

Through the years, two of our members have received this prestigious award.

Ernie Edmundson Earns Citizen Volunteer of the Year Award



Coastal Bend Bays Foundation has named Ernie Edmundson Citizen Volunteer for 2006. The MidCoast Chapter is proud to count her among our membership. Columnist David Sikes wrote in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*:

"This is the fourth year the foundation has chosen to showcase the conservation efforts of Coastal Bend residents, many of whom might otherwise escape notice. While a show of gratitude is nice, I'm fairly sure these folks don't need our encouragement to continue their good works.

However, I'm hoping that celebrating them publicly might strengthen the positive stigma attached to the actions of people who incorporate conservation into their lives and remind us of our moral obligation to do the same. They bring conservation into classrooms.

They enlighten communities on resource management. They attend meetings and keep watch over policy makers. They demonstrate common sense business practices. They lead by example."

Fellow member Lonnie Matthew wrote the nomination that won Ernie this important award:

Ernie Edmundson is a Master Gardener, Texas Master Naturalist, member of the Native Plant Society of Texas, on the board of Aransas First land trust organization, and one of the founders of Stewardship Aransas, a non-profit nature preservation corporation dedicated to awareness and education regarding conservation of the natural beauty of the Live Oak Peninsula.

Ernie is a volunteer educator. She is a self-taught expert on native plants and is very knowledgeable about birds. She presents many programs to Native Plant Society, Master Naturalists, and Master Gardeners from Palacios to Kingsville. She also presents programs at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and many area garden clubs. She is a resource at the Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens.

As an Aransas/San Patricio County Master Gardener, Ernie has assisted hundreds of newcomers in saving their money, time, and water in their landscaping needs. Ernie is always cheerful, helpful, and knowledgeable. The Coastal Bend region has greatly benefited from her abilities.

This is the second consecutive year Coastal Bend Bays Foundation has honored a MidCoast Master Naturalist. See the story on the 2005 honoree, Ray Little next.

Chapter Member Named Coastal Bend Bays Volunteer of the Year

Ray Little, charter member of the Mid-Coast Chapter, was named Coastal Bend Bays Citizen Volunteer of the Year November 17, 2005. From the CC Caller-Times:

Citizen Volunteer - Ray Little has held many positions, but he might be best known as one of the longest running advocates for whooping cranes. He's been a birder since he was 4. He's a Texas Master Naturalist, a founding member of the Coastal Bend Audubon Society and the Frontera Audubon Society in the Rio Grande Valley to name but a few of his affiliations with birding and wildlife groups. He's a 30-year volunteer at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Perhaps Little is best known as a 22-year veteran narrator on whooping crane boat tours, during which time he may have set a record for repeating the same jokes more times than anyone in history.



Text from Ray Little's Nomination for Citizen Volunteer:

Ray Little started birding when he was four years old by learning to read the Arm & Hammer Baking Powder Bird Cards that showed the colored pictures of many birds and a description of each. As a youngster, a biology teacher lived close by and took him on many nature trips through the nearby woods and creek to study birds and other wildlife. He went to Texas A&M at College Station in 1940 to major in Fish & Game, but World War II interrupted his studies. After serving his time in the Pacific, he returned to A&M and the name of the major had been changed to Wildlife Management. He has continued to take courses in ornithology and to lecture throughout his lifetime.

He married Margie in 1947 and has two sons, Terry and Dell, both avid birders from a very early age. He has led field trips for many groups and organizations. He served on the founding committee of the Frontera Audubon Society in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and also the Coastal Bend Audubon Society in Corpus Christi. He has served as an officer from the President on down, including many cases on the Board of Directors of many of the birding organizations.

Ray is a Texas Master Naturalist, having been part of the first graduating class of the Mid-Coast Chapter in 2000. He is a member of Coastal Bend Audubon Society, Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi, Aransas Bird & Nature Club of Rockport, Texas Ornithological Society, American Birding Association, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, and many others. He is Chairman of Rockport Demonstration Bird & Butterfly Garden, Chairman and Developer of Aransas Woods Nature Sanctuary, Founding Committee and Developer of the Fred Jones Nature Sanctuary, Friend of

Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary-Rockport, Friends of Goose Island State Park, and Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island NWR. He currently is on the stewardship committee and still does most of the maintenance for Aransas Woods, now a part of the Aransas First Land Trust properties, and for several other Coastal Bend birding sites.

He is very proud of the "Awareness Award" that was bestowed upon him by the Kingsville Bird & Wildlife Club in 2003.

But Ray's Special Interest is in Whooping Cranes. He has worked closely as a volunteer with the ANWR Biologists for over 30 years. He served as Wildlife and Whooping Crane Narrator on the Wharf Cat from Port Aransas and Rockport for 22 years and recently "retired" from a formal role.

The above is the "short list" of activities for someone who has given tirelessly of himself for the benefit of the Coastal Bend. We are pleased to nominate Ray Little of Rockport for the Citizen Volunteer Award.

Earl Matthew M.D., Board of Directors, Aransas First and National Wildlife Federation
T. J. Fox, Past President, Mid- Coast Master Naturalist, Inc.
John Beree, Treasurer, Aransas Bird and Nature Club

Two other people we know well were also honored at the banquet. From the Caller-Times:

Public Awareness - Jay Tarkenton helped developed a marine education program through the Center for Coastal Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, which broadcasts a message of wetland conservation to many. His hands-on style of education has resulted in the acquisition of a field classroom on Aransas Bay and a shallow-draft boat for aquatic studies. His enthusiasm for life, coastal ecology and the preservation of local history has helped instill a passion for these in those who hear his message.

Higher Education - Liz Smith has for 15 years been a tireless crusader for the preservation of Coastal Bend ecosystems through the Center for Coastal Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. She's authored, co-authored or helped develop more than 74 environmentally focused publications and presentations on the subject of coastal habitat conservation and management. She's particularly dedicated to including students in all her research. Recently, Smith helped Refugio County in its effort to create a wetland education center.