

ARLINGTON  
CONSERVATION  
COUNCIL

# POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2009

Special meeting day,  
time, & place

[www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org](http://www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org)

## January Meeting Annual Potluck and Business Meeting

Don't miss this look at the  
new year's opportunities,  
a bit of business,  
whatever's on your mind,  
— and food, too

Saturday, January 17, 10:00 am - noon  
The Montessori Academy of Arlington  
3428 W. Arkansas Lane



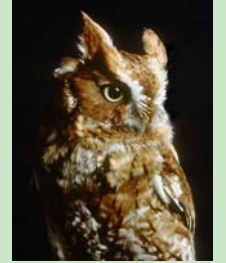
### Bring food!

We'll supply the drinks

## Bits & Pieces

### The Little Dukelet

Little Dukelet? How about Eastern screech owl instead? Owls and winter just seem to go together somehow, when those haunting calls drift through the bare branches. And this little owl has got to be one of suburbia's best-kept secrets: Their home ranges are actually smaller here than in real forests. Maybe because our traditional landscaping offers so little cover and so many rats and mice. If we all had wildscapes, would the screech owl population decline?



### Today's Inspirational Moment

Nature hates calculators.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### Environment Arlington?

A while ago, while summarizing local ACC concerns for our state legislators, we were reminded again that the biggest issues — air, water, energy — cross the city limits. Good information about issues on the state level seems to be at the Environment Texas Web site, [environmenttexas.org/](http://environmenttexas.org/). And Public Citizen, [citizen.org/texas/](http://citizen.org/texas/), also looks like a good source for any of us who want to let our representatives know what we value.



### Salamander Romance

They're small, hopelessly drab, and we virtually never see them, but Small-mouthed salamanders could easily be our most common salamander. They live in wet forests and are active at night.



This amphibian begins breeding right about now. We expect such creatures to be active when it's warm, but a friend who studied them often

had to break through a layer of ice in shallow woodland pools to observe their reproductive behavior. Brrr.

**From the President John Darling**



Hard to believe but it's already time to think back on ACC's activities last year and wonder how we can do more and better this year. Board

Member Jo Ann Duman reminds us (page 5) that whatever we manage to accomplish in 2009 will represent the tip of an iceberg that started growing 40 years ago. (Iceberg might not convey exactly the image I have in mind, especially now when icebergs are shrinking, but you get the idea, I hope).

I once saw some of the old ACC papers and was surprised to see familiar Arlington State College names from my undergraduate days at ASC. They got the ACC thing going three years after I graduated, but I can't recall ever hearing any of the founders I knew discussing Arlington's environmental issues. With fewer than 90,000 residents then, the city's growth from the 7,700 people who lived here in 1950 must have played a huge role in ACC's formation. As a callow youth just passing through (I thought), I didn't have their longer view — or their awareness, for that matter.

And now here I am, hoping to see all our members and friends at the annual potluck brunch and business meeting on Saturday the 17th. And brand new people, too. Maybe you've picked up the *Post Oak* at a library or one of our other dropoff spots and something in this newsletter strikes a chord. Maybe it's just the knowledge that you're not the only one who worries about our environmental future, who wants more trees, pure air, clean water, mass transit, efficient buildings, and all the rest. Come on out and see that you're not alone. Everyone's welcome.

**Notice of Annual Meeting and Election of ACC Board Members for 2009: The ACC Annual Meeting will be held at The Montessori Academy of Arlington, 3428 W. Arkansas Lane, Arlington, TX, at 10:00 am on January 17, 2009. During the meeting, ACC members will vote for the slate of nominated officers and board members as follows: President (and Newsletter Editor) – John Darling; First Vice President (and Program Director) – Jo Ann Duman; Second Vice President – Roy Miliner; Treasurer – Marian Hiler; Secretary – Jo Briggs, At-Large Board Members – Grace Darling, Heather Dowell, John Dycus, Marianne Herrmann, Molly Hollar, Danny Kocurek, Jan Miller, Callie Mitchell.**

**THE POST OAK**

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**All Memberships expired January 1st. It's past time to renew, so do it today. We need every one of you.**

Thanks A.C.C. for working to conserve Arlington's natural resources.

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## New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



Thanks to Wesley Miller's photos, enjoy a virtual walk in the prairie's winter wonderland.

On a less scenic note, his photos show panels from the adjacent warehouse development stacked uncomfortably close to NYABP, sometimes taking flight onto the prairie.

With this crazy weather (frequent record high temperatures, blustery winds and occasional bitter cold), Mother Nature's kids are probably feeling a bit off balance. Hibernate or germinate?



Shed the winter coat or grow more? Winter and early spring plants like anemones are already sprouting, though most warm season plants only recently went dormant... maybe.

Calendar:

### Workday on the Prairie

Saturday, January 24

9:00 am – noon

New York Ave. Blackland Prairie Park



We'll cut small trees and brush, so please bring loppers and hand saws if you can. Gloves, boots (or sturdy-soled shoes), long sleeves and pants are recommended. Water will be provided, but please bring your own container if you can. Please RSVP to [jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net), for late info on weather, etc.

### Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

February 13 – 16, 2009 (Friday through Monday)

This is a national program and *anyone* can participate from *any* location. Basically, the plan is to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. This year, let's trek a couple of parks in south Arlington: NYABP for counting prairie birds and Southwest Nature Preserve (SWNP) for crosstimbres birds. More details in next month's newsletter.

Note: In 2008, Arlington came up with the 4th largest number of GBBC lists (73) in the state of Texas,



outnumbered only by Fort Worth (152), Houston (138) and Austin (129).

More info: [birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html](http://birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html).



## Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



What interesting times 2008 had in store. Some good, some not. Vandals badly damaged the small pond and the stone bridge over the creek.

The irrigation system drowned the buffalo grass in the former meadow. Restoration of these areas seemed overwhelming, but wildscape volunteers and friends saved the day. The whole year, actually.

Five thousand dollars from the September plant sale were added to previous sale proceeds to reach the match for a \$19,000 Arlington Parks and Recreation Department grant to repair the pond and creek. Redenta's Garden restored the water features at cost. APRD and Veterans Park staff Martin Sanchez, Greg Watson and Frank Rivera provided yards of soil and hours of labor to prepare the new berm for replanting in the original half acre of the wildscape.

Great wildscape friend Alma Pohler of River Legacy Parks connected volunteers from HOBY Leadership and Upward Bound groups with the wildscape. The volunteers moved additional soil for the

berm and helped replant the area. John Snowden of Bluestem Nursery donated 200 Turk's cap plants, valued at more than \$1,000, further increasing plants available for sales and distributing throughout the wildscape.

The mini-classes for volunteers continued, with landscape architect Greg Schadt discussing water conservation in landscaping in November. Last year's scarce rainfall makes his presentation especially timely. City forester Heather Dowell, a key link to the city's greenhouse facilities in Randol Mill Park, led December's mini-class on native tree care.

In addition to overcoming these challenges, wildscape volunteers completed planting in the acre-sized erosion area this fall, adding more than 1,600 plants (valued at \$8,970) grown by volunteers in the greenhouse. Volunteers also thinned out 159 coralberries (\$1,272) from a large stand planted in the wildscape several years ago and transplanted them in the erosion area. Volunteers spent extra Saturdays and many November afternoons to beat the winter freeze.

Much of the wildscape's success traces to the super greenhouse operation led by Josephine Keeney. In addition to overseeing the volunteers Wednesday mornings, Josephine regularly drops by the greenhouse to check on the plants. She also propagates and donates other plants from her home. In addition to the over \$5,000 in plants moved at the plant sale and nearly \$10,250 of green material planted in the wildscape, more than \$16,800 worth of young plants are growing in the greenhouse for future sales and wildscape plantings. All of this adds up to a contribution of \$32,992 from the greenhouse volunteers. That operation is made



*Prairie flameleaf sumac showing off at the wildscape.*

possible by APRD, which allows us to use the greenhouse, and by Heather Dowell, whose oversight keeps the greenhouse in workable condition.

Let's do some math. More than 3,300 hours at \$15 an hour equals \$50,925 worth of volunteer labor this year. This plus the amounts above — the APRD grant, the Bluestem Nursery gift, the plants planted and transplanted and not yet planted — top \$102,917 added to the value of the wildscape in 2008.

Wow.



*Happy in their labor: Barbara Meyers and Kathy Scott hard at work.*



*Greg Schadt teaches the water conservation miniclass.*

## Changing Times and Changing Air Jan Miller

My mom frequently forwards interesting newspaper clippings, and a recent one was an O.K. Carter column from the Star-Telegram with a personal connection. Titled "Arlington transit mess had humble beginnings", it detailed the proud inauguration of Arlington's first gasoline motor, to power the paper's printing press, back in 1901. This was followed by the town's first horseless carriage just a few years later. Seems my great-grandfather, Dr. W.H. Davis, soon took delivery of the third auto in Arlington as

his 1903 horse-pulled buggy was rapidly becoming passé and his team was spooked by the new, noisy contraptions. And as Carter points out, Arlington's been "paying for it both financially and environmentally" ever since, including frequent ozone alerts and no doubt contributing to Texas' ranking as #1 CO<sub>2</sub> emitter. He also notes that in 1902, Arlington had three (count 'em!) modes of mass transit: the Interurban electric trolley, the T&P railroad and the old stagecoach route. With more cars, the

Interurban was gone by the mid 1930s and the T&P's passenger service by the early 1950s. By 1990, Arlington had become the largest U.S. city without mass transit...and still is.

Carter described pitiful attendance at recent town meetings, indicating little public enthusiasm for mass transit planning. "Arlington seems to prefer a mode of transit that involves personal possession of a ton of rolling steel and glass"....with nasty non-renewable petroleum addictions and awful carbon, SOx and NOx emissions.

**Memberships Expired at the End of December**  
**If you haven't renewed, this is your last issue. You know how much we need you, so please renew or join today. Help us bring out the best in Arlington. Thanks.**

## A Year of Celebration Jo Ann Duman

Serendipity happens to the very best of us. Recently, while she was helping me prepare for an assignment from our president, Julia Burgen rediscovered something: the articles of incorporation for ACC are dated 1969. Local founders signed the documents July 19, 1969, and submitted them. The government approval letter was dated November 3, 1969.

That gives us an opportunity to celebrate 40 years of conservation efforts for preservation of our environment and Arlington's natural resources. Throughout 2009, let's have a feast, call a dance, make a picnic, plant some trees, get a proclamation from the mayor, design a shoulder patch, hoist a flag, and any other festivities we want so ACC can trumpet the survival of a small group of people that continually renews itself

through challenges, triumphs, and sometimes hurtful defeats.

How would you like ACC to mark its 40th Anniversary Year? Please share your ideas with members of the board (the names are always shown in the same place in the newsletter). We'd love to have your ideas at the January 17 brunch, but keep those ideas coming anytime.

Another opportunity we should take in our anniversary year is to assemble and publish the history of ACC. Some of you know the group's records were passed from president to president in "the box" until that low-technology failed us a few years ago when one president moved abruptly and no one knows where the box went.

With your support, a team of volunteers will organize and scan materials like

meeting minutes, newsletters, newspaper articles, photos, and scrapbooks to archive them. These items, arranged in sequential order by date, will be the basis of research at newspaper and the UTA libraries to capture the significance and history of the people and activities of ACC. Before the end of the year, the goal is to have all the organization, research, and writing completed and saved onto a compact disk (CD) that can be shared with all interested members so the information is readily available far into the future.

If you have materials you are willing to donate or lend until we scan and return them to you, please contact Marian Hiler or me. If you are interested in volunteering to work on the history team, let one of us know.

## City, University endorse “Blueprint for Greener Footprint”

(A press release from UTA)

**City of Arlington and the University of Texas at Arlington join nationwide campaign for federal stimulus dollars to create local green jobs.**

Arlington mayor Robert Cluck, M.D. and University of Texas at Arlington president James D. Spaniolo showcased local successes on energy and climate solutions on December 12, and called on president-elect Barack Obama and the incoming congress to empower greater local action to create green jobs and address climate and energy challenges.



Mayor Robert Cluck

Mayors, county executives and other local elected officials held similar events throughout the country during “Local Climate Action Week,” Dec. 8 through

15, and endorsed a “Blueprint” for the new president and congress, sending a message about the need for federal support in solving climate and energy challenges.

“Local governments are in a unique position to dramatically reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, and stimulate the economy,” said Mayor Cluck, citing the city’s methane gas recycling program at the landfill as one of Arlington’s innovative renewable energy success stories.

The city of Arlington and the University of Texas at Arlington recently completed a carbon footprint analysis to measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which have serious effects on public health and quality of life. Both are award-winning leaders in recycling, composting and energy conservation programs. Additionally, the university is home to numerous alternative energy research projects.

“Technological innovations can create the new jobs that are needed for a healthy national economy, while making



City staffers distributed compact fluorescent bulbs at the event.

our local communities better, more sustainable places to live,” said President Spaniolo.

In addition to Cluck and Spaniolo, speakers at the event included Richard Greene, administrator for Environmental Protection Agency- Region 6; Robert Smouse, LEED AP environmental services executive manager for the city of Arlington; and Jeff L. Howard, assistant professor in the School of Urban and Public Affairs and former co-chair of the President’s Committee on Sustainability. Additional organizations and individuals were recognized for their environmental and sustainable stewardship activities throughout our community.

## Our Most Precious Liquid Asset (Reprinted from the January 2009 issue of *Insight*)

We had a great Vision North Texas Regional Summit recently. Thanks to the many volunteers and staff who made it possible.

At the end of the morning, participants used keypad polling to respond to a variety of questions. They first considered a range of potential development scenarios, from “business as usual” to a greener region. Then they considered which issues were most important for Vision North Texas to measure as we examine the performance of these alternative scenarios over the next several months.

Among the 16 issues listed were revitalizing downtowns, enabling residents to walk/bike to jobs, and locating new homes/jobs near rail. Participants were asked to rate how important it was to measure each issue—with the highest rating possible being it’s “essential to evaluate” this issue.

As might be expected, minimizing traffic congestion and improving air quality got high ratings, with 80 percent rating these as essential to evaluate. But they tied for 3rd.

Taking the top two slots in terms of importance to evaluate, according to

Summit participants, were issues related to water.

The second-ranked issue (84 percent rating this as essential) was protecting water quality in streams and lakes. And drumroll... the top-ranked issue (90 percent rating this as essential) was conserving the region’s water supply. In these troubled times, we can’t ignore our most precious liquid asset – water.

*John Promise, P.E.*

*Director of Environment and Development, North Central Texas Council of Governments*

## Nuclear Power Riskier Than Ever: Too Expensive, Too Dangerous

*(By the time you read this, the meeting will have passed, but the issue will persist and the information here will continue to be relevant. The article is a press release from the SEED Coalition, Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, and Public Citizen of Texas)*

An NRC Environmental Scoping Meeting will be held on Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> in Glen Rose, Texas to take comment on the environmental impact study for two nuclear reactors proposed for the existing Comanche Peak site. A coalition of environmental and consumer groups and their members will be telling the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Luminant (formerly TXU) that nuclear plants are “too risky, too expensive and too dangerous” to help Texas meet its power needs, and makes no sense when clean, safe, affordable options exist. The coalition of groups said they only learned of the hastily called public meeting to seek input on environmental issues on December 24th.

“We’ve been down this road before,” noted Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. “The utility industry sold Texas on Comanche Peak and the South Texas Project and consumers have been paying the ‘stranded’ costs ever since, even as valuable water resources are expended and radioactive waste piles up onsite.”

Luminant proposes to build two more nuclear reactors at the existing Comanche Peak nuclear site near Glen Rose, in Somervell County, using an unproven, untested technology known as USAPWR.

“The design of the reactors has not been certified and has never been built anywhere in the world. Why should Texas serve as guinea pigs for a dangerous radioactive experiment?” asked Karen Hadden, Executive Director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic

Development (SEED) Coalition. “Design problems as well as human error led to numerous problems and shutdowns of Comanche Peak reactors in the past. The competence and character of Luminant need to be examined closely since the history of the existing reactors is disastrous. In the past, there was a chance to fix nuclear reactor construction problems before an operating license was issued, but that safeguard is gone with the new licensing process.”

“The rush to build new nuclear power plants is simply an attempt to take advantage of federal subsidies while they are available, and then hope to pass the



*On an unrelated note: An icy elm from our non-nuclear winter.*

building and operating costs on to the public,” noted Tom “Smitty” Smith, director of Public Citizen’s Texas office. “Luminant has said that costs could go as high as \$22 billion and the Comanche Peak reactors could cost even more due to its design and the rising costs of uranium, steel and cement. Comanche Peak Unit One ran ten times over budget and was years late coming online

The cost of solar concentrated power plants and solar panels are coming down and wind energy is booming. Energy efficiency now returns twice the amount invested according to the Public Utility Commission of Texas. “Investing in

nuclear power means increased risks of accidents, terrorist attacks and dealing with radioactive waste for millions of years. With clean affordable options, why even consider risky nuclear power?” asked Hadden.

A report by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) found that Dallas/Ft. Worth can reduce projected energy needs by 101% in the next 15 years. Peak demand can be reduced by 38% in the area. Expensive nuclear plants are not needed. ([http://www.cleanenergyfortexas.org/dallas\\_ftworth.html](http://www.cleanenergyfortexas.org/dallas_ftworth.html))

“Renewable energy production was up about 5% between 2007 and 2008, while nuclear power production decreased,” noted Jim Duncan, President of North Texas Renewable Energy, Inc. “With the success of wind power and progress in solar technology, why would Luminant even consider sinking money into an obsolete nuclear technology?”

With the most recent ERCOT projections reporting that Texas’ existing generating capacity will meet its reserve margin needs until at least 2013, the Sierra Club’s Reed agreed that it makes better sense to invest in energy efficiency, demand response and emerging renewable

technologies like wind, solar, geothermal and ways to store energy.

“There is a wide range of interest groups from industrial customers, to new players in the solar and wind energy markets, to low-income advocates who believe we need to look forward to reducing our demand and investing in new technologies like solar and energy storage, not using 20th century technology like coalfired and uraniumfired power plants. Luminant should get on board,” said Reed.

The Seed Coalition, Public Citizen and Sierra Club are sponsors of the website [NukeFreeTexas.org](http://NukeFreeTexas.org), which has additional information on the dangers of nuclear power in Texas.

## Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

Memberships are good for one year, renewable each January. Your dues go directly to our public education efforts.

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**Please circle membership category.**

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# Don't Forget!

Saturday, January 17  
10:00 am

## *Annual Potluck and Business Meeting*

Be sure to visit us at  
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