

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES
VOLUME 9, NUMBER 7

AUGUST 2008

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

August Meeting Talking Trash

**Gwen Harper, Recycling Coordinator,
Arlington Independent School District.
Gwen will discuss the AISD recycling
program.**

**Wednesday, August 13, 7:00 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)**



The AISD float in the July 4th parade was made of recyclables and looked great.

Bits & Pieces

Computer Waste

A new law in Texas requires any company that sells computers to provide a free and convenient way for consumers to recycle their old equipment, reports the *Waco Tribune-Herald*.

The law will go into effect September 1. Companies must accept desktop and laptop computers, keyboards, monitors and mice. Manufacturers need only accept products they produced.

Companies may choose how to fulfill the requirement according to their resources. Some options include establishing permanent drop-off sites, holding special collection days or creating a mail-in system.

Today's Inspirational Moment

"I realized that if I had to choose, I would rather have birds than airplanes."

Charles Lindbergh (1902-1974)

Plover Progress

At least one Snowy plover was just running around in the drying beds, along with as many as 17 other species of shorebirds. We're pretty sure it's the height of summer here, but for lots of sandpipers and plovers, breeding season has ended and fall migration is in full swing.



ACC T-shirts Available Soon

Remember how incredibly cool we looked at the last July 4th parade? Now you can be this hip, too, for only \$15.00. By popular demand, the now-classic ACC treefrog green t-shirt will soon be available again. Don't fail to catch this opportunity: Contact Marian Hiler (info is on the back page) and tell her how many you want and what sizes.



From the President John Darling



Captions only this time. I've run out of sentences. (Except that one.)



1. Biodiesel bus resting briefly in Moab, Utah. Great Dartmouth kids touring the country on used cooking oil.
2. Neighborhood enhancement courtesy of Johnson Creek Crossing apartments.
3. Do-it-yourself recycling in Moab.
4. Mystery bucket on Pecan Street across from JCC apartments.
5. Drying beds in August. Snowy plover about 500 yards out.



THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



Great discovery! Wesley Miller recently found and photographed Texas Bluebells* at NYABP last month. This is the first time they have been observed at

NYABP, but given their location, they could have been there all this time, just unseen.

(* Old name: *Eustoma russellianum*. New name: *Eustoma exaltum* subsp. *russellianum*)

Texas bluebells are a showy mid-summer native wildflower, usually sky-blue in color, but ranging from white to deep purple. You may find its hybridized, double-petaled relative in your florist's bouquet as *Lisianthus*. The Botanical Research Institute of Texas tells us they are found in low spots in prairies, low open ground, or disturbed sites throughout most of Texas. Because they bloom in mid-summer and their tiny, dust-like seed need weeks to mature, the plants are frequently lost due to mowing. They may also have highly specific cultural requirements.

This is proving to be a great year for Texas bluebells at many local sites, including Fort Worth's Tandy Hills. In areas with established colonies, the colonies are much larger than in



previous years. Other sites appear to be "new." If you know of other Texas bluebell colonies and how their numbers compare to previous years, contact Jim Varnum (jvarnum@aol.com).

Jim and a few other Master Naturalist volunteers recently braved the 100-degree heat to survey NYABP and found many wand (or green comet) milkweed (*Asclepias viridiflora*) plants in bloom. It's not a showy plant, but the flower is intricate, unusual and like all



milkweeds, a host plant for monarch butterflies.

Arlington Parks and Recreation Department staff have said they have no plans to mow the prairie until this winter. Generally the prairie has been mowed after spring blooms have gone to seed, around late June/early July. But scheduling the annual mowing at different times of the year is a good management tool that doesn't selec-

tively decrease one season's plants over another. This year it will allow the bluebells and other mid-summer plants a chance to grow and seed.

Stay tuned: Fall is coming and hopefully some rain even before then. Fall means cooler temperatures, resumed workdays and a prairie tour. Plan now to visit and make some new discoveries of your own.



Calendar:

Saturday, August 16
8:00 am - noon
Cedar Ridge Preserve (CRP)
Seed Ball Making Party

Come on out for CRP's annual Seed Ball Making Party. We will be making seed balls to sow into the area around the new entrance gates. Bring family and friends. It's lots of fun and kids love it!

What are seed balls? A combination of red clay, humus, seeds and water mixed to a consistency of mud that can be rolled into 3/4-inch spheres. After they dry, they are sown into a restoration area waiting for the next rain to dissolve and plant the seeds.

For more information and to RSVP, contact MN Sara Beckelman at sbeckelman@arborillogical.com.



Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



They must be living right out at the wildscape, because the soil serendipity just keeps rolling.

After the Hugh O’Brian Youth (HOBY) leadership students planted the berm in May, the only thing lacking was about 8 more yards of dirt on the back side. While wildscape volunteers pondered how that could possibly happen, an Upward Bound counselor called to inquire if 40 high school students could be utilized for a couple of hours. Insert exclamation points here.

The wildscape’s super Arlington Parks & Rec crew, working with very short notice, got the dirt there in time for the Upward Bounders, who toiled with smiles on their faces as if they were having a party as they speedily moved that mountain. Wildscape ringleader Molly Hollar couldn’t contain herself: “Tomorrow’s world will surely improve with such terrific young people taking it over.”

Wildscape volunteers should have the back of the berm planted by the time you read this. Turffalo, donated by Redenta’s Garden, will be planted to complete upgrading the former meadow into a demonstration area for water conservation landscaping. Homeowners following this example can reduce watering to 1-3 times a year after the grass gets going in about two years. Once established, even



with no water except rainfall, the grass may go dormant in summer and return the following spring. Contrast this to traditional landscapes in 100-degree heat needing copious amounts of water to survive.



You can take home loads of lantana, grasses from Bluestem Nursery, and other water-conserving plants at the fall plant sale from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 27, at the Randol Mill Park greenhouse. See the plant sale flyer in this issue, or visit thewildscape.org for a full list of plants available and more things to make you smile, including photos of a baby bunny living in the wildscape.

Mini-classes for volunteers will continue Saturday, September 6, when Josephine Keeney will advise us on attracting butterflies. Recently, Sandy Fountain conducted a session on attracting bluebirds, and John Darling talked about vermicomposting.



Wildscape Mini-Classes (tentative)

Month	Subject	Speaker
April	Rainwater Harvesting	Ann Knudsen
May	Attracting Birds	Julia Burgen
June	Plants of the Wildscape	Suzanne Tuttle
July	Attracting Bluebirds	Sandy Fountain
Aug	Vermicomposting	John Darling
Sept	Attracting Butterflies	Josephine Keeney
Oct	Native Landscape Maintenance	Lucy Harrell
Nov	Water Conservation	Greg Schadt
Dec	Native Trees & Their Care	Heather Dowell
Jan	Propagating Native Plants	Pat Lovejoy
Feb	Good Critters in Our Soil	Ann Mayo

Native Plant Sale

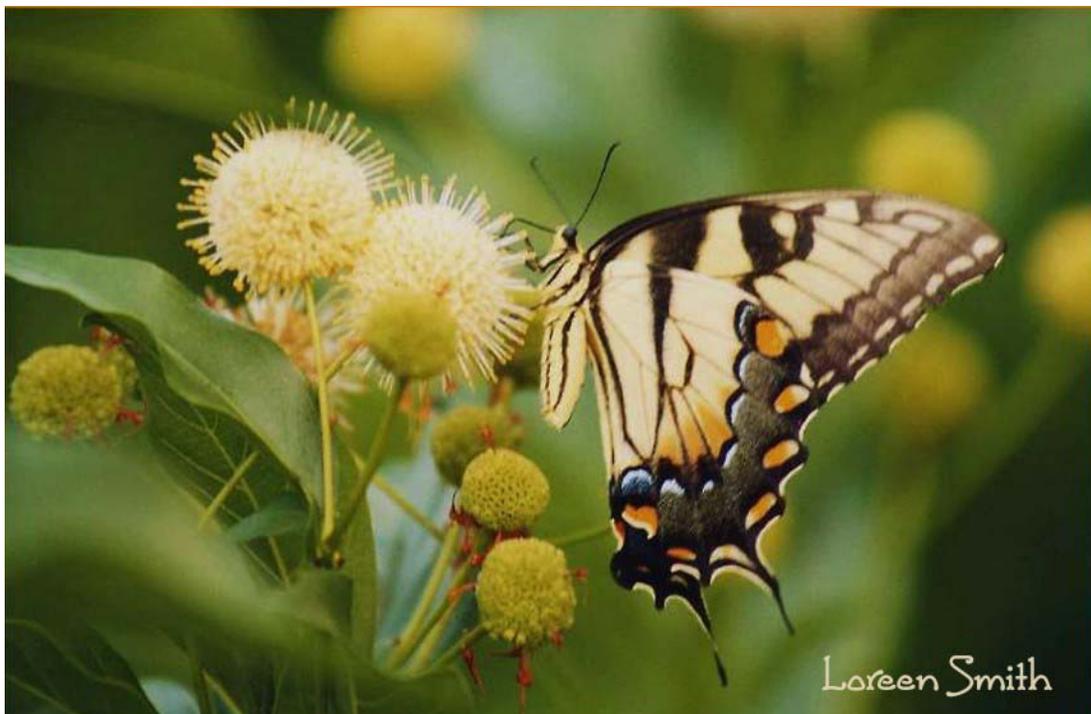
at Randol Mill Park Greenhouse
Benefitting the Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park

Saturday, September 27, 2008
9:00 - 1:00

Organically grown native plants
Most from local seed and cuttings
Plants better adapted to our local climate

Check www.thewildscape.org for plant list

Quarts	\$4.00
Gallons	\$7.00
Trees	\$15.00 and up



Thanks to our June and July Speakers



In our first joint meeting with Tarrant Coalition for Environmental Awareness, Luke Metzger, Director of Environment Texas, addressed a large crowd on environmental topics we will be following during the next legislative session.

In July, Gary Stuard, founder and executive director of the Interfaith Environmental Alliance, spoke to us about his grassroots alliance of Texas congregations from various faith traditions, all working together to green their own individual congregations and to identify and address key environmental issues (local, state, national, and global) through education and nonpartisan grassroots democratic action.



Earth Day Hawks

We were so enthralled with the raptors that we failed to get the names of the members of the Texas Hawking Association who brought their birds to Earth Day at the Wildscape. Ms. Mindy Halligan brought her red-tailed hawk. Mindy is the daughter of one of our favorite Fort Worth Audubon Society members, Ann Halligan, who arranged for the birds and human hawkers to visit the Wildscape. Ms. Noel Murphy of Arlington and Mr. Kris Langevin of Saginaw often take their Harris hawks hunting together. We got to see both birds on their perches, up close and magnificent.



Looking Ahead

At the Sept. 10 meeting Kennedale snappy thinker David Murray will explore how he built an electric car, how long it took, the cost, the difficulty and the payoff — reliability, obscene mileage (pennies per trip) and zero pollution.

This Just in: Editor Can't Find July 4th Photos!

*Desperately Hopes Float Workers Won't Notice!!
Resorts to Multiple Exclamation Points!!!*

As your newsletter hurtles past its sell-by date, your editor is amazed by yet another staggering piece of evidence that senility is winning. Somewhere, Virginia, there really is a mess of wonderful photos that would make your green heart swell with environmental pride, if only you could see them. But not here, and not now. Impeachment, anyone? (Thanks to Marian Hiler and the Arlington 4th of July Association, we do have one shot, at right.)



Gas Pains Jan Miller with Bonnie Bowman

Pipelines being bored into neighborhoods, eminent domain for private gain, and other concerns about natural gas drilling and its related issues have united many FW voices into a new citizen group: Coalition for a Reformed Drilling Ordinance (CREDO). A crowd of over 100 braved mid-day heat to protest before a recent joint workshop for the Gas Drilling Task Force of the Fort Worth city council that featured guest speakers from several regulatory agencies. (Link to a video of this meeting is at end of article.) CREDO is calling for an immediate moratorium on all upcoming natural gas drilling permits and pipeline easements. Later that night, the first of two public forums sponsored by the Tarrant County League of Women Voters and the Fort Worth League of Neighborhoods was attended by over 100 people. The topic that night was gas pipelines and eminent domain. Speakers were attorneys R. Scott Moran (currently representing gas operators), Glenn Sodd (currently representing property owners), and Jim Bradbury (task force member).

Moran outlined the process for condemnation, stressing that no property may be taken for public use without just compensation, including the decreased value of the remaining property. Condemnation is initiated with a notice requiring appearance before a special commissioners board within 11 days. At that time, a single appraisal is presented and if not agreed on, may be mediated. If mediation is not satisfactory, a lawsuit may be initiated.

Sodd elaborated on the process, noting that legal expenses are not recoverable and that the process may take 1-4 years. He questioned the definition of "public use," noting many other public uses that do not have condemnation authority (for example, grocery store operators – food is also an essential commodity). He also noted that before the special commissioners' board, individuals have no subpoena powers, no depositions are allowed, and there is minimal time to prepare a defense. Gas operators, on the other hand, have years to prepare for the eminent domain process, not 11 days. Gas operators have

been granted numerous other advantages, such as being exempted from Public Utility Commission requirements that apply to other utilities. These require the operator to present 3 routes for power line easements, plus opportunities for public and contested case hearings. He also brought out the minimal requirements to become a pipeline operator



under Texas Law (not much more than the ability and equipment to lay pipe).

Bradbury reviewed the status of topics that are to be considered by the FW Gas Drilling Task Force. They will be making recommendations for updating the ordinance to the FW city council. To date they have recommended improvements in the FW ordinance's noise management plan and changes to the definition of "protected uses." The current ordinance (similar to Arlington's)

requires a 600' buffer (which can be reduced to 300' with a waiver by property owners or vote of city council) between protected uses and drilling operations. The task force will recommend a re-definition of protected uses that would narrow the definition of parks (eliminating protection of Trinity Trails) and substantially narrowing the definition of public buildings (e.g., restaurants, office buildings). Pipelines are currently under discussion and include resolution of multiple rights-of-way impacting landowners when more than one gas operator/pipeline company operates in a neighborhood. He mentioned the lack of mapping, regulation and oversight. Topics still to be discussed by the task force are compressor stations, permitting processes and environmental issues (not including waste disposal).

During the following Q/A discussions, everyone was reminded that existing gas regulations were enacted prior to urban drilling made possible by the use of fracturing techniques pioneered in the Barnett Shale. Many recommendations followed, including the need for a separate pipeline ordinance (as in Southlake and Flower Mound), a regional master plan for pipeline routes, and regulation of gas production by the Public Utilities Commission.

Calendar:

Wednesday, August 13, 7:00 pm, "Water and the Barnett Shale" Second public information meeting sponsored by Fort Worth League of Neighborhoods and Tarrant County League of Women Voters.

<http://fwlna.org/>

<http://www.lwvtarrantcounty.org>

Fort Worth Gas Drilling Task Force meets weekly. For dates, times, locations and any other information related to its activities, including the 8/7/08 Joint FW City Council and Task Force meeting: <http://www.fortworthgov.org/gaswells/default.aspx?id=52558>

Additional information can be found at: <http://www.gasmoratorium.org/>
www.fwcando.org

THIS AND THAT *Grace Darling*

City of Arlington Carbon Footprint

At the afternoon work session of August 5, District 4 Council Representative Kathryn Wilemon mentioned Arlington's *Carbon Footprint*, which will show how we are doing as a city and what we need to do in the future. Arlington is a member of Local Governments for Sustainability, which has software that is used by UTA students to determine the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the city – our “carbon footprint.” The city staff's Green Policy Committee will review the data and offer suggestions for reduction. Council member Mel LeBlanc (District 1) said that he was apprehensive about the idea of a carbon footprint; he believes this is a political issue, a stealth way to control economic development in cities and their budgets. Mayor Cluck disagreed and said it is very important that we decrease our carbon footprint. (Thanks to Brenda Koegler for contributing this item.)

Proposed 2009 City Budget

City Manager Jim Holgersson presented the city's priorities and proposed city budget for next year at Council's work session on August 5. Arlington's priorities are:

- 1) safe, strong attractive neighborhoods
- 2) economic development and job growth
- 3) capital investment and transportation

The 2009 budget of \$381+ million addresses these priorities without an increase in taxes. Mr. Holgersson then went through the highlights of the budget. When Mr. Holgersson finished, Mayor Cluck questioned him about why the budget did not include the 13-15 new police officers the city council members had promised their constituents. Mr. Holgersson said that, according to the formula/strategy the city has used for years, support staff is needed in 2009 and the new officers would not be needed until 2010. The mayor and council were insistent that on August 12 they be presented with a budget for

discussion that included the additional officers. (Thanks to Brenda Koegler for contributing this item.)

Commuter Bus Service to Fort Worth



Through a 1-year renewable agreement between the cities, buses from Arlington Park and Ride lots to Fort Worth Intermodal Center will begin running September 1. The schedule calls for 3 morning (Arl-FtW) and 3 afternoon (FtW-Arl) bus trips. Tickets will sell for \$2.50 one way or \$5 for a day pass. Citizens will also be able to purchase an \$80 monthly pass that gives access to all Fort Worth buses. The first year of bus operation is funded in full by a grant, with the expectation that it will generate sufficient income to pay for itself thereafter. The buses will run on compressed natural gas and are especially designed to simulate express buses, with high seat backs and quiet operations. While not rail, the service can be implemented quickly and subjects the city to minimal bus emissions. (Contributed by Judy Northup and Brenda Koegler; with thanks.)

Johnson Creek Project Open House

Billed as a “scoping meeting,” the show-and-tell style open house presentation featured multiple graphic display boards with maps and designer plans for our beleaguered creek, plus experts from the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

and private consultants to explain it all to us. This was said to be the first of several opportunities for public comment (complete with court reporter to take notes) on what the future Johnson Creek south of the entertainment district should look like. For those who think the creek has suffered enough and should be left alone, already – speak up now. The stated purpose is to control flooding and bank erosion downstream in the stadium area (didn't we displace residents and buy out their houses along the creek a few years ago for this reason?), which will likely entail massive engineering feats and expenditures of dollars. Go check it out for yourself: The next open house date will be listed on www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org.

Update on Regional Transportation Council

On July 31, Fort Worth council member Jungus Jordan, chair of the RTC, gave an update on proposals and funding options for regional rail service to a sizable crowd of Arlington residents at a town hall meeting hosted by District 4 representative Kathryn Wilemon. The final plan is far from being decided and is contingent on the legislature's permission to raise the local sales tax cap, which the legislature has failed to do during the last two legislative sessions. But city officials and supporters of a regional rail solution are optimistic that this time the cap will be lifted, and so they are proceeding to inform the public about the designs they are considering and possible means of funding. Details are available at www.nctcog.org/trans/mtp/2030/maps/RCFSApr08.pdf. Of interest was the presence at the meeting of a few vocal residents intent on debating the merits of mass transit in Arlington. Had we settled the argument 10 years ago, enjoyed strong leadership and started planning a light rail system then, we might not be suffering so much at the gas pump today. Will we ever learn?

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't Forget!

Wednesday, August 13
 7:00 pm

Gwen Harper,
 AISD Recycling Coordinator

Talking Trash

Be sure to visit us at
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org