

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

February Meeting

Status of the Battle for Clean Air in North Central Texas

Jim Schermbeck,
Executive Director,
Downwinders at Risk

Wednesday, February 13, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



Jim has fought many battles in his time as a community organizer and clean air advocate. Some have stalled or faltered while others have ended in victories that have changed the environmental landscape of Texas.

Jim urges everyone to get involved by supporting local groups and causes.

"You're already involved [anyway] if you're breathing air in DFW. The question is, what are you going to do about breathing air that is neither legal nor safe..."

Source: Green Source DFW - Rita Cook

Bring something for the raffle.

Bits & Pieces

Very Bad News

A new study has shown that cats are the primary killers of birds by a wide margin. One estimate indicates that up to 500 million birds are killed each year by cats — about half by pets and about half by feral cats. We worry a lot about wind turbines, but they kill about 440,000 annually. Cats: another dangerous invasive exotic.



Today's Inspirational Moment



What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?

Henry David Thoreau

More than a Christmas Thing

Looks like all over the world the 1500 species of mistletoe are contributing to the health and diversity of forests in unexpected ways. For one thing, it's a food source for lemurs in Madagascar to bluebirds in the US West, crucial because the lowly parasite reproduces all year long and the berries can make a big difference in lean times.



Stars in Their Eyes, Dung on Their Feet

Now we learn that African dung beetles roll their dung balls away from competitors by orienting to the Milky Way. Incredibly cool, but we have to wonder if our local species do this — or how, given our massive light pollution. Can anyone remember the Milky Way?



Annual Potluck & Business Meeting



Above left to right, past president Grace Darling, Julia Burgen, and Molly Hollar.

Another year, another great bunch of food and even some business.

This year we gave our special thanks to the Kolankos for all their help with the July 4th float and we offered our long-overdue gratitude to Julia Burgen for environmental accomplishments much too numerous to mention.

Thanks to new ACC president Danny Kocurek for arranging the room.



Below, left to right, JoAnn Kolanko, Mike Kolanko, Grace Darling.



Below, Julia Burgen.



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

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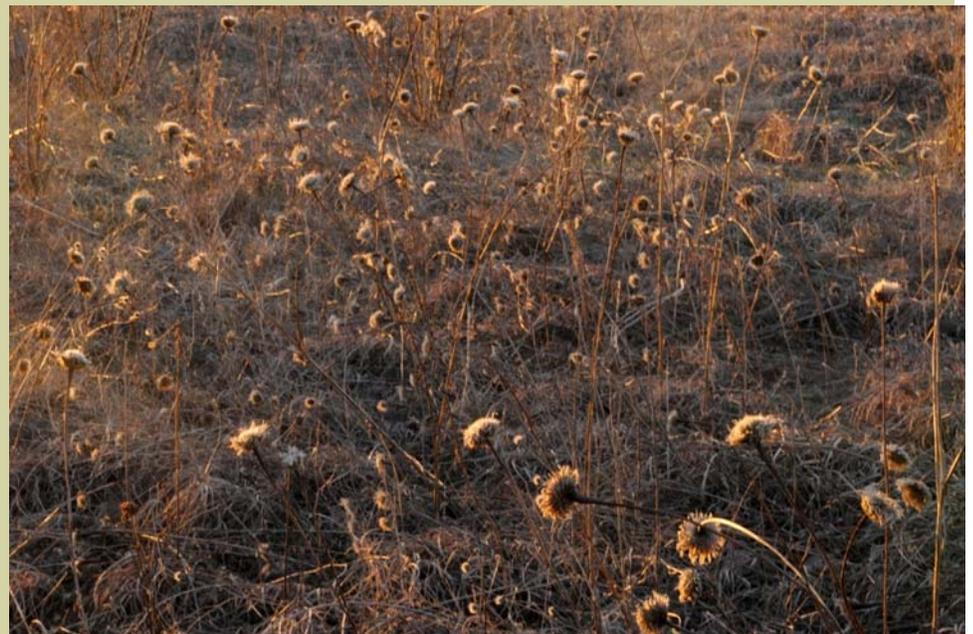
New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Photos by Wesley Miller

**Workday Saturday, February 16, 9:00 am – noon.
Be There!**

**3rd Saturdays on the Prairie
return!**

Let's take back more of the prairie on February 16: Arlington Parks and Recreation Department is planning to bring their chainsaws to take down some of the larger trees and make fast work of smaller ones. Volunteers are needed to wield loppers and to clear the brush and tree materials after cutting. Since we'll be partnering closely with APRD and in case of inclement weather, please RSVP to prairie@arlingtonconservationcouncil.org.

Please wear sturdy soled shoes/ boots and long pants. Bring gloves, loppers and hand saws if you have them. Please bring your own water, but refills will be provided. We'll work up an appetite, so plan to meet for lunch afterwards!



Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



While the wildscape enjoys its winter dormancy, volunteers have kept busy watering and mulching newly planted vegetation. In addition, some soaker hoses have

been replaced due to wear and tear or being pulled out by curious passersby.

Wildscape namesake Molly Hollar expects to lose a few trees due to the drought. Volunteers plan to replace some

of the shade trees (bur oaks, chinquapin oaks) in February and will continue to add understory trees in ongoing habitat restoration.

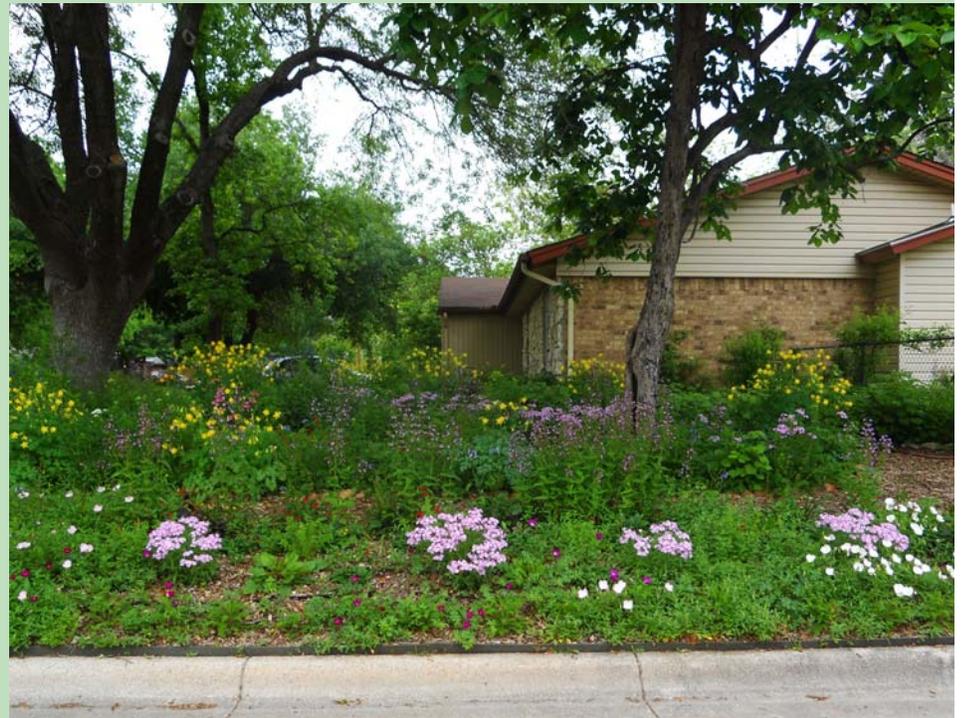
Josephine Keeney provided our educational mini-class in January on how she transformed her typical suburban yard into a native plant haven. Handouts included a plant list and useful how-to information.

Hester Schwarzer will give the mini-class in February on Texas native plants that she considers perfect for home

landscaping. She will repeat the presentation at the annual privet pull — give Molly what she always wants on her birthday, less privet in the world — Feb. 23, 9 am –noon.

This year the wildscape volunteers will help eradicate this invasive non-native plant from the O.S. Gray Natural Area, 2021 W. Abram St. After a satisfying morning of ripping plants out by the roots, the caravan rolls on to Mijo’s for lunch and birthday cake. If you volunteer only once a year, this is a can’t-miss event.

Note: Wildscape photos didn’t quite show up this month, so here is a look at the remarkable yard of Josephine and Frank Keeney. Photos by the Keeneys.



More Wildscape Peggy Quinn

What are those strange little pictures glued to things in the wildscape?

On your next visit to the wildscape at Veterans Park, use your smartphone's QR code scanner to explore this beloved gem in our fair city. Start at the kiosk near the south parking lot, where you'll find a description of the new self-guided tour.

How did this marvelous tour come about? A few years ago dedicated volunteer Linda Zombeck created just such a thing. But there was never enough money to make the signs to assist visitors in using it.

Then last summer, while creating the award-winning ACC float for the Fourth of July parade, Dick Schoech and Frank Keeney got to discussing QR coding. How they made the jump from painting float cardboard to using do-it-yourself barcodes is for you to figure out. Next

thing you know, they had created some parade code, printed it big and attached it to the float so folks along the route could link to the wildscape website and learn more about our organizations. Hooray!

Now everything's coming together. Linda's original tour has been reworked and integrated with a map contributed by Texas Parks & Wildlife's John Davis. Dick Schoech and Molly Hollar walked the tour and installed QR codes at the 12 stations on the map. On a recent rainy Saturday, Molly and I and our technical consultant, Benjamin Kocurek, tested the package. What do you know — it worked!

Test it for yourself. Head to Veterans Park with your smartphone and give it a try. (Cellphone reception is sometimes poor in the wildscape. Hold your mouth just right and you'll get through.)

The QR codes have another advantage in that users can add comments. Plus, a report can be generated on the number of people scanning each code and visiting the wildscape website.

For example, between December 16 and January 16 the site had 131 visitors who viewed 373 pages. New visitors accounted for 87 percent of this total. Most visitors used their home computers to access the site, but 21 percent used an Apple smartphone, 11 percent an Android smartphone, and 2 percent a Windows phone.

We can even see which tour spots are the most popular. Are you bored with this? Don't be. These are telling statistics for the number crunchers at Arlington Parks and Recreation on the importance of the wildscape and why it deserves city support.

Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 17 at SW Nature Preserve Jan Miller

You can participate in this national event by counting birds anywhere between February 15 through February 18. For details about the GBBC, see www.birdsource.org/gbbc/.

And you can count even more birds at the Southwest Nature Preserve GBBC Event on Sunday, February 17 from 9:00 am until noon. Meet at the southwest parking lot (under construction) on Bowman Springs Road.

Participate in the 16th annual GBBC event by walking the trails through post



oak woodlands, savannahs, grasslands and around 4 ponds at this 58-acre city preserve. A wide variety of birds has nearly always been reported here, with a record of 30 species counted in 2009. Everyone's welcome!

If you have them, bring binoculars and bird guides; if you have extras, bring to share. Please wear long pants and sturdy shoes/boots. Please note that although there are trails, the park is undeveloped and there are no facilities (water or restrooms). We'll meet for lunch after-

wards to compare our species list and bird counts with those from previous years. Results will be reported to GBBC.

Reach the site by heading west on I-20 and take the Bowman Springs Road exit. Go south and you'll see the parking area on the left just as the road begins to curve to the right.

An RSVP would be appreciated, in case of inclement weather and to gauge parking needs, but isn't required. Contact jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net or 817/988-9341 for more information.



Lessons Learned Since Kindergarten Grace Darling

I was asked recently to speak to a group of local gardeners about a topic of my choice. Facing terminal embarrassment were I to talk about a garden-related subject, I suffered a rare moment of introspection during which I reviewed my accrued life experience of many (never mind how many) years looking for something I actually know something about. To my surprise, one answer kept jumping ahead of the pack: meetings.

Throughout my adult working life, meetings were a boring but unavoidable necessity. In the corporate world I was a tiny member of, it was evident that the busiest people tended to hold the shortest meetings, while those nearer the bottom of the pecking order seemed to favor protracted discussions, apparently reveling in the time spent away from their jobs. That observation was interesting from a sociological standpoint, but of little use to me because I still was forced to attend. Since my retirement 4 years ago, however, meetings have become an almost daily part of my life as a community volunteer, only now it's my choice whether to endure or enjoy them. Here I'd like to share with you some tips that will make that choice easier.

ID your interests. This could also be titled Know Thyself. As a precursor to attending a meeting, you join a group, and this is where taste and preferences come into play. Do some soul searching and try to pinpoint your passion(s) before you jump into a group because your neighbor needed a ride or your girlfriend

wanted company. Before joining, calculate the time you'd be required to spend on the group's agenda and be honest with yourself about the time you are willing to commit. If it sounds like it'd take too much time you'd rather spend elsewhere, don't join and spare yourself the guilt trip later.

As a corollary, if you've joined and later find that you don't really enjoy what the group does or cannot devote enough time to it, quit. Unless you plan to run for office, there is no point in building up your résumé with membership in organizations you don't intend to participate in. People can tell when you're dead wood, and it'll come back to haunt you.

Play to your strengths. Not everyone brings the same skills, expertise, likes and dislikes to a group – which is a good thing if the group is to benefit and prosper. Find out what you excel at and are willing to do for the organization, and stick with it. This is not always the same as what you'd like to do: for instance, I'd love to have a beautiful singing voice but unfortunately can't carry a tune in a bucket. By now you probably have a pretty good idea of where your talents lie and what jobs you are best suited for within a group. It's a waste of everyone's time if you struggle with a task you dislike from a sense of obligation; worse, it may lead you to quit the group when a simple job reassignment — finding your niche — might cause you and your group to flourish.

Beware of your limitations. This precept follows logically from the one above, but it bears repeating. If you are good with numbers but your grammar is shaky and you can't spell, don't offer to take on the newsletter. Or, if you like to be outdoors and the task they want you to do keeps you in an office, skip it. If education and being around children is not your thing, don't try to force it – kids will spot a fraud within seconds. Fortunately there are many good teachers who'll be happy to take your place.

Remember, there are many ways you can help with the skills you have; don't overreach. (I am guilty of breaking this commandment with ACC: as a board member, I relished researching issues and writing position papers; as president, my lack of organizational skills and logistics follow-through sometimes caused serious problems.)

Listen to your gut. This one applies not only to jobs but also to personalities: If there is a person in the group you absolutely cannot work with, for whatever reason, just walk away. Facing a frequent irritant will only sour you against the group and lead to a stress ulcer. You can always come back should the situation ever change.

I hope my Brief Guide to Meeting Survival proves useful in your future volunteer activities. Now please put on your thinking caps and let us know how you are prepared to help ACC, because we need you.

Memberships Expired at the End of December

If you haven't renewed, there's still time.

You know how much we need you, so please renew or join today.

Help us bring out the best in Arlington. Thanks.

Wintertime Beekeeping **Danny Kocurek**

Wintertime is one of the most challenging times for beekeeping for many reasons. The most obvious is the cold weather. Bees are able to produce enough heat to keep the colony alive as long as they have sufficient numbers and food to keep up with the energy they are expending. If the beekeeper has gotten too greedy and left them with too little honey, they will need to have supplemental feeding with sugar water. The other problem with the cold weather is that the hive is not supposed to be opened for inspections or feeding if the temperature is less than 50 degrees F. This is obviously a bigger problem for our northern friends but can be an issue here at times.

Most Texas beekeepers feed their bees throughout the winter to not only keep them alive, but to keep them strong. The goal is to have them ready to leap into productivity as soon as the weather warms. The colony shrinks during the winter because the queen drastically reduces her laying. Interestingly, the bees that are born in the winter live much longer than the ones born in summer. A summer bee lives an average of 5 weeks, whereas a winter bee can live for 5 months. All of the male bees are booted out in the fall so the colony is all ladies during the winter. By feeding pollen substitute and sugar water when real pollen and nectar are not available, the

beekeepers are trying to trick the bees into thinking it is spring and ramping up production of new bees. This way they will maximize the number of bees available when the nectar truly starts flowing in the spring and honey production is maximized.

Although it sounds like a lot of work keeping bees in the winter, it still only comes out to a couple of hours a month. However, if you are thinking about taking up beekeeping, it is time to start making plans. Nucleus and full hives need to be ordered and woodenware needs to be assembled in preparation for springtime. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Molly's Birthday Bash & Privet Pull **Danny Kocurek**

Our annual celebration of Molly's birthday and the equally enjoyable destruction of privet is coming soon. As you know, Molly greatly dislikes gifts and attention but loves to see privet being destroyed. Please join us for this wonderful celebration. You can come for an hour, just say hello, or stay for the whole event. Please note that it is not at the Wildscape.

Date - Feb 23rd

Place - OS Gray Natural Area - http://www.arlingtontx.gov/parks/simple/park_osgray.html

Time - 9:00 am – noon

Lunch and cake will follow at Mijo's at 12:30.

Annual Arlington Master Composter Workshop

Learn how to make great compost in your own backyard. Class graduates receive books, workshop materials, and a compost thermometer.

Attendance required on both days.

FREE for Arlington residents; \$20 for nonresidents.

For more information or to register online, visit arlingtontx.gov/environment or call 817-459-6778.

Friday, March 1

6:00 – 9:00 pm.

Saturday, March 2

9:00 am – 4:00 pm.



Note: Your backyard pile will probably be smaller.

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 _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

First-year member \$10.00

Individual \$15.00

Family \$25.00

Supporting \$40.00

Sponsor \$100.00

Lifetime individual \$250.00

Other \$ _____

New member

Renewing member

How did you hear about us? _____

Make checks payable to Arlington Conservation Council. Mail to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216. Contributions and dues are not tax-deductible. Note: If you cannot pay, please let any board member know. The only available newsletter format is electronic, and it can be obtained via email and the Web site.

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Don't Forget!

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Jim Schermbeck
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