



# 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**

*Norma Trevino*

Hello Fellow Master Naturalists,

Hope all are ready for warm and sunny days!

We are getting ready for all the colors and species that come with spring migration. There are a few Bird banding and projects scheduled for the next few months, so please look on the list serve for additional information.

Sea Turtle Inc.'s training for turtle nesting season is just around the corner, so if you haven't volunteered to do either walking or ATV patrols, now is the time and attend the required training.

Our Ramsey Park Volunteers are always there every Thursday, keeping the area in great shape. If you have some spare time, want to get your hands dirty, then, come by the park.

Any retired teachers? Our partners at the UTRGV lab on the island are always looking for help during the next few months. Lots of area elementary schools take students to South Padre Island for field trips; story tellers are welcomed.

We are planning an all day field trip, on a Saturday in May on board the Riley, lunch, and Sea Turtle Inc. Space is limited, we'll be posting details on social media, website, and e-mail.

Welcome to the new graduates of our Winter 2019 class. Mark your calendars & join is at their graduation ceremony on April 9th.

Have an idea for a field trip or a guest speaker? Let us know! We are planning some additional field trips and workshops for the remainder of the year.

See you at the next meeting!! ♦

## **SPOTLIGHT ON A RAMSEY VOLUNTEER**

*Frank Wiseman*

Our Thursday Morning Ebony Loop Volunteer Team in Harlingen's Hugh Ramsey Nature Park is comprised of TMN members who come from a myriad of occupations. Among them, we want to shine a light this month on one out of the many as being a great asset to our group.



Andrea Villarreal is just one of our hard-working volunteers. She brings not only her work ethic but her friendship and *joie de vivre* that brightens and gives that extra sparkle to our whole morning's work atmosphere.

Andrea is a retired girl's athletic coach, most recently from Donna, Texas. She has coached a variety of girls' sports over the years that include basketball, softball, track, volleyball, swimming and others. Andrea shows up each Thursday with her trusty shovel ready to pitch in wherever she is needed. In addition to not minding getting her hands a little dirty with any of our tasks, she brings a spontaneity to the camaraderie of our group.

She encourages others, shares her knowledge of the native plants in the park, and helps others with proper tool usage. She is a great proponent of team work, especially adept at figuring out how two people can work together at the same task and making it quicker and easier.

For these and many more reasons, we wish to salute our friend and co-worker-volunteer, Andrea Villarreal. ♦



# TEXAS MASTER NATURartists

HIGHLIGHTING TMN ARTISTS AND HOW TMN HAS  
INFLUENCED THEIR WORK ...BY KAREN CEBALLOS

*JOLAINE LANEHART*

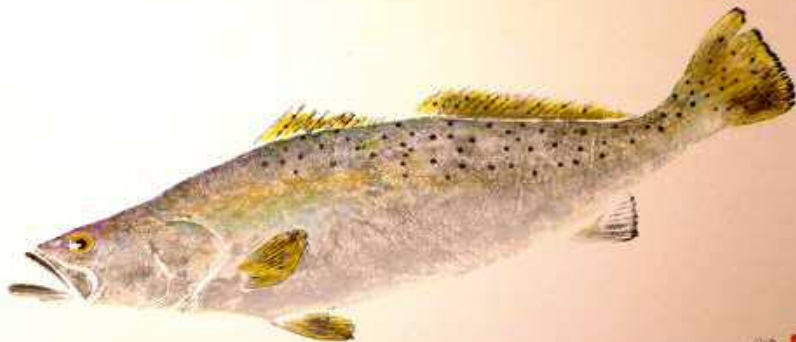
## **Pine needles coiled around slab of Davis Mountains rhyolite.**

Without master naturalist I probably would have never considered basket weaving as an artistic endeavor. TMN heightened my interest in ethnobotany and introduced me to resources that inspired me to further appreciate our natural world, its history and the intersection of art and function. Basketry is ancient, at least 10,000 years old, and is evident in every culture. It is an expression of the interaction between humans and their environment though the use of available resources in a sustainable manner to create both tools and art.



**Birdhouse woven  
with willow**

“



*TONY REISINGER*

## **Gyotaku Fish Print: "Laguna Trucha"**

As an advisor to the Texas Master Naturalists, the program has greatly influenced my art and my life in that I have realized the huge importance of conservation or the wise use of all our natural resources. My favorite example is fish, a renewable resource we need to manage for future generations to enjoy and receive the health benefits of seafood. Spotted seatrout are one of the most popular gamefish southeast anglers enjoy catching and consuming.





## CECILIA SIERRA

1. Green Jay, Hooded Oriole and Great Kiskadee among Texas Mountain Laurel, Gouache
2. Bewick's Wren, Colored Pencil with Acrylic
3. Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Colored Pencil with Acrylic

When I first heard about TMN, I saw it as an opportunity to meet new people, learn more about the nature community and possible get new ideas for my art, which focuses on various things from nature. By taking part in TMN I've been able to learn, explore, and appreciate the Rio Grande Valley. As a result, my art has started to focus on what I've experienced throughout the past few weeks of being in TMN class.



## LINDA MCGONIGLE

### Prickly pear cactus, Oil

### Journal Entry, Pen and water color pencils

I got more into nature journaling after I became a TMN. There are many different styles and methods of nature journaling and I have attempted to adapt several of those into my workshops. I guess I would say that the addition of scientific elements of nature journaling have been more a consideration, since I became a TMN. I was a public school art teacher for 33 yrs and my nature journaling was more "art" oriented rather than so much scientific. My personal style is still artistically oriented along with meta data which I consider necessary. After becoming a TMN, I was asked to lead workshops of this nature and they have certainly evolved over time depending on my participants and purposes for the nature journal within those groups.





## ALICIA'S 4,000 HOURS

*Tamie Bulow*



*TMN President Norma Trevino Presenting Cake to Alicia*

Although small in stature, this dynamo can be seen from one end of the Valley to the other. Because when Alicia Cavazos hears the call for volunteers, she is the first one to jump in! Her list of credits includes leading bird walks at South Padre Island Birding & Nature Center, driving the nature tour tram at Resaca de la Palma State Park, organizing and creating educational activities at the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, conducting roosting parrot surveys for the Tejano Parrot Project, and banding/rescuing birds - just *some* of the ways Alicia accrued her achievement of volunteering 4000 hours. Yes, 4000 hours. Tasks as simple as pulling guinea grass at Ramsey Nature Park, to as involved as working with visiting school children at Sabal Palm and the Coastal Studies Lab, Alicia said she likes to try different things. Truly, the opportunities through the Texas Master Naturalist program have been her smorgasbord.

Not only does Alicia dedicate her time and talents for the benefit of all those visitors to the Valley who seek enlightenment, she does it with vigor! Her enthusiasm for birding cannot be contained - too bad it can't be bottled. She is passionate, concerned, curious, generous, and willing – the model volunteer. For example, when Alicia became a Texas Master Naturalist, she

was in the Class of 2012. The organization was in need of a president in 2013, and guess who stepped up? As typical, she sees a need, and she jumps in.

Alicia is currently the Secretary of the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival Board of Directors, as well as the Education Chair of the Festival, coordinating activities for all the school children who come to visit during the Festival. She supervises the student Art & Writing Contest also connected with the Festival. Her backyard is a work in progress with native plants and enticing bird feeders, attracting special birds which Alicia invites other birders to come watch. She has opened her property for banding of Green Jays and hummingbirds, all for the benefit of local science projects with TPWD. She has a regular weekly route for surveying roosts of Red-crowned Parrots (between Harlingen, Brownsville, Weslaco and McAllen), using telemetry equipment to track the birds that have radios attached. The citizen science projects are always on Alicia's to-do list: Texas Birding Classic, Audubon Christmas Counts, Cornell's eBird, and Colonial Waterbird surveys, to name a few. At the monthly TMN meetings, she is the one behind the camera, then posting on our social media pages. With a resume like this, Alicia is a valuable and outstanding asset to our TMN chapter and a shining example to all our members.

While Alicia will receive her recognition of this milestone at the State Meeting this fall, we held an informal celebration at the February chapter meeting. I hope you were there to congratulate Alicia, and have a piece of celebratory cake! ♦



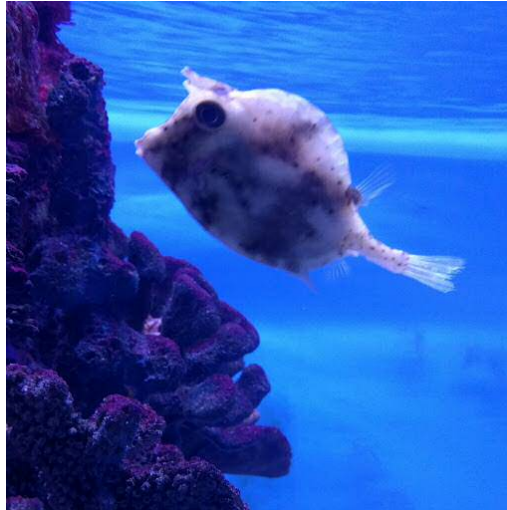
*Celebration Cake*



*In the Field*

# FISH-WATCHING: THE SCRAWLED COWFISH

M. Kathy Raines



Naturalists who thrill to spotting a lustrous red, blue and green painted bunting might find equal delight in some of the singular creatures hidden beneath Gulf waters—ones absent from fold-out nature guides sold at the grocery. Unlike with birds, though, if we're not fisher folk, divers or shrimpers, whose trawls occasionally sweep them up, and no red tide strews fish corpses along the shore, we rarely see them, save for in aquaria. Volunteering at the Russell Aquatic and Ecology Center at the Gladys Porter Zoo, I've certainly come across some intriguing ones, like the **scrawled cowfish** (*Acanthostracion quadricornis*).

Tiny fins a-twirl, looking like a sewn-together, paneled stuffed toy, or, “very 3-D”, as Shelby Bessette of the UTRGV Coastal Studies Laboratory put it, the agile, scrawled cowfish—which I first saw while taking water measurements behind the scenes—defly maneuvered itself upwards, downwards, and in reverse. I was smitten the moment I saw its delicate movements and sloped head ending in tiny protruding lips. And it is a beauty, with its swirly, gray hexagonal plates resembling lustrous marble. Two seeming horns, like those of a cow, stick out over each eye, prompting the name “cowfish”.

Cowfish, the two species appearing in the Gulf being the scrawled and the honeycomb (*Acanthostracion polygonius*), in the family, ostraciidae, are types of boxfish. They essentially have two skeletons, a bony carapace on the outside, with openings for gills, lips, eyes and fins, and an interior one for organ support. In fact, its genus name, *Acanthostracion*, derives from the Greek *Akantha* and *ostracon*, meaning “thorn shell”. Cowfish engage in ostraciiform swimming, or propelling themselves with tiny fins and tail tips.

Besides sharp spines above each eye, spines also protrude from the carapace's back corners. These typically small fish reach from eight to a record-setting twenty-two inches long. They can be yellow, green, gray or blue with scrawled splotches.

Scrawled cowfish, which thrive in seagrass beds in temperate to tropical waters of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, feed upon plants and small, slow-moving creatures like hermit crabs, anemones and sponges. Around divers, cowfish remain motionless, retreating only when detected.



A cowfish's carapace offers it some protection from larger fish. Also, in defense, cowfish camouflage themselves, altering their colors to blend in with their backgrounds, bury themselves in sand, suddenly change course and dart away or, as a last resort, emit a slimy mucous toxin which, much like a bar of soap, disperses into the water. This toxin, benign to humans, destroys blood cells and asphyxiates fish with gills, posing some risk to fellow aquarium fish.

Cowfish appear to be neither endangered nor vulnerable. In the Caribbean, some people do eat fresh cowfish, but they must take care to avoid its toxins. People can observe this fascinating creature at the zoo's aquatic center, in the reef fish exhibit, and also the Coastal Studies Lab on South Padre Island. ♦

## **ARMADILLO -- AN IMPORTANT, IF SOMEWHAT, ANNOYING TEXAS CRITTER**

*Anita Westervelt*



The nine-banded armadillo is the only species of armadillo in the United States, although 20 species exist throughout Central and South America.

Nine-banded armadillos live throughout Texas except in the Panhandle and the Trans-Pecos. The species is found as far north as southeast Nebraska and Illinois, and east through Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina.

Generally seen trundling along, snuffling at the ground with a slight sweeping motion of its head, the nine-banded armadillo can approach speeds to 30 miles an hour when fleeing a predator. There's not much for them to fear in the Valley except coyotes and vehicular traffic; further north, and in Louisiana, they are prey to mountain lions, black bears and alligators.

The name armadillo means "little armored one" in Spanish. Their shell is made up of bone plates, known as scutes, which are covered in overlapping scales and connected by flexible,

leathery skin. It is the only mammal that has bone plates in its skin. The critter has additional protection on the top of its head, upper limbs and tail. The underside has only soft skin and fur.

These unique-looking critters are about two and a half feet long from nose to tail tip and weigh about 12 pounds. Contrary to rumor, only the Brazilian three-banded armadillo can roll itself into a ball to foil a predator. The nine-banded armadillos have to rely on dense shrubs in which to hide, or scurry to one of several burrows it has dug out around its territory.

Nine-banded armadillos are nocturnal in the summer and diurnal during winter. They are very sensitive to temperature because they have poor insulation under their armor. In winter, they tend to be active during the warmest part of the day, in summer, at night, when it is cooler.

Armadillos are mainly insectivores. They have poor eyesight, but excellent hearing and a very keen sense of smell. They eat beetles, larvae, worms, termites, cockroaches, fire ants, scorpions, white grubs, grasshoppers, ants, maggots and snails as well as a small amount of fruit, seeds, fungi and other plant matter. They also eat spiders, snakes and frogs. Their diet is regional- and habitat-dependent.

Ever helpful in ridding a yard of many pests, especially grass-killing grubs, they unfortunately root out their fare by digging with their large, sharp, thick, strong claws. They leave a yard full of annoying holes for the property owner to find.

Armadillos generally take up residency near water, which doesn't limit their territory. The nine-banded species can hold its breath for up to six minutes and cross a stream or resaca by walking across the riverbed. Alternately, they can suck air into their intestines which enables them to swim. They have a strong doggy-paddle stroke.

Armadillos have a history as a food source for humans. The nine-banded armadillo was nicknamed "poor man's pork" and "Hoover hog" by people who blamed President Hoover for the Great Depression, according to [armadillo-online.org](http://armadillo-online.org).

On the other hand, it is true that armadillos are the only animals that can contract leprosy from humans and pass it on to other humans. Scientists believe that in order to contract leprosy from an armadillo, one must frequently handle the animals, and/or consume armadillo meat.

Sources: "Critters of Texas Pocket Guide," Adventure Publications, Inc. Online sources, National Wildlife Federation, [havahart.com](http://havahart.com) and [a-z-animals.com](http://a-z-animals.com). ♦

## **SOUTH TEXAS BIOLUMINESCENCE**

*Shelby Bessette*

Port Isabel and South Padre Island have been experiencing bioluminescence frequently this past February. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, the UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab received a message from local ranch owner, Mary Jo Bogatto of Cactus Creek Ranch. Bogatto sent a picture of discolored waves while visiting South Padre Island (Image 1), asking "what causes orange in the waves?" and "I've never seen this before!". This report was unusual for the scientists at the Coastal Lab, but they assured her it was not Red Tide. The reports did not stop, with the City of Port Isabel calling a few days later, asking the lab to sample water from a residential dock (Image 2). The

sample was put under the microscope, just as the lab analyzes Red Tide (*Karenia Brevis*) cells, and the species was confirmed by two senior scientists, Dr. David Hicks and Dr. Franklin Benton. The discolored water was being caused by a *Noctiluca scintillans* bloom, a species known to produce bioluminescence. This was also around the same time the waves began to glow at night!

During the day, the large globular cell, with a single tentacle-like flagellum, can appear in large abundances floating on the water's surface. *Noctiluca* typically blooms around docks or areas with less water movement and may have an orange scum appearance. The round, kidney shaped cells can produce ammonium during large blooms (orange-red), which can be toxic to fish, but no effects were reported. *Noctiluca scintillans* has no known harmful effects to humans, so we hope everyone enjoyed the light show! The reports of discolored water continued through the month of February and a pale blue glow was seen when water was disturbed in the bay and in the breaking waves as the plankton created bioluminescence at night! ♦



SPI, Texas – February 1, 2019



Port Isabel, TX – February 5, 2019

1: Picture from Bogatto's beach report.

2: Picture from Port Isabel Residential dock.



# POSSUM-WATCHING: HUMILITY OF A BACKYARD NATURALIST

*Kathy Rains*



The small Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), or possum, crouched comfortably, it appeared, on the worn roof of our gazebo, rounded ears alert, its five clawed toes holding a slight grip, its black eyes staring ahead. As I approached, closer and closer, finally climbing a step ladder to take a good picture, its eyes followed my movements, its head turning slightly, and—in true possum fashion—making zero plans to move at all. My elderly yellow lab mix, exhilarated—a possum sighting in the daytime a rare luxury— alternately stared motionlessly and leapt up, barking wildly. The possum appeared nonplussed, registering no clear distress.

I then put a few apple slices in a suet feeder in my olive tree for the birds, going inside for a few minutes. When I returned, this formerly stationary possum, evidently having negotiated the yard's canopy of branches, was bending down on a low branch to eat the fruit, the dog wildly leaping, but unable to reach the creature; at my approach, the possum ascended higher, then stopped and stared down at us.

Some hours later, when I opened the back door, the dog was yelping gleefully, “Hah-hah-hah-hah!” and hovering proudly over her frozen, curled-up catch—the selfsame possum, I presume. However, its being motionless—like a toy from which she'd already extracted a squeaker—greatly nulled its excitement for her, so off she trotted into the house.

My dog and I have replayed this routine often, though not so much in her sunset years. I always hope that the downed possum, though sometimes bloodied, will awaken and stroll off into the night.

A possum captured by a predator will indeed “play possum”. It freezes, its tongue protruding, and it foams at the mouth, urinates, and emits a smelly green liquid so that it not only looks dead, but smells dead. Many predators will spurn such prey.

Appearing to be a true seizure, this state lasts anywhere from a few minutes to hours. Upon awakening, its ears wiggle a bit, as it determines whether a danger has passed. A continued threat prompts it to slip back into its coma.

I have witnessed many a possum awaken, wiggling its ears, and, though I do not often see this, I have assumed that they’ve wondered off. Recently, I feared that one possum, matted with blood, was a goner, but, about half an hour after I kenneled the dog, I saw it balanced on a fence. I kept checking it, wondering if it was all right, since it didn’t move, and it stared at me. Then, when I saw it perched yards away on another section of fence, I figured it was in decent shape—though it could have collapsed on the other side of the fence or even been mauled by a neighbor’s dog. One never knows.

About an hour later, this day’s possum remained mashed on its side in the dirt along the porch, its chest faintly rising and falling, its ears wiggling slightly, its foaming alligator-like mouth slightly agape. A half hour after that, seeing the dirt patch was vacant, I celebrated its revival, only to spot it lying on its side by the dog’s water trough, having dragged itself only a few feet. Oh, no, I thought, this one has indeed met its end. I offered it a little water. It breathed, and its ears wiggled a little, but its long, toothy snout seemed glued to the cement.

Then, somewhat later, checking the creature once more—wondering if I’d need to kennel it for possible rehab or dispose of it—I opened the back door one last time, hours after its capture, and, lo and behold, it was gone, and a flashlight search revealed no trace. Hooray, possum, hooray! I thought. I so admire possums’ spunk!

Then I wondered: what determines whether a possum awakens in a few minutes or a few hours? Is it the length of time it has been traumatized? Is it the severity of its injuries?

Since a Google search offered no clues, I posed this question to employees at Resaca de la Palma, who did not know. However, a ranger posited that the possum may not have awakened and wandered off—that an owl might have swooped down and snatched it, a possibility that had never crossed my mind. When I doubted her, saying that I lived in a residential area, with a neighbor’s two-story house a mere few feet from my porch, she countered that owls, who may live in nearby palm trees, can dive with great precision for their prey.

Now when my dog, as she sometimes does, traces a possum’s escape route over the fence and out of the yard, I can safely claim that possum made an escape. But I wonder how many possums I’ve celebrated for outsmarting death were scooped up by owls or other predators. Nature is indeed, “red in tooth and claw”, as Alfred Lord Tennyson attested.

I could set up a trail camera to settle these nighttime mysteries, but I don’t have to know everything right away; rather, in wonder and awe, I will continue watching and studying about the wild creatures I am honored to have frequent my backyard. ♦

# TEXAS POCKET GOPHER -- PREVALENT BUT RARELY SEEN

*Anita Westervelt*

Texas pocket gophers are prevalent in sandy soils of South Texas. The critters rarely surface, which is why they aren't often seen, but their mounds leave tell-tale evidence that they've taken up residency.

The gopher's distribution in South Texas is wide but patchy because of its requirement for loose, sandy soils. They are found in Hidalgo County and as far north as Val Verde County, west, and San Patricio County on the east. In the order of Rodentia, these busy, drab grayish-brown rodents average 12 inches from nose to tip of tail. The tail is about four and a half inches long. Males are slightly larger than females.

In Hidalgo County, mounds can reach to five inches in height and 12 inches in diameter. Texas pocket gophers also are found on Mustang and Padre Islands where mounds, in that moist sandy soil, can reach from 17 to 23 inches in diameter.



Tunnels under the mounds are both deep and shallow. The gophers are loners; they live alone except to breed and nurse their young in the deep tunnels, which can run as long as 100 feet and include many short side branches. Shallow tunnels are for foraging. Their food consists largely of vegetation, including roots of grasses, and roots, stems, leaves and flowers of species of sunflowers.

The critters seem to have a fun sense of humor. In a now-you-see-it-now-you-don't manner, a Texas pocket gopher will seize the roots of a plant -- from within its tunnel -- and pull the plant into its burrow, leaving any viewer to wonder why a plant would suddenly sink below the earth's surface. I wonder, do critters sometimes laugh at us humans?

My research didn't cover laughing, but I did find where the gopher will emit a wheezy call and gnash its teeth if it has to defend its home. In order to curtail those harrowing experiences and avoid predators, like coyotes, skunks and snakes, Texas pocket gophers mainly stay underground. For added security, they plug tunnel entrances with soil.

Some landowners look favorably upon these burrowing rodents for their important job in helping aerate the soil. ♦



## **MILESTONES: JANUARY – MARCH 2019**

### **Dana Allamon**

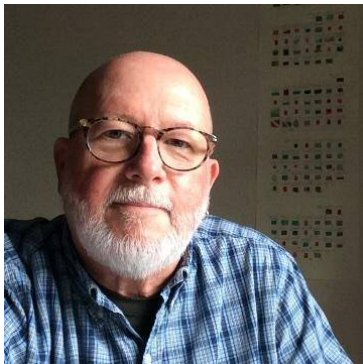


### **Initial Certification**

Dana moved to the valley in July of 2016 from the Austin area when she retired as a Family and Consumer Science teacher for Hutto ISD. Meeting Norma Trevino at Sea Turtle Inc. and learning about our program, Dana attended the fall class in 2018. Dana received her initial certification this quarter, and has jumped with both feet into our chapter programs, accepting a position on the Board as Director of Communications. As such, she is responsible for publicity, our web site, the newsletter, chapter history and outreach events – and is quick to mention that she couldn't accomplish these functions without great assistance from each area's chairman. She has made significant changes to the calendar on the chapter website (check it out!) and will be developing a cadre of volunteers for outreach events later this spring. (Call her if you are interested!) In her second year on the Sea Turtle ATV Nesting Patrol team, each Wednesday during the nesting season she is on patrol from SPI to Port Mansfield and back – 32 miles of beach front. A self-proclaimed people person, she

would love to get to know each of you.

### **Chet Mink**



### **Initial Certification**

Recently retired from a 33 year career as a high school art teacher, Chet attended the class in 2018. He moved to the valley in 1985 from Indiana and enjoys drawing, bike riding, playing music with a local dance band, gardening, birding, hanging with my soon-to-be-retired-art-teacher spouse and many other things, and not in that order.

He has been volunteering with the Ebony Loop maintenance and enhancement crew at Hugh Ramsey Park for the past few months. Chet picked Ramsey as it is his neighborhood park and has been thankful to be able to help support it. He would like to expand his volunteer work through sharing what he knows about drawing,

painting and keeping a sketchbook. Drawing at Ramsey Park has helped him learn about several of our native plants. Chet also look forward to finding ways to use other skills and interests he cultivated in his time before retirement.



**Vivian Acott**

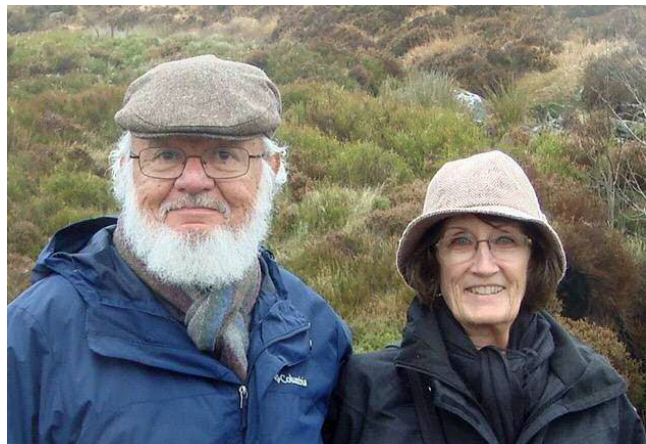
**100 Hours**

Vivian moved to the RGV two years ago from Colorado and joined the TMN program to learn about nature in the valley. Vivian received her initial certification as a Master Naturalist in 2018 and has served on our board of directors as an At-Large representative for Cameron County and is co-chair of the Merchandizing Committee. Passionate about plants and floral she enjoys working with the fun loving Hugh Ramsey Park team.

**Ethel and Reynaldo Cantu**

**100 Hours each**

Ethel and Reynaldo are happily retired after more than 30 years of public service in Cameron County. Reynaldo is a retired lawyer while Ethel retired from administrative duties at UT Brownsville. Attending the class in 2017, their volunteer time is spent primarily at the Native Plant Center on South Padre Island and a total commitment to the WOVE program each winter. Ethel gives frequent presentations on landscaping with native plants – and is available for opportunities to present this topic. They have developed their property into a haven for native plants – their Rancho Viejo home has Montezuma Cypress as a sea wall, a dedicated butterfly garden and a pond in the back yard. At their place on SPI they have developed landscaping specific to native plants that will survive in the coastal ecology. Reynaldo reports that “Ethel does the planning, I do the digging!”





## **Chuck Cornell**

**250 Hours**

Chuck has been very active with our chapter since first attending the 2018 training sessions. He was elected New Class Representative for his class, and served on our board of directors in that capacity for a year. Chuck currently has three main places where he volunteers. On Wednesdays he is the videographer at the training classes, creating videos of the presentations that can be used as AT experiences for members. Thursday's volunteering on the Ramsey Park team allows him to enjoy the park while working to maintain and beautify it. On various other days he works with Bill Clark banding raptors in Cameron, Willacy and Hidalgo counties. Chuck said, "It's a great learning experience. Bill has a wealth of knowledge and shares it freely plus we go places in the 3 counties that I have never seen before. Thankfully I am retired so I have the time to do these things as well as travel and just enjoy life in general. " This is a picture of Chuck with one of the many different raptors he has helped Bill band - the little American Kestrel.



## **Amy Daley**

**250 Hours**



After retiring m teaching kindergarten for oodles of years, Amy and her husband, Paul Sorenson found themselves "Winter Texas-ing" in Port Isabel from October through May for the past 4 years. Having the best of both worlds, they spend their summers playing with their 5 kids and 10 grandkids in Casper, Wyoming. Amy holds a BA Degree in Education from the University of Wyoming and a Master's Degree in Education from Lesley University in Boston, Massachusetts which affords her the opportunity to now work part time as an international education consultant taking her to schools across our nation and countries abroad such as S. Korea and Great Britain facilitating professional development for teachers. In her spare time, you will find Amy running... running lots... as in running 65 marathons in 42 states – close to her goal of all 50 states.



A Texas Master Naturalist class of 2016 graduate, Amy Daley volunteers her time at Sea Turtle, Inc., learning everything she possibly can about the rescue, rehabilitation and release of sea turtles, educating the public, and assisting in conservation efforts of sea turtles. She loves every minute working with the exceptional staff at Sea Turtle, Inc. and is grateful for the up close and personal interaction with the sick and injured turtles as well as the residents.

Amy appreciates the learning opportunities that Texas Master Naturalists offer beginning with the introduction to every “ology” of South Texas during the classes and field trips to the outstanding speakers who share their passions at the monthly meetings. With every speaker or learning opportunity, Amy’s reaction always is, “That is what I want to do when I grow up!”

### **Julia Osgood**

**1000 Hours**



Julia has been a member of the Rio Grande Valley Chapter for a little over two years. She first certified as a Master Naturalist in 2008, having trained in the Capital Area Chapter based in Austin. In 2010 she moved to Guadalupe County where she helped start the Guadalupe Master Naturalist chapter and served as Chair of its formation committee. Retiring in 2017 from a 20-year career as a technical writer for computer software, she moved to the valley to be in the heart of birder country. Here she serves on the New Class Committee and is the Co-Director of the VMS Membership program. Although most of her volunteer hours are earned doing chapter administration work. Julia is an active participant with the New Class Committee, reports regularly to

the citizen science program, provides monthly waterfowl monitoring at Estero Llano Grande State Park for the Texas Estuarine Resource Network (TERN) and in the past did amphibian monitoring and water quality monitoring in Travis County and Guadalupe County.

### **Erica Rodriguez**

**100 Hours**

Erika graduated with the spring class, 2017. She reports that she always been a fan of the natural world, and studied Biology and Ecology in college. She took her first bird class at UTPA with Dr. Brush and has been hooked on birds ever since! She was drawn to work at Quinta Mazatlan where, as a program coordinator, she was able to work with school children and teach them the importance of the conservation of plants and animals native to the RGV. This experience also gave her a greater understanding of the native plants and how



important it is to educate people on the importance of landscaping their homes with native vegetation. Wanting to do more, she started looking into the Master Naturalist and Master Gardeners Programs. Accepting a job as a health care nutritionist at the Cameron County Annex building, she met Tony Reisinger and Jennifer Herrera who gave her the encouragement to apply to both programs. As a Master Naturalist, she has continued her love for plants and animals while volunteering with the Hugh

Ramsey team. Not always able to attend Thursday's work days, she also helps at Ramsey by water the plants during the summer when they are in need of an extra drink. Erika also loves volunteering at outreach events around the valley such as the birding festival, WOVE and other celebrations at the state and federal parks. She gets a real joy out of teaching people about the importance of conserving our wild lands. As a result of her love of gardening and the need to help an underdog, she raises monarch caterpillars.

## **THANK YOU FROM THE WINTER OUTDOOR WILDLIFE EXPO!!!**

The 2019 WOVE was a great success, and members of our TMN chapter were an important part of it. For the past year members of our chapter were involved in the EXPO's planning and preparation as well as the event itself. The steering committee played an important role in the planning, organizing, and running the 5 day event. Ten members of the steering committee are Texas Master Naturalists. They made a significant difference in the success our planning.

Members and trainees signed up to help. They sold tickets, greeted visitors, acted as room monitors, guided people to rooms, collected surveys, fold raffle tickets, and basically did whatever was needed. Our chapter members filled more than one hundred 4 hour time slots as volunteers during WOVE. Their help was a very important reason for our success this year.

Nature presentations are a very important part of WOVE. In addition to Jonathan Wood's raptor program, there were more than 40 outstanding presentations on a variety of topics during the week. Fourteen of those programs were presented by members of our chapter. I am impressed by the expertise of our members.

- Edible Natives - Christina Mild
- Landscaping with Native plants - Ethel Cantu
- Monarch Conservation. iNaturalist 101, How to ID Shorebird - Javier Gonzalez
- Photo Workshop - Greg Storms
- Sea Turtles - Kat Lillie
- My Experience as a Citizen Scientist - Alicia Cavazos

- The Plight of the Plovers at Boca Chica Beach - Stephanie Bilodeau
- Birds of the RGV and Spring Migration - Marilyn Lorenz
- Skins and Skulls - Elisa Velador
- Marine Wildlife Education and Mammal Stranding - Shelly Bissette

Thank you, chapter members, for your support and participation in the 2019 WOVE program. I am looking forward to your participation in the future.

**Carolyn Cardile**