

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2010

**Special meeting day,
time, & place**

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 16, 10:00 am - noon
The Montessori Academy of Arlington
3428 W. Arkansas Lane



**Don't Forget!
Bring Food and Ideas**

Bits & Pieces

Eastern Woodrat

You probably won't see this large rat, but you'll surely notice its big stick nest in the woods. Our packrat collects shiny bottle caps, bits of colored glass, and other odd bits. It forages in treetops for nuts, berries, and leaves and only lives about three years.



Today's Inspirational Moment



The EPA's only consistent target has been the target on the backs of Texas workers and taxpayers.

*Gov Rick Perry,
January 7, 2010*

Actual Fall Color

Just a few weeks ago some of the blackjack oaks at the Southwest Nature Preserve provided marvelous fall colors while a vigorous chittamwood ignored the falling temperatures.



Kids Ask the Darndest Things



Your editor's daughter has a knack for posing questions that sound simple but aren't. Here's the latest (good answers welcome): Which is worse, buying inorganic blueberries in a recyclable package, or organic blueberries in a nonrecyclable package?

From the President John Darling



Despite my best efforts to keep my head firmly in the sand, I'm beginning to suspect that it's the beginning of a brand new year and I ought

to be generating insightful reflections on events of 2009 and exciting possibilities for 2010. Instead, I keep coming up with low-level thoughts along the lines of, "Whew, got through another one somehow. What the heck is next?"

It's probably better if I don't look ahead anyway. Lots of unhappy notions pop up, and my editor (She Who Must) insists that you really, really don't want to read them.

Okay then, happy thoughts: Looking back at Wildscape columns might just

be the ticket for a positive environmental attitude. What a wonderful record, and it shows no sign of slacking off. I have to think that we'll keep seeing more and better this year, thanks to Molly, Ann, and the remarkable corps of volunteers.

And that makes me think grateful thoughts about our outstanding Parks & Recreation people, who represent the best of modern park professionalism.

Of course I have a soft spot for our city recycling staff who are committed to making us better, even in these very tough times. (A plug here: The annual Master Composter class is scheduled for February 26 and 27. Call Lorrie Anderle at 817-459-6778 for details. If it's like last year, there will be pizza!)

On a different note, I can't stop thinking about a recent ACC member's



request for information about cities where the sale of invasive plants is banned. Seems so obvious, yet I haven't thought in such straightforward terms. The garden above contains only native plants because in this suburb of Capetown, the sale of all nonnative plants is banned. How about that idea? Too radical? Not when we start paying the true cost of water.

Happy New Year Thoughts.

Notice of Annual Meeting and Election of ACC Board Members for 2010: 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 16, 2010. During the meeting, ACC members will vote for a slate of board members.

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



Workdays took a holiday in December, but in November a great group of volunteers thinned trees and brush on the southwest corner of the prairie, giving the

prairie a broader view to northbound traffic. They also collected grass and forb seed for restoration reserves and bagged litter. Big thanks to Bonnie Bilodeau, Bonnie Bowman, Julia Burgen, Molly Hollar, Wesley Miller, Donna Piercy, Hester Schwarzer, Bill Shaw, and Mary Roberts Turner. Most of the group reconvened afterwards to enjoy a great lunch at Cynthia Chippendale's restaurant, *Potager*.

APRD is making plans for winter mowing after the prairie dries out a bit. Mowers on nearby I-20 rights-of-way have left deep ruts. The prairie's deep black clay soils are even softer than roadsides and can be easily damaged when wet. There's still plenty of time: the ideal period is from Thanksgiving 'til mid-late February.



Next Workday:
Saturday February 20
9:00 am – noon

So how about another workday? Let's start the year right: Saturday, February 20, 9:00 am – noon.

Winter is a great time to cut trees and brush, so we'll plan for a really big workday in February. We'll work up an appetite, so plan to meet for lunch afterwards. RSVP to jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net appreciated but not required...in case of adverse weather, etc. Contact me for directions.

Mark your calendar now for:

Tandy Hills Brush Bash

January 23. Go to <http://www.tandyhills.org/contact1.htm> and get more information.

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 12-15, 2010
Count birds at any location from Friday, 2/12 through Monday, 2/15. For details about GBBC, see www.birdsource.org/gbbc/.

Southwest Nature Preserve Bird Count

Saturday February 13, 9:00 am - noon.
Participate in the 13th annual GBBC event by walking the trails through post oak woodlands, savannahs, grasslands

and around 4 ponds at this 58-acre park. A wide variety of birds has nearly always been reported here, with 30 species last year. More details in next month's newsletter.

This month's Bluestem News notes the passing of Margaret Parker (1910-2009), a conservationist and co-founder of Forth Worth Nature Center and Refuge:

"No doubt in the future there will be great pressure brought to bear to 'develop' our refuge – for housing or some other revenuebearing enterprise. The 'development' concept ought to receive a very hard critical look from any person concerned with the quality of the human environment. There are revenues to be gained other than monetary from leaving land undeveloped – namely the health – physical, mental, and spiritual health of the people... May we always have such open spaces where the spirit can be renewed."

Margaret Parker, 1970

Wildscape Update John Dycus



A White Christmas turned the wildscape into a winter wonderland, and super volunteer Wesley Miller has the snow photos to prove it. Thanks to Mother Nature and a

gang of volunteer elves, seasonal changes make our urban wildscape wilderness fun and downright exciting.



Honors students from teacher Paul French's health sciences program at Sam Houston High School recently proved especially conscientious as they planted several new areas and then mulched the plants. They also moved stone to place as boundaries and resurfaced trails.



Some of the regular volunteers supervised. Before leaving, these effective workers said they'd like to come help again in mid-April.

Out under the power lines, not enough volunteers in the world could save the trees butchered by Oncor. Early in the fall, 15 wildscape volunteers joined ACC members and other citizens at a meeting with Oncor representatives to express concern over the company's often thoughtless tree trimming.

There's nothing thoughtless about Hester Schwarzer, one of the wildscape's



John Snowden



strongest supporters, who led the last mini-class on "Working with Children." Hester's talents in this area are remarkable, as evidenced by the interest shown by children at her activities.

Many of the wildscape volunteers are women, but several men have added immeasurably. John Snowden, owner of Bluestem Nursery, donated nearly all of the native grasses, 200 good-sized turk's cap plants and 100 gayfeather bulbs. Now he's helping develop the mini-prairie, bringing grasses and planting them there with the help of great volunteer Joe Martinez. Master Naturalist Bryan Rowe recently planted 30 trees

and last year planted about 100 turk's caps. A couple of weeks ago Danny Kocurek dug up a bur oak donated by Penney Andrew and replanted it in the wildscape. Bryan, Danny and Larry Norris planted another large bur oak (30-gallon container) provided by Arlington Parks and Recreation.

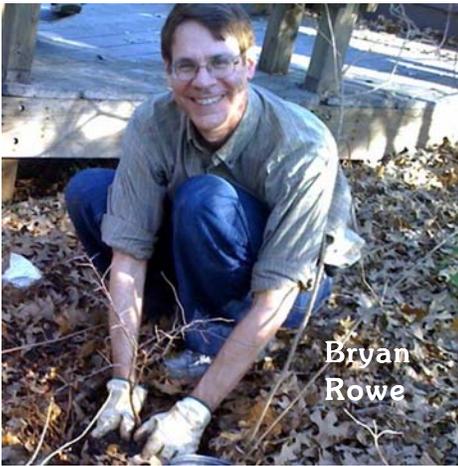
Since December and January are the best months for planting trees, the wildscapers hope to plant more under-

continued on page 5



Joe Martinez

Wildscape Update continued from page 4



story natives in the post oak woodland to add color and fragrance in the fall and spring. Several groups have volunteered to help, including students from UTA and Fort Worth Country Day School (returning after several years), and don't forget those Sam Houston High School health science students.

Sounds like another wonderful time for the wildscape and its growing list of friends, making this truly a Happy New Year.



Danny Kocurek, Joe Martinez, and Larry Norris

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.

Our November Speaker

Thanks to Bonnie Bradshaw of Wildcare Texas, our last meeting was a lot of fun and very educational. Bonnie entertained us while making the case for the Wildcare Triage Center planned to be established here in Arlington.

The center will provide invaluable help to injured and orphaned animals, and you can help. Learn more (and donate) at <http://www.wildcaretx.org/>.



Meatless Monday at UTA

On November 9, UTA Dining Services held its first Meatless Monday and demonstrated how delicious and varied their vegetarian fare could be. See the October Post Oak for more information.



Public Open House

for the City of Arlington's Hike and Bike System Master Plan. Wednesday, January 27, 6:00 - 9:00 pm at Arlington City Hall, 101 W. Abram St.

Attend this public meeting to learn about the plan and provide your input. Visit www.greenways.com/arlington to review project information.

New EPA Region 6 Administrator

Al Armendariz, who gave us a remarkable talk on gas well emissions last May, has been named the new EPA administrator for Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. It's safe to say that we have high hopes for this new boss, and lots of ACC folks helped welcome him at J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill on December 10.



Gas Drilling Update **Danny Kocurek**

There have been lots of developments in the ongoing saga of gas drilling in our area in the last few months, and change does appear to be in the air. But before we break out the organic beer and toss a Dylan CD in the karaoke machine, we will have to wait a little longer.

First, let's go over what we know. If you have been following these issues, you have probably seen articles in the local papers on the privately funded air testing at a couple of sites north of the Metroplex. These studies identified several chemicals in quantities above what is considered safe. It appears that as a result of these events, TCEQ has made some remarkable statements and changes lately. TCEQ toxicologists and regional employees have made statements in private and public indicating a change in how they approach gas companies and investigate complaints. Late last month, TCEQ changed their policy, stating they would investigate complaints at sites within 12 hours. Previously there was often a gap of 2 weeks or more between the complaint and the investigation. The memorandum outlining the new process can be found at http://earthworksaction.org/pubs-others/TCEQ_BarnettShaleComplaintInvestigationProcedures.pdf but it basically involves using an infrared camera to look for leaks and doing an air test if there are signs of leaks. To report a suspicious odor at a well site, you can call **888-777-3186**. The investigator



will need you to fill out the form located at <http://www5.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/complaints/> and they will do the rest.

The memorandum also states that if they find any “unsafe or hazardous conditions (including imminent and substantial endangerment to human health), they will immediately contact the company and request immediate corrective action.” Previously, TCEQ has stated that they have no enforcement power over problems found at gas sites, and they can only refer them to the Texas Railroad Commission, which is notorious for being controlled by the gas industry. We will have to wait and see what this change actually means since “requesting” corrective action does not sound very effective.

Although these are potentially positive changes, the most promising development has been that TCEQ has been doing air testing at sites around the Metroplex and is preparing their data for release, possibly later this month. This will be the first systematic and comprehensive review that has been done and will hopefully give some more definitive answers to the air quality questions being asked. Stay tuned and next time you contact your council member, ask what he or she is doing to ensure the safety of residents near gas well sites.

Note: See the January 13 Star-Telegram for an article on TCEQ test results.

TCEQ Commissioners Welcome New EPA Region 6 Administrator

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality commissioners hosted recently appointed EPA Region 6 Administrator Dr. Alfredo “Al” Armendariz at the commission headquarters in Austin. The purpose of the visit was not only to welcome the new administrator to his new position but also to discuss the various rules regarding Texas’ successful air program. Commissioners recently approved for publication a new rule package seeking to expand public participation in the state’s air permit process.

“Texas’ air quality permitting program is already one of the most robust in the nation,” said Chairman Bryan W. Shaw. “The TCEQ has taken proactive, aggressive measures to improve air quality in Texas. Air emissions and pollution concentrations in our state are at their lowest level in the past 20 years, while Texas continues to maintain a strong, growing economy.”

“I have always viewed public participation as a vital component in the permitting process,” said Commissioner Buddy Garcia. “I appreciate Dr. Armendariz

spending time with each of us today, and I look forward to working with him to show the rest of the nation how Texas has been successful and will continue to lead on environmental issues.”

A public hearing to accept comment on the proposed rule revisions will take place January 25, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. in Building E, Room 201 S, at the TCEQ campus, 12100 Park 35 Circle, in Austin. The comment period will end on February 16.

(Excerpted from a TCEQ press release. Can you tell?)

Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

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

Membership Information

Name _____

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Please circle membership category.

First-year member \$10.00

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How did you hear about us? _____

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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
PO Box 216
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Don't Forget!

Saturday January 16
10:00 am

Annual Potluck and Business Meeting

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