

**ARLINGTON  
CONSERVATION  
COUNCIL**

# POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES  
VOLUME 15, NUMBER 3

**APRIL 2014**

**Note:  
Special meeting place  
See below**

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

## **April Meeting A Practical Guide to Rainwater Harvesting**

**Dustan Compton,  
Arlington Water Utilities  
Conservation Program Coordinator,  
and Danny Kocurek,  
ACC President**

**Wednesday, April 2, 7 - 8 pm  
Kocurek house, 3000 Sieber Dr**



Dustan and Danny will explain how to hook up that nice rain barrel you made or bought, how to use it when it gets full, how to deal with common problems, and how to scale it up.

They will demonstrate a 55-gallon rain barrel, a 600-gallon homemade approach and a 3,000-gallon professionally installed system. They also will show how to deal with gutter debris and overflow, how to calculate how much water to expect, and how to attach devices to use your free water.

Refreshments will be provided. Come and have fun. Guests are welcome and encouraged to attend.

## **Bits & Pieces**

### **Gallinippers & Leathernecks**



It's really spring: Crane flies are everywhere — and versatile. They're worldwide, lay eggs on dry land, in marshy spots, in fresh and salt water; the larvae eat algae, rotting stuff, or other animals; the adults can be pests or may not eat at all before

breeding and dying. One common thread: lots of birds, mammals, fishes, and assorted invertebrates eat them.

### **Today's Inspirational Moment**



Every spring  
is the only spring —  
a perpetual astonishment.

*Ellis Peters*

### **Fun with Grass**

Okay, pay attention lawn lovers. Here's what Neil Sperry wants you to do (Star-Telegram, March 22): scalp if you'd like, apply pre-emergent herbicide, apply broadleafed weedkiller, fertilize, apply sphagnum peat moss if you have root rot, apply herbicide for nutsedge, apply a second batch of pre-emergent herbicide 90 days after the first, fertilize again in June. Then relax and maybe roll around in that beautiful lawn. Later you might consider getting a chromosome workup if you're thinking about reproducing.



### From the President Danny Kocurek



#### The War on Science

Many of the battles fought by sustainability advocates are unfortunately against ignorance instead of ideology. This takes many forms, from climate

change denial to lawn watering to changing a light bulb. Failure to understand science is obviously a problem but a bigger problem we face is failure to understand the concept of science.

This may sound strange but there are examples all around us. This morning I heard an interview with a legislative candidate in Dallas who clearly stated that he wanted creationism to be taught in science class. Although this is actually a poorly veiled ruse to establish a state-sponsored religion, it has ramifications that go way beyond simple attempts by the Tea Party to rewrite the constitution. Anyone with a rudimentary understanding of science will find this farcical, but failing to acknowledge and fight against this war on science is dangerous. The general public has a seemingly increasing inability to discriminate between science and religion, or to even understand the

basics of the scientific process. So failing to address every aspect of this war on science makes working towards a more sustainable planet increasingly difficult.

You don't have to march, protest or yell to help. Simply and politely explain the difference between science and religion when you find yourself with someone who doesn't understand.

Keeping quiet implies agreement, and we can't afford it.



## THE POST OAK

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**Blackland Prairie Preserve** Jan Miller. Photos by Wesley Miller



Last month's workday had a great group: Big thanks to James Fuhr and Ricoh coworker George, Larry Lutz and Wes Miller. There wasn't much in bloom yet, so with any luck — and rain — April should be beautiful.



## 3rd Saturday Workday

April 19  
9 am – noon

Early spring wildflowers will surely be blooming, so don't miss 'em! Join us for the whole time or any part you can manage. We'll do a prairie walkabout before leaving for lunch. Please RSVP to [prairie@acctexas.org](mailto:prairie@acctexas.org) in case we need to change plans because of weird weather, etc.

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. Highly recommended: sun protection and bug spray.

For map and directions: <http://goo.gl/maps/W01P9>



## Wildscape Update **Molly Hollar, Marylee Thomason, and John Dycus**

Neither drought, nor freeze, nor heat, nor disc golf stays the bloom of wildscape flowers from the spring completion of their appointed show. Not quite Herodotus, and thank goodness we are not couriers for the Post Office, but the same truth applies.

Wildscape namesake Molly Hollar is pleased to tout the native Texas and indigenous plants blooming despite the coldest winter in the 20 years she has cultivated the Veterans Park acreage. The plants are confused! Some are coming in late. Some that bloomed on

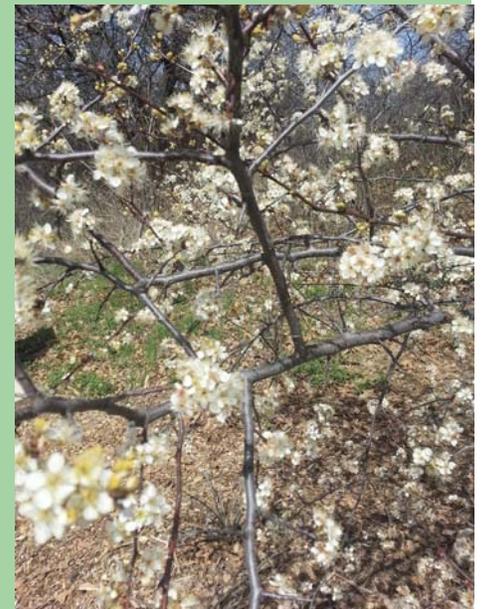
time had their buds nipped. But still they delight us. Nature is grand indeed.

Some shrubs and trees that were not yet established were probably lost to the harsh weather. These natives are a tough lot, though, so expect positive surprises as new shoots appear from plants presumed to be goners. It will rain again. The wonderful volunteers will keep coming. Who knows, the warmer weather might even entice a fresh crop of wildscape caregivers.

The drought likely will worsen, so soaker hoses continue to be added, lest

one drop of water goes off course. The city allows hand watering, but the number of available hands does not allow water to reach all those in need. Soaker hoses are the answer, as one twist of the faucet handle carries moisture to everything down the line.

Biting cold has canceled several workdays, which slowed some projects. With watering the top priority, tasks such as changing the kiosk signs have been neglected. Anyone with a talent in that area, and an aversion to a water hose, is encouraged to step forward.



## Thanks to Our Last Speaker

It was a real pleasure last month to hear from Don Crowson, Arlington Fire Chief and Director of Emergency Management. We're all aware of the possible environmental hazards of urban gas wells. The Chief's presentation reassured us that our firefighters are taking the matter very seriously in terms of inspection, regulation, and training.

In a comprehensive talk, Don conveyed professionalism, a broad knowledge of potential issues, and most of all, willingness to answer our many questions. We're fortunate to have him here.



## Monarch Time

(From Texas Butterfly Ranch blog, March 23, 2014. Submitted by Julia Burgen.)

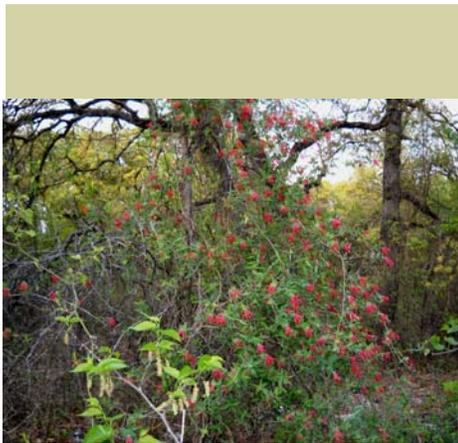
Right on time: First of season monarchs arrive in San Antonio

Reports of Monarch butterfly sightings in South Texas are hitting email lists, the web and social media this week, as the hardy orange-and-black butterflies begin their massive departure from Michoacán, Mexico, making their multi-generational journey north.

"The massive leaving is occurring right now!" wrote Journey North correspon-

*continued on page 6*

# Southwest Nature Preserve Jan Miller



Spring has sprung at SWNP — at least it smelled like spring with Mexican plums in bloom.

There are many needs at our latest preserve and a group has formed to address them. The Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve has big goals (invasive plant management, trail management, erosion control, public outreach, organizational planning and more) and could use your help. If you're interested in being part of the Friends group, contact [prairie@acctexas.org](mailto:prairie@acctexas.org).

Here's what's coming up:

**Friends dinner meeting**

Tuesday, April 8, 6:30 pm  
Southwest Branch Public Library  
3311 SW Green Oaks Blvd (east of Park Springs and west of Bowen)

**UTA's Big Event at SWNP**

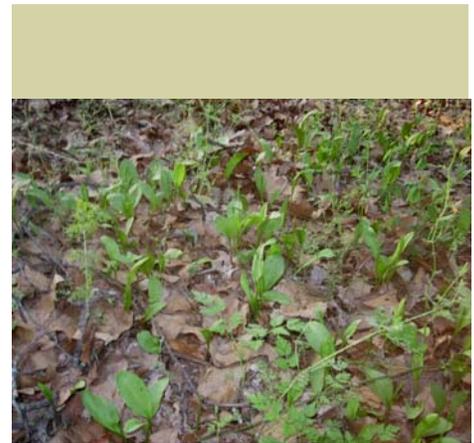
Saturday, April 12  
We'll need help to guide UTA student volunteers for a major cleanup.

**2nd Thursday workday (new)**

April 10

**4th Saturday workday (new)**

April 26



## Nature Walk at OS Gray Natural Area

Join us on Saturday, April 12, at 9 am for an outdoor educational experience.

Ever wonder what kind of trees, flowers, and grasses you see while walking through OS Gray Natural Area? Well, you can find out on April 12 when Texas Master Naturalist Jim Varnum will lead a nature walk through the park. Jim's walks are always very interesting, educational, and informative for anyone who has an interest in nature, from the casual park visitor to the advanced



Master Naturalist. Be ready for photo opportunities.

Location - OS Gray Natural Area, 2021 W. Abram Street, Arlington, TX 76013

Park Web page: <http://naturallyfun.org/os-gray-natural-area>

Friends of OS Gray Natural Area: <https://www.facebook.com/OSGrayNaturalArea>

## Monarch Time continued from page 4

dent Estela Romero from Morelia, Mexico, on March 13, as millions of butterflies fled their roosts. “Monarchs are clouding our town, flying by the towers of our downtown churches in a majestic performance as if dancing to music!”

Romero provides regular dispatches from the ancestral roosting sites to the educational organization that tracks the Monarch and other migrations. Read Romero’s updates at Butterfly Ranch Web site (<http://texasbutterflyranch.com/>).

The butterflies leave Mexico each year right around the Equinox, which occurred



*Monarch butterflies drop to the ground in a mating frenzy upon departing their roosts in Michoacán. Photo by Estela Romero via Journey North*

at precisely at 11:57 AM CDT in San Antonio on Thursday.

The butterflies get their cues from the sun, rouse themselves from a semi-hibernative state, and mate.

Then they start heading north, following the blooming flowers that provide fuel in the form of nectar in search of milkweed — the only plant on which they will lay their eggs and be able to continue their life cycle. The “Texas Funnel” — South Texas and the Hill Country — is often the first stop for egg-laying, and thus begets the first generation of new migrating Monarchs.

## First Rain of Spring

John Blair

It is the Ides of March;  
And, lying here in bed  
Feeling sorry for myself  
About a painful tooth,

I hear the sound of rain,  
First hard rain of the year.  
Wind moans in the yard  
Past corners of the house,

Ringing mellow chimes  
That rarely sing  
Since I hung them  
In an angle of the deck.

Fat drops drum fast  
Upon the roof, misting my view  
Of plum and quince,  
Wisteria and rose.

Trees, still bare of leaves,  
Creak a bit; squirrels scold  
From under eaves; well-fed birds  
Chirp within the hollies by the path.

As sweet as anything  
By Brahms or Liszt  
This soothing melody –  
This symphony of Spring.

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## Plastic, paper included in bag ban approved by Dallas Council

Excerpted from an article on the WFAA Web site by Jason Whitely.  
Posted March 28

DALLAS — Beginning January 1, 2015, grocery stores and retailers in the City of Dallas will start charging customers five cents for every paper and plastic bag they use.

The City Council narrowly approved the partial ban on single-use carryout bags Wednesday morning.

The law bans the bags at all city facilities, events, or properties. In addition, it requires retailers to charge customers an environmental fee of five cents per bag. The proposal to give businesses the alternative to charge \$1 per transaction was scrapped.

A bag ban had been discussed for more than a year, and was debated in Council chambers for most of the morning before the city secretary recorded the final 8-6 vote.

Council member Dwaine Caraway originally proposed charging 10 cents per bag, but said he compromised and reduced the “environmental fee” to a nickel.

In addition, Caraway originally wanted a full ban on all plastic bags in the city, but did not have the votes for it. “Change is extremely hard, I understand that. But at some point, we have to put our foot down and clean up our environment,” Caraway said.

He and other supporters said the ordinance is a first step to cleaning up Dallas and making it a green city. But opponents said the ordinance will not impact the litter problem since it doesn’t include other types of litter such as Styrofoam containers and aluminum cans.

The new ordinance does not include the following types of single-use carryout bags:

- laundry, dry cleaning or garment bags
- door hangers that solicitors use
- packages of multiple bags used for garbage, pet waste or yard waste
- recyclable paper bags provided by pharmacists or veterinarians with prescriptions in them
- recyclable paper or plastic bags used by restaurants for take-out food

*continued on page 7*

## Bag Ban continued from page 6

Dallas will dedicate five employees and spend \$250,000 this year to educate the public and the city's 20,000 retailers.

...Only two citizens spoke against the ordinance.

...“The vote to approve a five cent plastic and paper grocery bag fee in Dallas is another example of environmental myths and junk science driving poor policy in the plastic bag debate,” said Lee Califf, executive director of the American Progressive Bag Alliance,

which represents bag manufacturers.

“This legislation applies to a product that is less than 0.5 percent of municipal waste in the United States and typically less than 1 percent of litter in studies conducted across the country.”

...One of the big questions is whether the Texas Retailers Association or any other opponents will sue to prevent the city from implementing the new law. The TRA backed out of a suit after Austin adopted a similar plastic bag ordinance.

The TRA is currently asking the Texas attorney general's office for an opinion on whether bag bans are legal.

Another idea opponents floated is whether to collect signatures and put this issue up to a vote as a public referendum.

The bag ban goes into effect on the first day of 2015.

E-mail [jwhitely@wfaa.com](mailto:jwhitely@wfaa.com)

## Green Source DFW Awards 2014 Dick Schoech

ACC was well represented on March 13, 2014, at the Green Source DFW Awards Ceremony at the Dallas Center for Architecture, Downtown Dallas.

ACC members were finalists in two of the six award categories. The Molly Hollar Wildscape was a finalist in the Grass Roots Nonprofit Group or Organization category, and Jan Miller was a finalist for Volunteer of the Year. While both won the popular vote, neither was picked by the judges as the award winner.

Approximately 10 ACC members came out to mingle with other DFW “green movers and shakers” and to support their nominees at the dinner event, which drew 100+ attendees. The Green Source DFW Awards have been held yearly since the organization's founding in 2011, and attendance has



grown over the years to standing-room-only this year.

ACC faced some tough competition. The GSDFW Lifetime Achievement award was presented to longtime environmental philanthropist and activist Margie Jackson Haley.

The Sustainable Nonprofit Professional Award went to veteran Dallas environmental activist Rita Beving, currently an organizer for Public Citizen.

The Sustainable Volunteer Leader Award was presented to animal activist Alexandria Beck, founder of the University of North Texas student group Mean Greens for Animals.

The Sustainable Entrepreneur Award was given to Dallas Edible DFW Publisher Nanci Taylor.

And the Grassroots Nonprofit Award was presented to Texas Campaign for the Environment - Dallas Office.

## Apartments: Environmental Pros and Cons Roy Miliner

As America changed how we live and work, Arlington's housing reflected those changes. Sixty years ago Arlington was a bedroom community between Dallas and Fort Worth with a small college and good schools. The majority of the people worked in Dallas or Fort Worth because employment opportunities here in the city were scarce. Housing was pretty straightforward, with a lot of small, 900- to 1200-

square-foot houses as the primary structures and larger homes in what were then the outlying fringes. State highway 303 marked the southern boundary of the city, and Mansfield was a small country town way south of Arlington. Most adults lived in family settings; single living was not the norm then. Water conservation was not ever talked about with the many creeks coursing throughout.

To say that times have changed would be a major understatement. A few demographic facts gleaned from the Pew Research Center and the Huffington Post to illustrate the changes in our country: In 1960 America, the proportion of married young adults was 72%, while by 2010 it had dropped to an all-time low of 31%. At the other end of the age

*continued on page 8*

## Apartments continued from page 7

spectrum, older adults are living longer and many live alone after the loss of a partner. Women today marry for the first time at an average age of 27, and the overall percentage of married adults is now 51% of the population.

The local transformation began with General Motors' first Texas plant at the eastern end of town and the many auto workers, support personnel and dealership staff it attracted, who soon needed a place to live. At about the same time, Six Flags amusement park was built as a temporary money maker for the developers, who really wanted to create a major industrial center to capitalize on its strategic location between Fort Worth and Dallas. Not long after, the small Arlington State College became part of the A&M System before joining the UT System, and by 1960 the city was experiencing the fastest growth spurt in the country, its population doubling every 12 years or so. The increased prosperity brought about a fundamental change in the family structure when women went to work outside the home; both spouses now had to bring in income to maintain the economic level the household had grown to expect.

All these factors created a rapid change in how and where we lived. New housing types started to pop up — townhomes, condos, and apartments — to help meet the rising demand and accommodate new living standards. Large lawns were time-consuming to maintain and were not a priority for arriving residents. Two-car garages became commonplace as man and wife often commuted to work separately in the major cities to the east and west.

The Arlington housing boom of the 60s and 70s was ultimately unsuccessful because we failed to put together appropriate building standards through this period of rapid growth. Now Arlington is looking at several new housing developments which, with one exception, will replace existing apartments. Given the cost of buying and removing the old structures, as well as expectations for modern amenities and safer building codes, the planned new buildings will per force have a higher

density (number of units per acre) and many will have adjoining parking structures. A lot of people, including some members of the Arlington City Council, are calling these high-density apartments. Having been part of a design team working on a high-rise, high-density, mixed-use project, I can truthfully state that the proposed designs are not "high density."

One quick fact needs to be noted here. Apartments have their own unique construction designation. They are not classified as residential or commercial construction; they are classified as multi-family structures. Federal regulations dictate who can live there (Fair Housing Act); accessibility of the building and units (Americans with Disabilities Act and Fair Housing Act); and fire safety measures (National Association of Fire Protection). City ordinances also determine how they are built.

Let us first address the negative aspects of Arlington's multi-family housing stock. The aging apartments were built at a time of minimal construction standards. The wooden frameworks of most complexes are associated with a higher failure rate than structures built with steel and concrete. Failure — meaning movement — causes slow breakdown of the mechanics of the building and cracks in its skin, allowing loss of heat or air conditioning. The mechanical, electric, and plumbing systems are the main losers, and typically manifest as drainage backups and cracks in the walls. Most old buildings have exterior unit entry, which is not safe; are badly insulated and not designed for energy conservation, with pervasive heating and A/C losses; and have no facilities for recycling as part of the building's waste disposal. Large surface parking lots produce great quantities of stormwater runoff. No thought was given to noise control between floors. These features contribute to a poor living environment and make apartments an undesirable option for a lot of people.

But enough of the bad news. Let's talk about the positives of apartment living. When built correctly, multi-family units save energy. It is a fact that

shared-wall units use far less electricity than single detached houses. A guy in an apartment can keep his thermostat at meat-locker level of 68 degrees during the summer and pay half as much as I would in a well-insulated home with the thermostat set at 80 degrees, mainly because he will have maybe only one exterior wall and few windows. With units all around, there is far less energy lost in heating and cooling. Individually, each multi-family unit takes up considerably less land than does a single family house. Outdoors water usage per unit is also a fraction of an individual home's. If the complex or building has a parking structure, stormwater runoff is vastly reduced. Plus, if properly constructed in compliance with modern ordinances, the building is much safer and efficient than it was even a decade ago.

In the 6-year project that I was fortunate to work on, we were able to specify a lot of energy-saving items throughout the building. We incorporated dual-flush toilets and low-flow shower heads and faucets in all the units. We used LED and low-wattage fixtures throughout the public spaces as well as within the units. We had two trash/recycle rooms on each floor with connecting chutes that went to commercial dumpsters on the ground floor. We also reserved the first floor for retail in the entire two-block site, which was already partially rented before construction was complete. The five-story underground parking structure was topped with a pool and landscaped recreation area on the surface. The owners did not want to seek LEED certification but the building was loaded with green features, and at a cost only slightly higher than for conventional construction.

I hope Arlington city officials have learned a lesson from the past and that this new wave of development will be guided by principles of good environmental and energy-saving design coupled with high construction standards and best management practices for sustainability in planning and operation. We must build structures for the future and think green to help foster it.

## 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 _____ How did you hear about us? _____	First-year member \$10.00 Individual \$15.00 Family \$25.00 <span style="float: right;">New member <input type="checkbox"/></span> Supporting \$40.00 Sponsor \$100.00 <span style="float: right;">Renewing member <input type="checkbox"/></span> Lifetime individual \$250.00 Other \$ _____
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**THE POST OAK**  
 Arlington Conservation Council  
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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, April 2

7:00 - 8:00 pm

Dustan Compton and Danny Kocurek

A Practical Guide to Rainwater Harvesting