

Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo Honors and Thanks

Article by Carolyn Cardile, Rio Grande Valley Chapter & photos by Paul Cardile

On February 9-11, 2023 the SPI Birding and Nature Center hosted the 27th Annual Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo (WOWE) at the Hilton Garden Inn of South Padre Island. For the past 15 years WOWE has recognized a member of the community for his or her outstanding contribution to the preserving and promoting the quality of nature in the Rio Grande Valley. Several members of the WOWE committee are also Texas Master Naturalists from our chapter.

This year I had the honor of presenting the annual award from St. Andrew's Episcopal Church to the person in the Rio Grande Valley who has made an exemplary contribution toward enhancing, preserving, and promoting the quality of life of the Laguna Madre. To find out how St. Andrew's Church is involved and who won the award, read the presentation speech below.

Presentation of The Winter Outdoor Wildlife Award

The Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo was begun more than 30 years ago at St. Andrew's by the Sea Episcopal Church to teach Winter Texans about fishing in the Rio Grande Valley. For the past 27 years, WOWE has been recognizing a member of the community for his/her exemplary contribution toward preserving and promoting the quality of the Rio Grande Valley. A few years ago, WOWE became an education program and fundraiser for the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. However, St. Andrew's continues to present this Wildlife Award each year.

This year one person stood out as the obvious choice for this award. Before retiring, she worked as an engineer and service representative for AT&T. She was known for her green thumb and she planned to join the Master Gardeners when she retired. However, she met Tony Reisinger who convinced her to join Texas Master Naturalists. That's where I met Alicia Cavazos.



Alicia Cavazos, winner of the 2022 Wildlife Award presented by St. Andrew's by the Sea Episcopal Church

Alicia's enthusiasm and passion for the outdoors led her to becoming an active member and leader in Texas Master Naturalists. Through the years she has pursued numerous citizen science projects, such as the Red-crowned Parrot monitoring program, re-vegetation of the spoil islands, and bird banding. Her knowledge, enthusiasm, and dedication are inspiring to others. While being an active volunteer at numerous parks and wildlife areas in our community, she has also turned her backyard into a haven for native plants and wildlife. In recent years she has become an interpretive guide at Resaca de la Palma State Park. You can join her there on Wednesday mornings for an outstanding tour. Congratulations, Alicia!

I want to thank all the members of our chapter who volunteered during WOVE. I appreciate all the work of our chapter members who worked as room monitors, asked survey questions, helped in the lobby, greeted our speakers and volunteers at the sign-in table, and volunteered at exhibit tables. Thanks to all of you, WOVE ran smoothly. I also want to thank the members of our chapter who have served on the WOVE committee with birding center volunteers and me for several years: Cristin Howard, Javier Gonzalez, Marilyn Lorenz, and Paul Cardile.



(Left) Carolyn Cardile (standing) with volunteers at WOVE Volunteer Check-in table

(Below) Robert Gaitan readies RGV TMN table at WOVE



(Left) Port Isabel - South Padre Island Shell Club was one of many display tables at WOVE 2023