

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POST OAK

ACC WORKS TO PROTECT ARLINGTON'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH EDUCATION,
COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND ADVOCACY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 8

SEPTEMBER 2016

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September Meeting

Bird Migration

And what we can expect to discover
here in North Central Texas

Charley Amos,
Master Naturalist & Accomplished Birder

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



Charley has been birding over 30 years and has attracted over 90 species of birds to his yard. Charley travels extensively, always tracking that infrequently seen bird in nature, while visiting other wildlife along the way. He just returned from an exhilarating adventure in Costa Rica.

Charley is past president of the Fort Worth Audubon Society, and as a guide for hikes featuring bird spotting and identification, he's in demand statewide.

Bring Something for the Raffle

Bits & Pieces

Light as a Kite

What is that magical thing about kites? Gotta be the whole package: sleek shape plus unearthly buoyancy. Seems like they've all got it: from a gang of Swallow-tails swarming low in the Florida

Keys to dingy Black kites floating through the filthy sky of a Bangkok sunrise or hovering over a pungent dump by a Nairobi café. Or just a couple of suburban Mississippi kites casually rising like escaped balloons on a perfect September day.

And they eat grasshoppers — perfect!



Today's Inspirational Moment



Nothing is more beautiful than the loveliness of the woods before sunrise.

George Washington Carver

Beetle Blast

Nature is sort of all around us, even in a huge parking lot. This hydrodynamic creature, possibly a water scavenger beetle, might have flown to a light from a nearby creek before hitting the asphalt.

It's the aquatic larvae that lead more complicated lives than the adults. They hatch from a floating egg mass, crawl out onto land to pupate in soil, then return to water where they eat just about anything, including fish and mosquito larvae.



From the President Jan Miller

As an alternative to these crazy times, marked by goofy weather, uncertain political futures, and looming environmental crises, consider a Nature Rx¹ break! According to the calendar and recent weather, fall actually seems to be on the way, so take advantage and visit a local park or contemplate the marvels of your own environs, even if it's just a potted plant on the balcony. Maybe you had a chance this summer to visit a state park or celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, but if not, now's your chance. Even if you can't get away, take a virtual trip with Michael Smith's recent blog post² on nature's resilience.

The fall season brings new activities, so mark your calendar. Bird migration is underway (don't miss Charley Amos' September 7 ACC program) and sightings are increasing already. Monarch butterflies will also be on the move if they aren't already. And EcoFest³ 2016 is set for Saturday, September 17, with new hours: 10 am – 2 pm. Eco-fun for kids, with displays and vendors for adults too. (Tip: Free mulch this year and you can pre-register for free native trees.) ACC once again presents the big Fix-It-Green demonstration, with solutions for saving our natural resources and your \$\$\$\$. Volunteers will be needed to prep the displays the week before and to greet attendees during EcoFest. It's a great opportunity to learn more about ACC and great fun, so please [join us](#).

¹ <http://www.nature-rx.org>

² <https://greatrattlesnakehwy.wordpress.com/2016/08/21/resilience-and-other-qualities-seen-on-a-walk-in-the-woods/>

³ <https://naturallyfun.org/component/k2/1271/ecofest-returns-to-arlington-sept-17>

Remember ACC's September 7 meeting, and don't forget to invite a friend or neighbor. Thanks.

THE POST OAK

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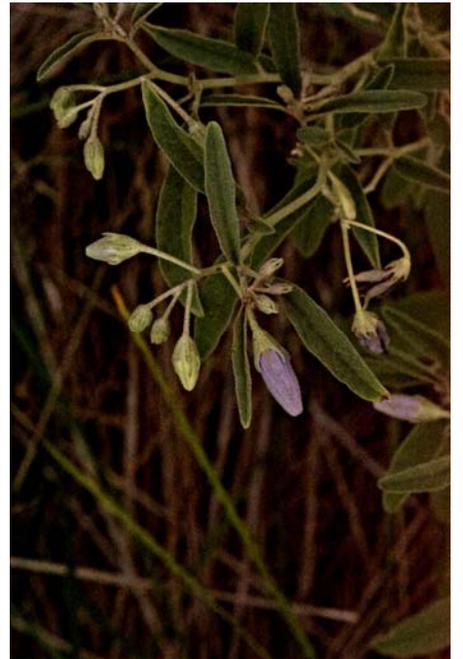
Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve photos by Wes Miller



In the plains the grass grows tall, since there is no one to cut it.

There is no one to water it either.

Vera Nazarian



Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason

The world is full of superheroes, and not just in the movies. Aquaman and his sidekick, Aquagirl, aka Kevin Donovan and wife, Carrie, showed up at the wildscape on the hot Saturday workday in August.



Carrie and Kevin Donovan

Kevin, a Master Naturalist, was scheduled to give the miniclass at the end of the morning, but he and Carrie, likewise a Master Naturalist, came early and pitched right in.

Ann Knudsen described the situation this way: "With the extreme heat and no rain to speak of, everything was desperate for water, even the very drought-tolerant plants. So watering, watering, watering was the order of the day."

Carrie grabbed a hose and Kevin, having irrigation systems knowledge, helped Joe Martinez with repairing sprinklers. They had not run in so long several heads were buried under plants and many were clogged. Oh happy day to get that area watered!

Kevin gave an excellent presentation titled "Working with the City on the Parks' Natural Areas." He described extensive efforts being made to develop policies for the city to encourage and allow volunteers to maintain these regions.

Everyone wanted to know how to help. "Go to Parks Board meet-

ings, which are open to the public, and take your friends," Kevin suggested. "Let the board know that these natural areas are important to you. Call with positive comments about how much you enjoy them." And chat up casual acquaintances in the grocery line, at the post office or gym with something like "Hey, I was just out at so-and-so natural area, it was beautiful. But I wish more people were aware of it. We need to make sure the city keeps it." Don't be shy. Even superheroes need a little help.



Theresa Usery and Peggy Crist

Other superheroes who joined the regulars at the wildscape in August included Master Gardener Diane Taylor and Master Naturalist Nikki Ordoñez and her daughter, Cheyenne. When Wesley Miller intrigued Cheyenne with a picture of a spider, she immediately got out her own camera.

Pretty soon she excitedly showed Ann Knudsen a baby spiny lizard she photographed. No better classroom than the wildscape!



Cheyenne and Nikki Ordoñez

On July 9, two young women and two young men from Arlington First Baptist Church 20-Somethings class came and worked their hearts out. When they finished clearing the overgrowth from the Woodland area (formerly the Erosion area), they were eager for more, so they cleaned up piles of trash left by parties around the pavilion.

This was one of the hardest working groups ever to volunteer at the wildscape, plus they said they love toiling for a cause even in sweltering weather. Next time, they promised to bring more people.

Superheroes. Molly attracts them, you know.



Diane Taylor

Environmental Dates Julia Burgen

September

Noteworthy dates for our public lands and other special places and persons

**Guard it well, for it is far more precious than money...
once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price.**

Ansel Adams

- September 3 52nd Anniversary of the Wilderness Act of 1964. One of the grandest concepts for any modern society to declare. Please take the time to examine the details and importance of this act via your computer search engine. Search National Park Service and then Wilderness Biographies for respite and hope from a too-busy, frazzled day.
- September 12 52nd Anniversary of Canyonlands National Monument
- September 24 110th Anniversary of Devils Tower National Monument
- September 25 126th Anniversary of Sequoia National Park
- September 27 National Public Lands Day

BONUS DAY

To remember my favorite place: October 1 126th Anniversary of Yosemite National Park

SOIL

What does the soil
On which we're born
Do to our souls?

The soil on which
We live, on which
We set our feet

When we are children
Playing, or farmers,
Gardeners sowing seeds.

I grew up in a river valley
Where soil was brown and warm
And plants sank roots deep.

In my childish games
I got that soil into my pores
Not to be removed by baths.

It left its trace
Some place in me,
Don't you suppose?

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Thanks to Our Last Speaker



At our August meeting Ray Rentschler, Field Operations Administrator for Arlington Animal Services, presented *Dealing with Wildlife*, an animated talk on our types of wild neighbors, how to live with them, and the city's responses to wildlife issues. This was serious business, presented with skill and humor, and the overflow crowd loved it. Thanks, Ray.

Danny Kocurek, left, with Ray Rentschler.

A Teacher's Best Field Trip Secrets...Revealed Carrie Donovan

With the new school year starting I can't wait to start planning field trips at my school. The sad part is that every year our field trip budget shrinks, and there are more limitations set on the number of field trips we can schedule. Teaching at an urban school with no extra financial support also can be challenging.

Do you experience these challenges as well? If so, I'm here to share a couple of my favorite field trip experiences that might be something for you to consider for your students.

Did you know that some of the best field trips are right here in Arlington? These outdoor excursions are either low cost or free. The only thing you need to do is get approval, find funds for bus transportation, set a date, get the right number of chaperones to ensure everyone's safety, permission slips, and take care of other stuff required by the District.

My newest and most memorable field trip was the one to the UTA Compost Site with my Garden/Science Club. I was amazed that this very same group of kids who whine and groan about Science in the classroom was immediately drawn by the mounds of biomass created and managed by Super Master Composter John Darling. My students followed John around like a swarm of bees from mound to mound. Hands were flying high when John asked for volunteers to pick up scoops of organic material here and there to be mixed later with other organic matter to make the famous UTA compost. Their eyes were filled with wonder and awe as John gave them a tour and showed the transformation of leaves, sticks, coffee grounds, pineapple stalks, and other organic matter into a soft, crumbly, black, fresh smelling heap of compost.

While my students waited with anticipation to get their hands in the finished compost, I could see and hear

their "Aha!" moments as we all participated in discussions about energy, the states of matter, the carbon cycle, the water cycle, force and energy, clay soil, minerals, decomposition, and the science word list went on and on.

Could these be the same students who were struggling with vocabulary and science concepts just the other day? Listening to their scientific hypotheses and their what-if statements made them sound like a group of soil scientists actively studying at UTA! I couldn't believe my ears; they were finally getting the outdoor connection of Earth and Life Science with real life outdoor science activities. They even lined up and waited patiently to get their hands dirty to feel the different textures of soil, and the best part was when John gave them the opportunity to take a sample of this freshly made UTA compost home in a "party bag" labeled UTA Compost. You would have thought they were given a bag filled with goodies like candy and toys.

Instead this party bag was filled with the finest compost made from coffee grounds, leaves and vegetable peels!

Before my students said their good-byes, John reminded them that their next job was to take the compost home to nourish their plants and gardens. With smiles beaming from ear to ear, dirty mustaches under their noses, you would have thought they just came back from Six Flags! On our journey back to school, I heard discussions not only about composting but also about UTA! I heard conversations like, "When I go to college, I'm going to UTA." Then another said, "I am, too!"

If you want to have your students experience science concepts in the outdoors, then Walk on the Wildside is for you! WOW is held at the Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park and is sponsored by the Arlington Conservation Council, an all-volunteer organization.

This field trip is very dear to my heart because a group of naturalists came together to organize this field trip over 15 years ago, and I was very fortunate to be a part of the planning process. ACC members set up 5 to 10 stations along a concrete trail at Veterans Park for our students to visit. These stations are staffed by volunteers who are Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, former teachers, or are otherwise active in the community. WOW is open to interested groups and I encourage you, as a teacher or parent, to become involved in this educational event. Make contact with the Arlington Conservation Council to set up a meeting to make a plan to list TEKS Objectives that you would like addressed, and follow up by having your students make thank-you cards.

I hope these suggestions help you plan for outdoor nature experiences for your students. Have fun and remember to keep our secret of the best field trips quiet!

Carrie Donovan is an AISD Science Lab Teacher for grades 2-6 in East Arlington at Goodman Elementary. She's also the Garden Coordinator and a Master Naturalist. Her students, with the help of plant donations, have created Pollinator Gardens in the Goodman Courtyard. The staff, students, and families grow vegetables in raised beds built by August Riehle for his Eagle Scout Project.

Goodman Elementary is also a REAL Schools garden site.

Goodman Elementary is a Master Naturalist approved site, and if you're interested in volunteering, please contact cdonovan@aisd.net.

Editor's note: John Darling respectfully rejects Ms Donovan's claims regarding his personal greatness; compost sells itself.

Southwest Nature Preserve Jan Miller

Friends of SWNP Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, September 20, 7:00 pm

West Arlington Police Service Center, Community Room
2060 W Green Oaks Blvd, Arlington TX

Parking is available in front of the building, via Ron McAndrew Drive.



Water Entomology and Streamside Ecology: "Does what you can't see in the water bug you?"

by Keira Quam (TPWD) and Mike McCorkhill (FW Fly Fishers and TPWD angler education volunteer)

This program is designed to teach adults how to teach kids about connections between aquatic invertebrates and the health of the water. You will learn easy-to-use and effective aquatic species collection, how to determine species types and numbers and what their presence or absence may mean in our nature preserve pond environment. This is a demonstration and applied hands-on class, so expect to use what you learn in our follow-up activities on Saturday.

Water Entomology and Streamside Ecology: Part 2

Saturday, September 24, 9:30 am

Southwest Nature Preserve, 5201 Bowman Springs Rd, Arlington

Use what you learned on Tuesday night as we work with a middle school science class in the water at the Preserve.

RSVP required!

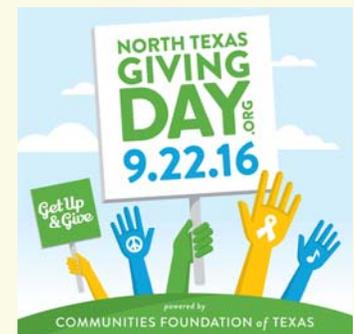
Sign up with Keira at the meeting on Tuesday or email her at

Keira.Quam@tpwd.texas.gov

North Texas Giving Day and Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve

Thursday, September 22, 6:00 am – midnight

Please remember Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve on North Texas Giving Day. Your donation will help us receive extra funds: Every gift of \$25 or more will be increased through bonus funds and prizes.



Make your gift on September 22 by finding us online at <https://northtexasgivingday.org/npo/green-arlington-foundation>. You can also find us by going to www.NorthTexasGivingDay.org and searching for "Green Arlington Foundation" or "Southwest Nature Preserve."

For details, see www.swnp.org or e-mail info@swnp.org

Sunflowers Sway to the Sun's Rhythm Deborah Netburn



The article below from the Los Angeles Times Science File was written by Deborah Netburn and reprinted here in abridged form courtesy of Marylee Thomason. For more information, email Deborah.netburn@latimes.com.

Sunflowers may be rooted in the ground, but every day young sunflowers trace the path of the sun, turning their faces 180° from east to west. At night they turn back from the way they came ready to face the dawn. Mature sunflowers do not turn but maintain an eastward orientation.

The observation that juvenile sunflowers track the sun is at least as old as Darwin, who reported it more than 100 years ago. How and why remained a mystery until Stacey Harmer, circadian biologist, and her collaborators decided to find out.

The group observed that the plants can pace their movements. During the short nights of mid summer, the flowers took just 8 hours to swing their heads from west to east.

However, during the longer fall nights, it took them 12 hours to accomplish the same feat.

To find out how the plants moved, the scientists marked both sides of the stems with a Sharpie pen at regular intervals. Using a time-lapse camera, they were able to see that the east side of the stem grew longer during the day, turning the plant's head to the west. At night, the reverse was true – the west side elongated, causing the plant to face the east.

What was controlling this growth pattern? Was it the movement of the sun or some kind of internal clock? To answer this question the researchers moved dwarf sunflowers into a controlled lighting environment. Even in constant, fixed overhead lighting, the plants maintained the same head-turning rhythms for several days.

Another experiment exposed the sunflowers to a 30-hour light cycle. This thoroughly confused them. They wound up turning to the west well before the transition to dark, and the plants moved erratically. The conclusion from these two experiments is that sunflowers are controlled by light and some kind of circadian clock.

But why do they turn to face the sun? For 100 nights an experimenter turned a number of juvenile potted sunflowers so they would be facing west in the morning. The manipulated plants grew to be 10% smaller than the control group. And the mature plants, which stayed facing east? They attracted five times the

FEEDING BIRDS

It feels good,
It delights me,
To see the birds
Eating at my feeders,

Finches flocking
For the seeds
Just inches from my eyes
Through the window.

They somehow know
I'm not a risk to them
Despite proximity
And size.

I do believe
That birds, despite
Short lives,
Develop flock lore,

Learning in some wise
While still in fledgling feathers
The hairy human in the house
Brings the food.

©2016 John I. Blair

number of pollinators compared with those whose pots were rotated so that they faced west. Further experiments showed that the pollinators were attracted to the warmer, east-facing flowers.

The scientists uncovered many of the sunflowers' secrets. Next, lead researcher Stacey Harmer plans to study which genes regulate the sunflowers' dramatic movements.

In Case You Missed It Grace Darling

Millions of bees dead after aerial Zika spraying

The headline in *The Washington Post* left me speechless. It seems that officials of Dorchester County, South Carolina, last Sunday ordered aerial spraying with Naled, a common insecticide that kills mosquitoes on contact, in overreaction to reports of several dozen cases of travel-related Zika in the state. “By one estimate, at a single apiary . . . 46 hives died on the spot, totaling about 2.5 million bees.” Consider the many millions of non-honey bee pollinators and other beneficial insects that must have perished that day and try not to weep. Let's make sure it doesn't happen here, okay?

Antibacterial soaps no good, says FDA

In 2013 the Food and Drug Administration gave soapmakers a year to show that adding antibacterial chemicals did anything at all to help their products kill germs. Now we have the answer: They don't. Companies will have a year to take the ingredients – primarily tri-

closan, used in 93% of “antibacterial” products – out of soaps and dishwashing liquids. “Manufacturers did not demonstrate that the ingredients are both safe for long-term daily use and more effective than plain soap and water,” said the FDA report. “In fact, some data suggests that antibacterial ingredients may do more harm than good over the long term.”

A new kind of solar roof

In the wake of SpaceX rocket's fast fire that destroyed the vehicle and its satellite payload last week, Elon Musk is bouncing back with a plan to replace 5 million rooftops in the U.S. with traditional roofing materials integrated with solar cell technology. SolarCity will develop traditional roofs made entirely from solar panels that will be marketed as sustainable, more aesthetically appealing, longer lasting, convenient, and ultimately affordable to the average homeowner. The company believes that by integrating a SolarCity roof with Tesla battery packs, houses so equipped could operate on solar power 24 hours

a day. The key will be the cost of roof replacement: Previous versions of photovoltaic roofs, aka solar shingles, were pricier to buy and install – and less efficient – than regular roofs, and Dow Chemical discontinued the product in June 2016.

Climate change news

After weeks of intense negotiations and on the eve of the G20 summit, the United States and China, the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases, have announced they will formally ratify the [Paris climate change agreement](#). President Xi has vowed to “unwaveringly pursue sustainable development,” while President Obama, for whom the commitment is part of a final push to secure a green legacy for his presidency, declared that “Where countries like China and the United States are prepared to show leadership and to lead by example, it is possible for us to create a world that is more secure, more prosperous and more free than the one that was left for us.” Godspeed, Mr. President.

Serious Backyard Bird

Tired of White-winged doves stuffing themselves at your feeders? You might not enjoy the most violent alternative, a Cooper's hawk, but here it is, compliments of Candy Halliburton and her backyard ecosystem.

We're seeing more Cooper's hawks in suburbia. Some studies indicate that they're more common in cities and suburbs than in their natural forest habitat.

It's not all gravy being a Cooper's hawk, though. Zooming through trees has its downside: In one study almost a quarter of skeletons showed healed-over fractures of chest bones, particularly the wishbone.



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Don't Forget!
Wednesday, September 7
Fielder Museum
7:00 – 8:00 pm

Charley Amos
Bird Migration

