



ABNCV MEETING

Thursday, May 14

6:30 - Snacks and Conversation

7:00 - Program

8:00 - Business meeting

9:00 - Adjourn



Program: Turtles and Tortoises! Do you know the difference? **Jonathan Perez**, a member of the Gulf Coast Turtle and Tortoise Society, will explain the difference and also give a presentation on a turtle rescue and release program. As most of you know, Jonathan is also a staff member here at ABNC. Please join us for an informative program.

Bayou Foliage

Volume 16 No. 5 May 1998

A publication of the Armand Bayou Nature Center Volunteers
"Interested + Informed + Involved"

May Calendar

May	2	Stewardship Saturday (Trail, forest, facilities)
	2	WILDSAPES
	3	Volunteer Board Meeting, 4:00
	9	BAYOU BOIL
	14	Volunteer Meeting
	14	Bayou Foliage Inputs Due
	16	Stewardship (Prairie and marsh)

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife

May 2, 10:00 a.m., The Auditorium

Diana Foss of the Texas Parks Service will give a presentation on converting your traditional lawn into a low maintenance, wildlife-friendly habitat. Regardless of the size of the space, your garden can become a Wildscape. A packet will be available for \$15 with booklets on butterfly gardening, hummingbird gardening, and planting for other wildlife. Also included are brochures on ornamental trees, nest boxes, and native plants.

Please join us for this very popular program. The sign-up sheet can be found in the break room. This program is also open to the public.

VOLUNTEER PICNIC

Saturday, June 13, 6:00 p.m.

The June volunteer meeting will be our summer picnic on the farm house porch. Please mark your calendars and join us for a relaxing evening. More details to come in the next *Bayou Foliage*.

Jean Kruse

Happy Birthday!

Joanna Wactor	5-1	Emily Egan	5-3
Mona Shoup	5-3	Joe Bryan	5-6
Laura Hendrix	5-10	Paul Brunkow	5-13
Rae Gillespie	5-14	Mary Ann Tucker	5-19
Eldine Owens	5-24	Michelle Wagner	5-24
Joe Weber	5-31	Ross White	5-31

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

The Volunteer of the Month for March is Jane Bock. Jane is the volunteer responsible for keeping up the lovely calendar/bulletin board in the lobby. She also helps out in the Wild Birds Unlimited gift shop in the entry pavilion. Jane says she first became interested in ABNC back in the early 1970's. She and her husband accompanied Hanna Ginzburg on a nature hike which was designed to create enthusiasm for saving land for a nature center. When ABNC opened her family became members. "We have benefited greatly from nature center programs. For example, my favorite hobby is birding. I give ABNC credit for creating and nurturing that interest. My daughter took every class offered to children while she was growing up. As a result her favorite subject has always been science. Again, ABNC fostered and developed that interest. She is now a science major at Texas A&M." As for volunteering, Jane became a volunteer in 1991 after retiring from teaching, "not because I was bored, or had time on my hands or needed an outlet for my energies, but rather because I love ABNC. I believe in its mission, and I wanted to be a part of it. I believe man is meant to be a steward of the earth and not an exploiter. ABNC lets me help make a difference in the world; that's why I'm a volunteer." Thanks, Jane. It's volunteers like you that do make a difference at ABNC. We couldn't do it without you.

Printing Compliments Of Celanese

MINUTES OF THE ABNCV MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1998

Jean Kruse introduced Brian Zemba and Dick Miller of the Johnson Space Center Astronomical Society. Dick spoke on telescopes and presented a slide show of the universe. Helen Burton then called the business meeting to order. The minutes of the March meeting were approved as published in the *Bayou Foliage*. Georgia Colyer read the treasurer's report and announced a total balance in the checking and savings accounts of \$2,999.77. This reflects a \$1,100.00 check written as the first installment on the new lab and breakroom floor. The work is scheduled to begin next week, and there will be a discount on the second half since we will move the furniture.

George Regmund announced that the Volunteer of the Month for March is Jane Bock, and he thanked the volunteers and Becky Brignac for their work on **Down on the Farm**. The issue of the March 16 public meeting on the footpath on NASA Road 1 is unresolved, but the District Engineer will make a decision in a couple of weeks. On the last stewardship Saturday, the poles for the prairie observation platform were put in place; it will be eight feet off the ground and wheelchair accessible. The Shell volunteers will complete most of the work on April 25. We are in the middle of all our spring events, and many volunteer hours are required. Helen reminded everyone that we must have a weekday farm coordinator by the end of May or some of the classes will have to end. Anyone interested in this position should call Helen. We then discussed an arrangement Marilyn Jankowski of Wild Birds Unlimited has proposed to the organization. She would coordinate and train volunteers to work the gift shop and donate 10% of the gross sales to us as "birdie bucks" to be used for awards and gifts purchased at her stores. The volunteers agreed to try it for one month and discuss it at the next meeting. Jean announced that Wildscapes will count as two hours of continuing education on May 2. Jonathan Perez will be the speaker at our next meeting and will discuss turtles. Our annual picnic will be on the farmhouse front porch on Saturday, June 13 at 6:00. Hanna Drago mentioned that even when a receptionist is hired, it will be necessary for volunteers to relieve at the admissions desk for lunch breaks. Barb Hill reported on the publicity the Garden Tour has received and said we still need a few more volunteers. Becky Brignac thanked all the volunteers who worked **Down on the Farm**. Over 800 people attended, and most of them were first-time visitors to the nature center, and their comments were positive. Chuck Snyder reminded us that May 9 is Bayou Boil and that volunteers will be contacted to help on this fun event. Ed Adams passed a sign-up sheet for an appreciation lunch at his house on May 18 for all the teachers. Andrew Hamlett passes out a sign-up sheet to be sent to public officials encouraging them to keep 25 acres across from the nature center undeveloped.

Respectful submitted,
Patsy Cashion, Secretary

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Thanks Becky!

Down on the Farm received rave reviews. Thank you for all the time and energy you spent to make a memorable day.

Gift Shop

If you are interested in volunteering in the gift shop, the volunteer organization will receive store credits called "Birdie Bucks" for the time, and you will earn volunteer hours. If you are interested call Marilyn Jankowski at (281)486-BIRD.

The volunteers agreed to try staffing the gift shop for one month to see how it goes. Marilyn will train and schedule you if you are interested. She is trying to increase the profitability of the store so that she will be able to keep it open and hopes this will help. In return the volunteers will be able to purchase for ABNC things like binoculars, birdhouses, etc. We could also use the store credits for volunteer recognition awards.

New Floor

Your volunteer cookie sales and other efforts have paid for a new floor for the break room and lab. We have paid the deposit and expect work to begin soon. We saved our money for several years and were able to pay for a big-ticket item that the nature center badly needs. When you see the floor you may pat yourselves on the back for a job well done.

Weekday Farm Coordinator Needed

We need a weekday farm coordinator badly! The job entails scheduling weekday farm classes. (The Assistance League of the Bay Area takes care of many classes.) Penny Woodward is unable to continue in the role, and Jane Bingel has graciously agreed to help out until May. Please call me if you would like more information or if you would like to fill this position for the rest of the year.

Helen Burton

HELP! HELP! HELP!

We still need help for the Toymaker Girl Scout Badge Workshop on April 25 from 9:45 - 3:00. Even if you can only work half a day it would help. Right now we only have one volunteer and we need three. If we don't get enough volunteers to do the program we will have to cancel, and that would mean a lot of unhappy girls, not to mention a loss of income to ABNC. Please check your calendars and call me if you can help.

Mary Alice Trumble

SPECIAL THANKS

The volunteer organization has many fine, hard-working people who do a great job. At this time, however, I want to express my thanks to a group of very special people.

I was in a 'bind' but thanks to Ann Brinly, Stephania & Paul Rogers, Mary Ann Tucker, and Carol MacGregor – who covered the desk so that Ann could do a wool demo – a very precarious farm outreach program became a success.

Thanks to all of you and to the Assistance League, especially Cherri House. I couldn't have pulled it off without you.

Thanks again!

Jane Bingel

I have always been proud to be associated with ABNC, but after **Down on the Farm**, I'm VERY proud to be a part of this volunteer organization. Everyone went above and beyond the call of duty, and the random acts of kindness and courtesy were appreciated and acknowledged by our guests. Thank you to everyone who played a part in this wonderful day. Special thanks go to Jim Edwards, Jim Hawkins, and Roland Borey who came up with the idea to have an event of this kind here. **Down on the Farm** would not have happened without their support and hard work.

Becky Brignac



STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Excellent weather continued through early April as the stewardship crew made much-needed improvements to the physical plant at ABNC. Of particular note is the new prairie observation tower, which will provide a striking new way to watch the wildlife of our restored tall grass prairie. The stewardship volunteers have been working overtime to install the posts needed to support the two-tiered tower, in preparation for the annual Shell Workday on April 25. By the time you read this report, the tower should be very nearly complete and a great new attraction for our visitors!

Also on the list for upcoming Stewardship Saturdays are: painting and general cleanup of the classroom portion of the Heimann House maintenance on both the Karankawa and Martin Trails; and a variety of setup and cleanup activities associated with May 9th's Bayou Boil. Come join us on the first or third Saturday of each month for a morning of vigorous activity and good fellowship!

Chuck Snyder

Planning Committee Looking for a Few Good Volunteers

Believe it or not, it's time to start planning the 1998 Fall Festival. We will have the first planning meeting on Sunday, May 17 at 4 p.m. If you would like to be part of a critically important committee to ensure that Fall Festival is again a big success, then please plan to attend this first meeting. We will have the various areas of responsibility divided and will ask each person attending to choose one to chair. The committee meets monthly until October when we will probably meet twice a month. Come be part of a fun, vital part of ABNC. If you are willing to serve on the committee but cannot attend this first meeting, please call one of us before May 17 so we will know in which area you are interested. Thanks for your help.

Chris La Chance & Mary Alice Trumble
Fall Festival Co-Chairs

DOWN ON THE FARM A HUGE SUCCESS

Our newest mini-event, "Down on the Farm" was an overwhelming success. The weather was perfect, and hundreds of people, mostly families with children, came out to have a fun afternoon at the Martyn Farm. We saw many people who had never been to ABNC, so it was a great chance to expose them to the many programs we offer here. The exit surveys were all positive and expressed a desire to come to another such event. A huge thank you goes to volunteer Becky Brignac for hours and hours of work getting the event planned and pulled together. Becky was responsible for getting all the non-ABNC volunteers to come out and put on some outstanding demonstrations for us. She coordinated the entire event with very little staff time (thank you) and, along with the help of Demo Coordinator, Polly Swerdlin, who lined up our volunteers for demos, pulled off a very successful event. This event joins the Garden Tour and Bayou Boil as another one conceived and originated by volunteers. Thanks to all who made this such a fun day.

Mary Alice Trumble

ARMAND BAYOU NATURE CENTER

CUSTOMER SERVICE PERSONALITY

To handle front desk inquiries, admissions, class information, bookings and scheduling.

32 hours per week.

Wednesday – Saturday

8:30 – 5:30

Send Resume to:

Director, Armand Bayou Nature Center

P.O. Box 58828

Houston, TX 77258

The World We Live In

by
Jonathan Perez

After my short, two month long hiatus from writing my semi-steady monthly column, I felt that I should finally get off of my lazy rear and write something again. To the two or three people who actually read my column, I apologize for this little break.

This article will focus on the Lagomorphs of ABNC. Also known as the rabbit, hare and pika group, lagomorphs are known for many things, including their amazing breeding capabilities and their "cute and cuddly" nature and demeanor. At the center, there are only two lagomorphs, the swamp rabbit (*Sylvilagus aquaticus*) and the eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), which belong to the order *Lagomorpha*. The black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) has been found in relatively close areas to the nature center, but currently, there is no substantial evidence that they do in fact reside here at the nature center. This is a controversial issue and, therefore, the black-tailed jackrabbit will not be discussed here.

What sets the lagomorphs aside from rodents has to do with the structure of their teeth. Lagomorphs grow two pairs of upper incisor teeth, one directly behind the other. This is unlike the rodents, which only grow one pair. Lagomorphs also have a pair of incisors on their bottom jaw, which will be brought up later.

Generally speaking, the genus *Sylvilagus* (which includes the two rabbits found at the center) are not known to dig burrows, but have been observed using burrows already dug by other animals. Other places of shelter include brush piles and forms, which are shallow depressions in the soil or vegetation. Females will dig holes for nests and rearing young, but she does not actually use the nest for herself. Instead, she will crouch over it, "sealing" the babies inside the protective depression. The young will climb to the top of the hole to nurse whenever hungry. The nests of the swamp rabbits, though, are made on top of the ground and is made of dead vegetation that is lined with fur.

Also, most species of this genus are either nocturnal or crepuscular (active during the dawn and dusk hours), but some are occasionally seen during the day, but usually not in open, sunny areas. They are active year round and feed mainly on herbaceous plants when available (spring, summer and fall). During the winter, they will browse on woody vegetation and the bark of trees and limbs.

The swamp rabbit and eastern cottontail look similar, at least initially, but careful examination and practice can lead to an easy identification of the rabbit species in question. The swamp rabbit is much larger than the cottontail. The cottontail adult is about half the size of a swamp rabbit adult (the swamp rabbit is the largest species in the genus *Sylvilagus*). Also, the cottontail is grayish brown on top and shows more white under its tail (hence the name), while the swamp rabbit is a yellowish brown with more pronounce black mottling. The ears of the cottontail are pointed, whereas the swamp rabbits ears are more rounded.

The eastern cottontail is a truly unique rabbit because of all of the 13 species in the genus *Sylvilagus*; the cottontail is really the only one that can live in tremendously varied and diverse habitats. These habitats include fields, far, prairies, hardwood forests,

rainforests, boreal forests, etc. The swamp rabbit, however, is pickier and prefers swamps and lowlands near water. The swamp rabbit is an excellent swimmer due to its thick fur which "waterproofs" its skin.

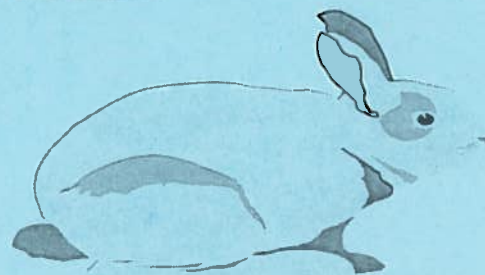
The breeding season is highly variable with respect to the geographic location of the rabbits. The farther north you go, the later the breeding season becomes, but the more young per litter you will have. In some areas of the south, like in southern Texas, the breeding season for some rabbits is all year long, but there are fewer young per litter. Probably in our area, though, it begins around January and ends in September, peaking during February and March. Sometimes these rabbits will produce two or more litters per year. Swamp rabbits usually have two or three young per litter, but as many as six have been documented. The eastern cottontail litter size is larger, varying from one to twelve but averaging five.

Baby swamp rabbits grow remarkably fast. When born, they are covered with a "downy" fur, but the eyes and ears are closed. In two or three days, though, the eyes open and the baby is able to walk! Other rabbits in this genus do not have such quick growth in progeny.

Ok, enough of the technical stuff, now for one of my favorite parts of wildlife, the animal signs. Although it is really difficult to describe what rabbit browses look like or what their scat looks like without the use of pictures, I will try my best. As you may recall, rabbits have two pairs of incisors on the top jaw and one pair on the bottom. This fact is important when locating rabbit browses. When rabbits browse twigs, or blades of grass, or forbs, or whatever, the browse looks like it was cut at a 45-degree angle by a pair of scissors. Because they have sharp top and bottom incisors, they leave a clean cut. Deer, however, only have bottom incisors (see my past article on deer for more info), so they will leave a ragged and messy browse because they have to pull and tear, rather than cut like rabbits do. Sometimes, though, rabbits will eat the whole plant to just below the surface of the leaf litter, so watch out!

An interesting aspect of rabbit adaptation and physiology has to do with their scat. Not a favorite subject of most people, but this is a great way to determine when, where and who was present in a certain area. Rabbits generally have two types of scat, one is a hard brown pellet, from which digestion has already extracted the nutrients, and the other is a soft, greenish pellet, which are reingested to extract further nutrients and also provide vitamin B supplementation. Lagomorph droppings are round, sometimes wrinkled, and slightly flattened. It looks similar to and can be confused with deer droppings (deer have more elliptical or oval shaped droppings and are usually smooth).

I hope that you have enjoyed diving into the world of Lagomorphs. They are truly amazing animals and tons of additional information about these animals are available. Lack of room prevents me from ms, woodlands, deserts, swamps elaborating so I encourage you to read on if interests persists. As always, questions, comments and criticisms are welcome!



VOLUNTEER DUTY SCHEDULE

In an attempt to take some of the load off of the Coordinators, and to help cut down on our "no-show" rate, a list of the persons who have volunteered for various assignments will be printed in the *Bayou Foliage* each month. If you are scheduled for a particular duty and you are unable to attend, please use this schedule to try to find your own substitute. You may be able to trade weekends, or swap a Saturday for a Sunday with someone who has the same duty another time during the month. If you do trade, please be sure to call the appropriate coordinator and the ABNC desk to inform them.

DATE	11:00 TRAIL	2:00 TRAIL	INFO. SERVICES	FARM INTERPRETER	FARM DEMO	NAT. HISTORY DEMO
Sat. 5/2	Merle Bunde	Ramon McKinney	Danny Yancey	Susan Hesley	Jane Bingel (Cheese)	Ruby Dilgren (Butterflies)
Sun. 5/3	---	Martha Hood	Ken Russell	Polly Swerdlin	Paul and Stephania Rogers (Rope Making)	---
Sat. 5/9	Jim Crabb	Joe Bryan	Mary Barton	Jane Bingel	Irene Ward (Butter Making)	Pat Grimes (Snakes)
Sun. 5/10	---	---	Merle Bunde	Christine Ribeiro	Emily Egan (Floor Loom Weaving)	Sue Manley (Mammals)
Sat. 5/16	Louise Peck	Ray Parker	Martha Hood	Stephania & Paul Rogers	Larry Velae (Indian Crafts)	Marilyn Clark (Hummingbirds)
Sun. 5/17	---	---	Marsha Galvan	Marsha Goss	Ann Brinly (Weaving)	Joe Bryan (Sea Shells)
Sat. 5/23	Susan Hesley	---	Barb Hill	Susan Williams	Jim Callen (Wood Shop)	Ed Adams (Reptiles)
Sun 5/24	---	Patty Gill	Ruby Dilgren	Penny Woodward	Mary Ann Tucker (Basket Weaving)	Ann Tincher (Microworld)
Sat 5/30	Eldine, Justin & Mike Ownes	Anne Tincher	Joan Shack	Eleanor Stanley	Irene Ward (Butter Churn)	Bob & Laura Henrix (Front Porch Birding)
Sun 5/31	---	Chris Santiago	Mary Ann Tucker	Marjorie Borey	Tom Scarcella (Blacksmith)	Jim Crabb (Mushrooms)

1998 VOLUNTEER BOARD

	Home	Office
Helen Burton	281-474-7133	
Jean Kruse	281-486-0787	
Patsy Cashion	281-485-2681	Hanna Drago
Georgia Colyer	281-996-7888	Polly Swerdlin
Chuck Snyder	281-480-1550	Cris Santiago
Ruby Dilgren	281-488-1727	Weekend Demos
Michael Vu	281-471-1114	Weekend Trail
		Weekday Farm
		Weekday Trail
		Newsletter
		281-487-3033
		281-326-4149
		281-488-8193
		281-471-0979
		713-946-2754
		281-487-3033
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