**South Texas Border Chapter Texas Master Naturalist**

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 **For immediate release**

Annual Texas Master Naturalist training opens registration

**Pharr, TEXAS—**Texas Master Naturalist program training registration for the 2026 new class session is open through December 15. Weekly classes are scheduled January 8 through March 26, 2026. Registration is open to Winter Texans and residents of Cameron, Hidalgo and Starr counties over the age of 18 to join the South Texas Border Chapter that meets in Pharr.

Texas Master Naturalist is a unique educational volunteer program sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Sea Grant Program.

“Texas Master Naturalists are volunteers with diverse interests. They receive in-depth training about the wildlife and natural resources of the Rio Grande Valley’s unique ecosystem,” said Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Park Superintendent and chapter advisor Javier de Leon.

“Volunteers work with community partners in approved activities and help educate others about the special land in which we live and how to help sustain it.”

Students attend a three-hour evening class once a week taught by local university professors, and other field experts, including those from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Special day-time field trips are arranged for trainees, providing unique access and learning opportunities.

Trainees join volunteer teams with other chapter members and work among more than 60 local partners that include the chapter’s special projects, federal and local wildlife parks, coastal naturalist programs, cities, schools, and other public entities. Hundreds of opportunities are available to volunteers from studying wildlife to developing public native gardens, learning about native plants and habitat, citizen science projects, bird migration and shore birds to Gulf and beach inhabitants and trends.

Class size is limited. The cost is $150 and includes textbook, fees, t-shirt, name tag and one-year membership. Scholarships of $100 are available and completed form is due by December 15.

To apply for the class or request a scholarship, follow the instructions in the pdf icons on our New Class Webpage at <https://www.stbctmn.org/the-next-class>. If you have questions, please contact the new class director, Jim Gerry, at jimgerry@gmail.com or 630-464-4622.

Check out the chapter website at <https://www.stbctmn.org/>. Get a head start, learning about local nature through articles at <https://www.stbctmn.org/blog>, and attend monthly chapter meetings.

The South Texas Border Chapter meets at 6:30 p.m., the third Monday of each month, except December, with a guest speaker. Meetings are at St. George Orthodox Church Hall, 704 W. Sam Houston, in Pharr; they are free and open to the public.

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