three years terminated. By fall, it was clear that I would need to return to my home base in San Antonio. The good news about this is that I spent most of the next school year working on my yard and home in San Antonio as well as applying for teaching positions elsewhere. This was great news for my small patch South Texas habitat, which has long been a National Wildlife Federation habitat. While the South Texas Natives that I had brought back from Native Plant folks had thrived or not, basically



on their own, for six years, I could now tend to and observe them on a more regular basis. Neighbors with growing botanical interests keep an eye, and some water on my yard during the time I am in Kansas (the third place that takes in substantial amounts of my time and spirit, and which I will write about, comparatively, another time.) What follows are photos to show what has happened to plants whose life started under the caring hands of Far South Texas Naturalists (you know who you are) whose plants came back North with me.



Fiddlewood/*Citharexylum berlandieri*, Turk's Cap/*Malvaviscus arboreus drummondii*, Oregano/*Lippia graveolens*, Lantanas and Texas ebony are flourishing, but other plants are maintaining as well. And some have surprised me by reappearing.

I lost to a cold spell a large, shapely Chili Pequin that a student had given me. I had thought it was not developing fruit until I saw a mockingbird eating the green berries before they could ripen. Some must have been viable though, because soon after the old plant was gone, I had chili plants all around my yard. I was amazed at how these berries resonated with the butterfly milkweed's color. My milkweed has a story too: searching for this host plant in San Antonio when hungry caterpillars had eaten all the leaves of my own introduced me to one of my longtime plant friends. After calling or visiting a dozen nurseries in vain, I found a milkweed plant in the back of a backyard greenhouse. No one was around so I left a few dollars, a note, and my phone number, and a couple weeks later got a phone call from the proprietor—he had been in the hospital when I came by but that was the beginning of many talks about plants. ♦

## **Bees!**

*by Mary Jo Bogatto*

For years I have been frustrated when I hear newspapers, radio, and TV, stating that our crops are in danger because we are losing our bees. Each year I have reached out and tried to find someone to come get my bees with no success. It is too dangerous! They are 90 % Africanized! Last month I called my mother and expressed my concern and frustration. “Mom, I guess I am going to have to call an exterminator,” I said. She exclaimed loudly and with concern, “No! Try harder and look at Time Magazine’s article on bees this month.”

So I did and found contact information for a Jennifer Sass, Ph.D., Senior Scientist at National Resources Defense Council and Professor Lecturer at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Jennifer recommended that I contact my local bee keepers association. AHHHH!!! Why did not someone give me this information when I called our local organizations for help the last five years? So here is what I found out.

Because my bees had nested in the screech owl nest, they might be easily removed. I had put the box up on CCR at Mark Conway’s bird banding spot so that volunteers and students could enjoy the screech owls. The bees could not stay and posed a danger to humans. Raccoons were using the picnic bench under the box to reach the bees and extract some awesome honey. I was jealous. They had marked the spot continuously with scat, which is visible in the photo. The beekeeper, Nolton Beale, nicknamed, “No No”, asked for a photo of the location so he would know what tools he would need. I forwarded a photo and told him he could keep the box if he would come for the bees. I had to ask how he got the name No No—he got it as a boy, and it had nothing to do with “No No leave those bees alone” like I had imagined. He was able to come and take the bees, and they did not have to be destroyed.



Billy Wright, President of the Rio Grande Valley Beekeeping Association, suggested that the scent left in the screech owl box if I reinstalled it after bee removal would be too enticing for the bees, causing them probably to seek it out and build another nest.

Several articles state that an Africanized hive can be rehabilitated by giving the hive a new queen bee in as few as six weeks. Some beekeepers use decoy hives in order to remove a hive from an unwanted location. They place the decoy hive by the original hive and when the bees leave to feed, the opening is sealed, forcing the bees to use the decoy hive. So I have decided to ask for the screech owl nest to be returned and to keep it sealed until a new hive arrives in an unwanted destination. I want to see if the scent left by the last bees will entice the new ones to move to a safe location

From past experience I know that if you need to exterminate bees, you should put down a tarp under the area being sprayed to help keep the dangerous chemicals away from humans and critters and out of the water table.

For more information, look online at <http://texasbeekeepers.org/> . This group meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month at 7:30 pm at the TAMU Research and Extension Center in Weslaco. You can also check out: <http://honeybee.tamu.edu/> ♦



## Paper Wasp Fight at Cactus Creek Ranch

by Mary Jo Bogatto



Paper wasps, often called red wasps, are  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch long with black wings and variable body coloration. These seem to be *Polistes carolina* as they are overall reddish brown. They are semi-social and have three classes: workers, queens, and males. A mature wasp nest may have 20 to 30 adults, and in late summer the queens stop laying eggs and the colony soon begins to decline. Fertilized queens are similar in appearance to workers. These seem to be two females that fought to the death. The mouth parts are for chewing.

More information can be found at: <https://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide/cimg348.html> ♦

## Wolf Spider

by Mary Jo Bogatto

The following photo was taken August 2013 on the back porch. The spider did not seem to mind that the camera was so close to her for the photo. She stayed for two days and then I did not see her again.



I did find out some interesting facts at [www.spiderzrule.com](http://www.spiderzrule.com) on the web and at Wiki. This spider is a member of the family Lycosidae, from the ancient Greek word, meaning wolf. There are many genera of wolf spider ranging in size from 0.04 to 1.38 inches. This one was definitely a Texas measuring more than 1.38 inches. They carry the egg sac and babies until the babies are old enough to hunt alone. When they are born, they run up their mother's leg and crowd onto her abdomen.

The habitat ranges from coastal to inland. I felt lucky to get the photo!

## **Cactus Creek Ranch Kissing Bugs**

*by Mary Jo Bogatto*

Over the past few years I have noticed the kissing bug off and on and did not pay much attention until Chad and Tira Wilmoth said, "Do you know what that is?" "No," I replied, "but it shows up in the evenings and hangs around my cat."

It is a Kissing Bug or sometimes called a Chagas bug because it can carry Chagas disease, a parasitic infection targeted by the Center for Disease Control for public health action. So I investigated further and watched more closely. I have been living with it for 20 years with no problems, but now it has piqued my curiosity.





Researchers in the Department of Veterinary Integrative Biosciences and Department of Entomology at Texas A&M have new projects underway to understand the ecology of kissing bugs and the parasite that causes Chagas disease. I recently contacted them and asked them how they would want me to send the mysterious creature to them. They told me to place the bug in a zippered plastic sandwich bag and then in a bubble-wrap mailer or a small box. I also had to include a little paper (or write with sharpie marker directly on the bag) with my name, the date found, location found (address or zip code), specific location (on the ground, hiding in a crack, near a light, etc) and time of day.

Incidentally, the parasite that can cause Chagas disease is spread by the infective feces of these bugs, so please do not come in direct contact with them or areas they may have contaminated. I generally turn the bag inside out and use it as a barrier when grabbing the bug.

It must be stored in the fridge or freezer to preserve DNA and also to kill the bug, which is safest to mail once dead. The lab will identify the bug and test for infection with the Chagas parasite for research purposes: the bug dissection and testing for the Chagas parasite may not occur immediately.

I mailed the bug to:

Hamer Lab  
Veterinary Integrative Biosciences  
TAMU 4458  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843

For more information on sending a bug for testing, see the website:

<http://vetmed.tamu.edu/faculty/hamer-lab/projects/chagas-disease-eco-epidemiology>

If sending a bug for testing, use this email [KissingBug@cvm.tamu.edu](mailto:KissingBug@cvm.tamu.edu) to let them know the day you have sent the package. ♦

## **Chachalaca Family**

*by Mary Ann Moore*



This family of five chachalacas visits my backyard in Pharr. ♦

## **Pass the Duck**

*by Anita Westervelt*

Francis Barrera and Sara Reibman demonstrate the proper way to pass a duck during a Wildlife Center of Texas September workshop for oiled wildlife response training at Brownsville's Gladys Porter Zoo. The all-day workshop, sponsored by Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Division, certified eight Rio Grande Valley Chapter Texas Master Naturalists to be able to volunteer during an oil-spill event in the Lower Rio Grande Valley: Frances Barrera, Sara Reibman, Anita Westervelt,



Alicia Cavazos, Linda Desrosiers, Yadira Pink, Marilu Alf and Adrian Ramos.

Attendees learned wildlife laws, Incident Command System structure and its role in emergency operations, the effects of oil on wildlife and humans, and safety regulations and the need for safety to protect both wildlife and workers in their response efforts.

Afternoon activities included proper holding, handling, and passing a healthy, non-oiled duck to one another. One of the workshop presenters, Dr. J. Jill Heatley, DVM, associate professor at the Texas A&M University, College of Veterinary Medicine, explained the position as a modified Nelson, wherein the bird's neck is held loosely just under the head, body pressed securely against the person's hip and the other hand firmly holding the wings clasped to the bird's body. When passing a duck or other avian, the other person gets hip-to-hip and mirrors the position to safely accept the bird. Keeping it at hip level protects the person's face from the bird's bill.

Hands-on training also included learning intricate details in washing a duck. If you've seen the Dawn dishwashing liquid commercial, it is true: the recovery teams use Dawn to wash oiled wildlife because of its nearly 30 percent oil concentration in the solution.

While volunteers would not be washing wildlife during an event due to the annual training, licensing, and permitting required of the technicians, volunteers earning their certificates at the seven-hour course will be able to work in rehabilitation areas once wildlife is free of the oil, preparing triage supplies, issuing safety gear as well as in other non-critical areas. Below, Texas Master Naturalist Sara Reibman demonstrates the correct way to wash an oiled duck: while holding its head, she agitates the soapy water to bring the water to the duck under its body and wings. ♦



## Red Tide Training at Coastal Studies Lab

by Anita Westervelt

The recent discovery of a red tide in the Galveston Bay and Surfside areas prompted training for volunteers who want to join the first responders in the event the harmful algal bloom (HAB) moves into far south Texas waters.

The training was held at the University of Texas-Pan American Coastal Studies Lab on September 5<sup>th</sup>. Senior Coastal Studies Lab Program Coordinator Brigitte Goza instructed participants on how to collect water samples, fill out a collection log sheet, prepare slides for viewing under a microscope, identify the red tide organism, *Karenia brevis*, and count the number of cells.



Carolyn Cardile looks through a microscope while learning to identify red tide cells.

Trained volunteers will collect samples in designated areas, and others might choose to help with the lab work at the Coastal Studies facility.

Coastal ecologists from the Brownsville Coastal Fisheries Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife also presented a PowerPoint and discussed past red tides at South Padre Island and the effects from the algal bloom aerosols on humans and animals. The last red tide for Texas was from October 2009 through mid-February 2010.

The training and the Coastal Naturalist program received good coverage via Harlingen's Valley Morning Star and Brownsville's KVEO TV News Center 23. ♦

