

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 3

MARCH 2012

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

March Meeting

Photovoltaics in the 21st Century

**Jim Duncan,
North Texas Renewable Energy, Inc**

**Wednesday, March 14, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)**



Jim Duncan is the founder of North Texas Renewable Energy Inc, the oldest exclusive solar electric design and installation specialist in North Texas.

Come hear this pioneer in the Texas solar PV industry.

Bring something for the raffle.

Bits & Pieces

Too Trite?

Doesn't matter, it feels like spring and the American robins are everywhere, not to mention wonderful. It's our largest thrush and most widespread North American songbird. And just for the record, they've been here all winter: most will migrate north to breed, and some will stay here to nest. Our year-round beauty.



Today's Inspirational Moment



We all know we need it and everyone at the university knows we need it.

Council member Kathryn Wilemon on public transportation in the city.

All the News

A quick sample from one day in the Star-Telegram: "...derailed train in Arlington was carrying hazardous cargo." "Earthquakes blamed on gas injection well." "Senate GOP to try again on pipeline." And an editorial cartoon that completely missed the point about the environmental nastiness of invasive zebra mussels. Good grief.



Nursery Nightmare



Big ad in the paper today for a local nursery lists 47 plant species by name. How many are native? Three.

You might think that after last summer's drought we would see a big increase in ads for plants that actually ought to be here.

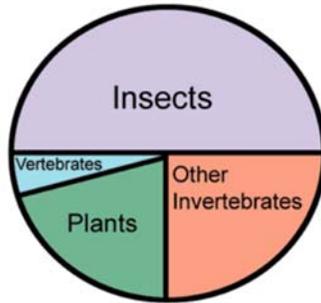
Around Town



Here's a look inside the complexities of one inconsequential part of your newsletter: Consider the Bits & Pieces on the front page. I started

including those after realizing that the first things I read in the *Audubon* and *Sierra* magazines were the short pieces, apparently tailored to my short-attention-span life. They ought to be easy, but I realized that it would be good to avoid repeating myself, so I began making lists of the bits in 2008. So now, whenever I can no longer put it off, I start by scanning the lists to avoid repetition. That's about 40 bits per year for 4 years, or 160 bits to avoid. Problem is that I only know about 127 bits on a good day, so now I have to indulge in actual mental effort to come up with new stuff.

Some are easy, like when a train falls off the tracks, and we might all expire in a ghastly cloud of chlorine gas. Of course, if that had really happened, I wouldn't have to come up with any more bits.



It's the natural history bits that need the most attention because I like to choose relatively big, flashy creatures. And that just got a lot harder, thanks to

the innocent-looking pie chart that popped up when I was searching for a deer mouse or some other appealing furry or feathered animal. If I read it right, the things I've always liked the most make up only about 5% of everything here.

So to be fair, I ought to dole out the bits in terms of species numbers. That means for every 10 newsletter issues, 5 ought to feature insect bits; 2 or 3, other invertebrates; 2, plants; and 1, something with a backbone. It gets worse (for me): Vertebrates include fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. So if I tried to be fair, I'd have my favorite — a bird — once every 5 years. Or still worse, fishes far outnumber all other vertebrates, so we might not have a bird for decades.

It's too depressing, so let's all pretend that we never saw the silly chart, and I'll think about barn swallows or something equally pleasing for next month.

THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller Photos by Wesley Miller



I just recently got to visit some of Texas' most scenic beaches — and richest in wildlife. One of the field trips was a cold, drenched hayride through Fennessy Ranch about

an hour north of Port Aransas, where I found greyish mud caking my boots. Hmm...perhaps a far southern fringe of the blackland soil. The ranch's conservation manager confirmed and added that they had no native prairie but had begun to restore part of the ranch, so far with positive results despite the recent drought. Later, on the return trip via backroads east of I-35, the flat coastal plain gave way to gently rolling and intensely green fields. A cotton gin in Granger proclaimed "Blackland Co-Op" but, alas, no native prairie remains.

It's a rare thing we have in Arlington. Come see our blackland prairie this spring — the real thing. Even better, join us for a workday. We'll hope to see you there on March 17.



**New York Avenue
Blackland Prairie Park
3rd Saturday workday
Saturday,
March 17, 2012
9 am – noon**

Volunteers needed! APRD employees will be cutting brush and small trees, then applying herbicide. Volunteers are needed to remove the brush as it's cut. There's always an opportunity to pick up litter, too.

Bring your handsaws, loppers and gloves and wear thick-soled boots/shoes and long pants.

The prairie will be wearing the green for sure. Don't wait 'til St. Pat's on Sunday, wear green to the workday on Saturday, too!

Please RSVP: You are essential! We need enough volunteers to assist APRD employees who will be operating the chain saws and applying herbicide. Please reply to:
prairie@arlingtonconservationcouncil.org



Wildscape Update *Molly Hollar*



Above, Early spring beauty compliments of the Mexican plum trees.



Above, Bob Poppelreiter with wheelbarrow to move weeds dug by Jo Poppelreiter from the berm.



Above, Kids from home-schooled families came to weed. Below, Carol Lombard, new Master Gardener 2012 intern, watering horseherb and violets.



Above, Larry Norris and Josephine Keeney weeding in the Wildscape. Below, Kay Sekio and Dawn Hancock on the Wildscape berm.



Awards Put Dallas-Fort Worth Environmental Business, Volunteer and Organization Leaders in the Spotlight *Julie Thibodeaux*

Reprinted from an article on the Green Source DFW Web site.

Green Source DFW rolled out the “green” carpet Tuesday night when it honored local environmental leaders at its inaugural Environmental Leadership Awards. The event, held Feb. 28 at the new Dallas Eco-op, marked the one-year anniversary of the online environmental publication, a project of the Memnosyne Foundation.



Josephine Keeney

More than 100 members of the Dallas-Fort Worth green community turned out for the event, which doubled as the grand opening of the Eco-Op, a promising project located in a former grocery store in the Lake Highlands neighborhood of northeast Dallas. Event-goers mingled and listened to live music by the King James Band at the green co-op, now home to compost experts, recyclers and beekeepers.

Phillip Collins, executive director of the Memnosyne Foundation, addressed the group, along with Dallas Eco-op director Heather Rinaldi and Green Source DFW editor Brandolon Barnett.

According to Barnett, the Green Source DFW online contest generated intense activity on the publication’s website and interest in the community. About 1,400 people cast a vote, voting twice on average. In addition, 18,247 unique users viewed the page showcasing the nominees.

“That’s a lot of eyes viewing and celebrating the work of local activists and groups helping to make DFW a more sustainable community,” said Barnett.

The Volunteer Award went to Josephine Keeney, who has been active in the Arlington Conservation Council and the North Central Texas Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Keeney is known for her dedicated work at the Molly Hollar Wildscape and the new O. S. Gray Natural Area in Arlington.

For the Grass Roots Group or Organization Award, Jim Schermbeck accepted the award for Downwinders at Risk, a grassroots organization that advocates for clean air quality in North Texas. The group was formed in 1993 to protest the burning of hazardous waste at the Midlothian cement kilns. Since then, it’s been involved in a variety of clean air fights, including relocating the Exide Technologies battery recycling plant in Frisco, eliminating regional smog and addressing air pollution generated by fracking practices.

The Entrepreneur Award was given to Bonnie Bradshaw of 911 Wildlife LLC, a wildlife control company in Texas founded in 2006. The company founded



Winners of the first annual Green Source DFW Environmental Leadership Awards. From left to right, Grier Raggio, Josephine Keeney, Bonnie Bradshaw, and Jim Schermbeck.

by wildlife rehabilitators offers humane solutions for homeowners and property managers and prevents native Texas wildlife from being orphaned, injured, relocated or euthanized. The organization has saved more than 21,000 native animals since its founding.

The awards themselves were stout monuments of crystal, standing a foot tall with the names of this year’s winners and the Memnosyne Foundation logo engraved in gold. Custom designed by Mary Ann Thompson-Frenk, founder of the Memnosyne Foundation which funds Green Source DFW, the awards recognize the hard work of those who are making DFW more greener.



Jim Schermbeck

Adventures in Urban Beekeeping Danny Kocurek



Having mastered the art of urban chicken wrangling, I have now set my sights on becoming a beekeeper. I have thus far learned that bees are immensely more complicated than chickens, and that I have a long way to go.

Like most of my adventures, this one started with my wife. You may remember that the chickens were also her idea. And you may be wondering why a vegan should want to raise chickens and bees, neither of whose products she will eat. I, however, have learned not to ask those questions.

I began with reading everything I could find and watching lots of YouTube videos. Eventually, I determined that no two beekeepers believe or practice the same beekeeping techniques and strategies; there is very little science to back up any practices; nor are there any standards to follow. However, every beekeeper is certain that s/he is doing it the right way.

Luckily I happened across a very kind, knowledgeable and humble beekeeper who has agreed to mentor me. We had our first session last week. I had on all my protective equipment, which is so bulky I think I could have removed a little and still safely survived on Venus. When the bees decided I was not their friend, however, I was very glad to be fully enclosed.

We opened the hives, identified drones and workers, learned how to tell honey stores from pollen stores and discussed lots of theories and ideas. I think a few hundred sessions more and I will be ready to keep my own hive. I will keep you posted on my progress, if I make any.



Thanks to Last Month's Speaker

Our speaker last month was Lorrie Anderle, Arlington's Recycling Coordinator. Lorrie delivered an animated update on city recycling to a packed house and fielded numerous questions with her usual mix of knowledge and humor.

Great Backyard Bird Count at Southwest Nature Preserve

Despite ugly weather on Saturday of GBBC weekend, Sunday was great and the 2012 GBBC count at Southwest Nature Preserve totaled 28 species. This was the 5th GBBC event at SWNP since starting in 2006 (no count in 2007):

Blue jay (1)
Crow (7)
Dark-eyed junco (11)
Cedar waxwing (14)
Eastern bluebird (1)
Yellow-rumped warbler (3)
White-throated sparrow (6)
House finch (2)
Carolina wren (2)
American coot (2)
Great blue heron (1)
Gadwall (11)
Ring-necked duck (8)

Mallard (9)
Bufflehead (4)
Black vulture (2)
Pied-billed grebe (1)
Northern shoveller (3)
Red-bellied woodpecker (1)
Mourning dove (2)
Carolina chickadee (3)
Tufted titmouse (1)



Goldfinches in January

The goldfinches have arrived at last,
Fugitives from Minnesota snow,
Eagerly soaking up the Texas warm,
Feeding on all the free seed
I dole out every day.
No bigger than a wren, each one
Appears inconsequential;
But as a swirling yellow flock,
Flooding the air with feathered forms,
They dominate our birdy deck,
Landing here and there and everywhere,
A dizzy dissertation as they go
On strength of numbers,
The power of persistence,
The forcefulness of full-tilt feasting.

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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, March 14
 7:00 pm

Jm Duncan
Photovoltaics in the 21st Century



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