

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 7

JULY-AUGUST 2007

Note
meeting place:
Fielder Museum

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

July Meeting The Upper Trinity Watershed Partners

Matina Garrett,
UTWP Coordinator,
North Central Texas Council of Governments

Wednesday, July 11, 7:00 pm

Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St.
(corner of Fielder and Abram)

Come learn about the Watershed Partners
and see the Interactive Enviroscape Model.

WE NEED RAFFLE ITEMS!

NOTE:

**We won't have an August meeting
this year.**

Bits & Pieces

Turtle Trouble

This three-toed box turtle is an early victim of clearing for the new apartments on Pecan Street. Read more about it and see other stories in the expanded online edition of the *Post Oak*.



Happy Fourth, Belated

Oh Beautiful for smoggy skies, insecticided grain,
For strip-mined mountain's majesty above the asphalt plain.
America, America, man sheds his waste on thee,
And hides the pines with billboard signs, from sea to oily sea.

George Carlin

War on Webworms

We're up to our elbows in webworms this year, but past ACC president Julia Burgen has been spreading the word to avoid pesticides and allow our local webworm expert, the yellow-billed cuckoo, to feast on the nasty brutes.



Global Warming? Let's Make It a Game!

Can we trivialize just about everything? You bet! The *Star-Telegram* invites us to play at living green for two whole weeks and maybe win \$2000. If only we could use it to fill up the Hummer. We just tell 'em in 500 words or less why we want to play. Why do we want to play? We want \$2000!

California Dreaming

Many pharmaceuticals and personal care products in wastewater are not completely removed by sewage treatment plants. California researchers analyzed tissues of earthworms in soils treated with biosolids and found 31 compounds, including household disinfectants, caffeine, and Prozac in resident earthworms.

From the President John Darling



Okay, we're tree-huggers, but at least we're not godless communist treehuggers — and we've got pictures to prove it. We didn't

exactly blend in at the July 4th parade with our recyclable float, but we had the best paper tree and the most green t-shirts by far. So many members and friends helped behind the scene that it's not fair to single anyone out. Even so, I have to thank Marian Hiler and Stephen Smith for doing so much.



Paul Knudsen/PortfolioStudio.net



Paul Knudsen/PortfolioStudio.net



THE POST OAK

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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 Jan Miller



"If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water."

Loren Easley, *The Immense Journey*, 1946

Thanks to Wesley Miller for his recent photos from New York Avenue Blackland Prairie. Wesley is probably the prairie's most frequent visitor, observer and volunteer. As shown by his photos, he has visited even during recent rains, capturing the deep saturated colors and textures of wet, cloudy days in his images.

The first meeting of the Texas Prairie Coalition was held in Lewisville on 6/25/07, with over 30 prairie professionals and enthusiasts from across the state attending.

Dr. Ken Steigman of Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area successfully dodged showers to lead a tour of two local native prairie remnants before the meeting. A blackland remnant near I-30 and I-635

was a marvel with rattlesnake master, cup grass, eastern gamma grass, wild bergamot and probably other species not found on our New York Avenue site, which in turn has its own plants not found at the Mesquite site. But that diminishes neither site. The second remnant on the tour was a chalk prairie, vastly different from any blackland site. What diversity existed,



once upon a time, when the prairie was a continuous ecosystem not just from Arlington to Mesquite, but many hundreds of miles to the north and south?

Both of the toured remnants featured another difference from our New York Avenue prairie: Their strategic suburban locations put them at risk for future development. This led to the topics of the coalition meeting: How can the few remaining prairie remnants across the state be identified, assessed and priorities set for their protection? What are the best practices for their restoration and/or management? How can the public be made aware of the existence of prairies and their benefits?

Although emphasis is usually placed on acquisition of the largest possible tracts for habitat resources, it was noted that even small sites could also have great value, providing local genotype material to seed banks.

Especially important, small remnants in easily accessible suburban areas can serve as ambassadors, introducing the public to the diversity and benefits of prairies and providing

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Hill's Happy Habitat Julia Burgen

ACC's role back in 1995-1996 as a community supporter for Hill's Happy Habitat continues to bear fruit (plums and berries) and bring flowers (lots of natives), birds and butterflies to Hill Elementary School. The inner courtyard provides educational opportunities plus visual beauty and stress relief for students, faculty and staff.

Martha May Martin, ACC member and Hill teacher in 1995, and faculty, Scouts and members of ACC helped transform the courtyard into the secret garden that it is today. There are now 5 more tree species, 4 smaller trees, 4 shrubs, 3 vines, 30 perennials, 5 annuals, 2 grasses, 2 ground covers, 3 water plants and an herb bed. We also have a compost bin

and a storage shed. The student council has purchased two tables with built-in seats and a long bench.

In 2006 the garden received a Smart Yard Honorable Mention Award from the City of Arlington.

Monica Daily and I serve as garden coordinators with six volunteer Hill mothers, grandmothers and community friends. From June 2006 through May 2007, we logged almost 700 volunteer hours. Monica (with the most hours) was also a recipient of the PTA's Lifetime Membership Award. One of our gardeners, Robbyn Steele, whose daughter moved on to Bailey this year, likes gardening so much she continues to come. Each winter she brings a portable



mulcher that we use for the perennial cuttings. Lynda Ballou, a retired Hill third grade teacher, has become a gardener this year.

Efforts range from gardening, pond care, procuring needed items, email communication, four school newsletter articles, classroom support with hall posters and cocoon/butterfly visits to classrooms, to courtyard information packets for teachers. Monetary assistance

continued on page 5

Wildscape Update John Dycus



Not much wildscape in the Wildscape Update this time. (This is the best it ever looked in June. There, you're updated.)

Which doesn't mean I have nothing to say.

If we are to castigate the city for selling our environmental birthright to every developer with a bulldozer and a building permit, let us likewise praise the city when its representatives treat us right. Five such emissaries assisted me one day recently, and I'm still smiling at the encounter.

Within minutes of their arrival at my curb in a Public Works pickup and an oversized flat-bed hauler, I was the proud owner of 25 free flood-barrier sandbags. My neighbor got 25, too. I no longer fear the TV weather hounds

and their foreboding radar all angry and purple-splotched like ninth-grade acne, for I have been favored by the sandbag Santas.

Richard Carmichael appeared to be in charge (he had the pickup), but he was slinging bags just like the guys — Fred Browning, Bobby Combs, Victor Stamp and Gabino Guerrero — on the flat-bed. They were polite to my 86-year-old mother; they worked with me on where to store the bags; they were fast, efficient and happy. Especially happy. Service with positive 'tude.

Cracking jokes and carrying on, they seemed to genuinely like each other. They seemed to like me, too, and we'd just met.

Happiness rubs off. How grand to see people for whom work is fun and their peers are pals.

This adventure began at 9 that morning with a call to City Manager

Sandbags are available from the city street department. Call first — 817 459-5434 — to be sure a supply is on hand.

For anyone who physically cannot put the bags in a truck and take them home, the city will deliver.

Jim Holgersson's helpful office assistant, Donna King. Elapsed time from then until the trucks pulled away: less than three hours.

Hats off to everyone involved. They make the city look good.

Richard Carmichael and the Flat-bed Sandbag 4. If they're musicians, I'm buying the CD.

Our June Speakers



Thanks to Mark O'Leary of Applied Ecological Services, and Howard Porteus and Elvio Bruni of Huffines Communities, for giving us a look at the Viridian development in far north Arlington. We had a big turnout and lots of good questions, particularly in regard to plans for large areas of wildlife habitat.

Prairie continued from page 3

a key towards greater public understanding and advocacy for prairies.

The next meeting of the Texas Prairie Coalition will likely be associ-

ated with this fall's Native Plant Society of Texas/Native Prairies Association of Texas 2007 Symposium in Georgetown. It will focus on conserving and restoring our native prairies and grasslands. Visit npsot.org/symposium2007/ for program and event details.

Workday at NYABP Saturday, July 14 8:30 am – 11:00 am

Let's see what bounty the rain has brought! We will check for invasive species, pickup trash and general cleanup. Bring gloves and clippers or loppers. Please wear long pants and sturdy shoes/boots. Rubber boots might be a good idea (since the site will probably still be quite wet), as well as sunscreen and bug spray of your choice. (Drinking) water will be provided.

To volunteer or for more information, contact jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net.

Johnson Creek Update

From Park Planner De'Onna Garner:

There will be a public meeting on July 23 to see the final Johnson Creek plan. Applied Ecological Services will be handling the presentation. We would like for ACC to attend.

The meeting will be held in the Parks and Recreation Boardroom at 6:30 pm. The same plan is scheduled to be presented to Council on the next day.

We will also present a brief overview of the project at the next Park Board meeting on Monday July 9 if anyone would like to attend. The primary purpose of that meeting is to get the new Park Board members up to speed on the project. The meeting on the 23rd will go into more detail about the actual plan.

Hill's Happy Habitat continued from page 2



Volunteer gardeners, left to right: Ann Schroeder, Becki Campbell, Julia Burgen, Monica Daily, Robbyn Steele, Lynda Ballou

has come from the Hill PTA, pond consultation from Erwin and Cassie Bullock of Cascades and Reflections, and from the Randall Mims family and boys from Troop 186 and Pack 535.

The Cornell Feederwatch program with third graders was managed by Monica Daily and 10 other volunteers who put in 60 hours from mid-November through March. A high point was a pair of red-shouldered hawks in March. Aaron Kelly, a sixth grade student, took pictures of the hawks and produced a digital entry titled "Hawk of Hill" for the

AISD Media Fair. He won first place for Digital Video in grades 3 through 6. Later large flocks of cedar waxwings cleaned up all the berries. When a few of the birds were found dead, we had a prime teaching experience while examining the beautiful birds and figuring out what happened to them.

The anole population of two doubled this year. Students and teachers are keenly interested in the fish and small turtles in the pond. There are numerous caterpillars and butterflies nearly all year long. We have black and giant swallow-tails, gulf fritillaries, sulphurs, and cabbage butterflies showed up when we planted kale for the turtles. Our native prairie rose finally bloomed this spring and was lovely.

Students have learned important lessons about bees. When our Mexican plum flowers open in March, the bees show up to gather nectar and pollinate the flowers so we will see plums in the fall. Then the bees are gone, but when the bluebonnets start blooming here

come the bees again to do their vital work.

During the March Open House, UTA Planetarium personnel brought two telescopes to the courtyard for viewing Venus and Saturn.

ACC's original work in 1995 continues to enrich the lives of Hill Students. If you would like to help and enjoy this hidden garden, call Julia at 817-303-3663. We will garden on Thursdays, July 19 and August 2, 8:00-10:00 am.



Giant swallowtail butterfly photographed by a 6th grade student.

Banders Needed for White-winged Dove Project John Davis



White-winged doves (WWDO) have shifted their behavior skills so they are now taking advantage of urban environments, and

as a result have leap-frogged north and made it into the DFW area en masse. I first started noticing them some 8-10 years ago if my memory serves me correctly. Since that time they've proliferated.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) would really like to band some 600 WWDO in Tarrant

County by the end of August 2007 so that we can begin to get an idea of the population levels in the area as well as movement patterns of these birds.

The way I figure it, if we could come up with 10 volunteers, each banding 5 birds a day, we could get around 600 birds banded in about 2 week's time.

TPWD will provide the traps, bands, pliers, seed, and training to the volunteers. The training time and place has yet to be determined and will be set up based upon response from volunteers. All the volunteer has to do is set up and monitor a trap (at their home) as often as possible during the peak time for WWDO activity in their neighborhood. When I've run traps, the peak time was morning and evening, but I've heard from some

folks that WWDO are more active around their house during the day.

Once the volunteers are trained, they trap WWDO and band them, record the band information, date, etc. and send the data to us. At the end of the trapping effort, the traps and all supplies will be gathered back up by TPWD personnel.

Please spread the word about this urgent need and contact me if you or someone you know would be interested in helping out the WWDO population in Tarrant County.

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Pecan Street Progress John Darling

On June 30 we looked more or less across the street from our house and saw the latest step toward construction of apartments intended for UTA students. A year ago the developer tore down the old house on land that should have become part of Julia Burgen Park. It's been so long that we began to think the project was dead, but a backhoe went to work and showed us what one man could do in less than a day.

The ugly surprise was seeing just how much devastation could occur on a lot that was far from pristine. Johnson Creek lies just to the east, but this land held no forest, only scattered or clumped pecans, cedars, hackberries, and cedar elms. Just the sort of raggedy place, in fact, that so many of our more versatile animals prize. Evidence: In early evening a juvenile gray fox poked through the debris,

picking its way delicately through the freshly exposed mud.

We're still absorbing the news that a number of our common birds are declining drastically, often from habitat loss. Birds tell a lot of the story here, too: As a red-tailed hawk glided by, other birds called from heaps of trees. There were house finches, cardinals, Carolina wrens, western kingbirds, bluejays, Carolina chickadees, great crested flycatchers, and eastern phoebes. And we've heard white-eyed vireos and chuck-wills-widows calling from this lot for many years.

Of course birds might relocate if they can find unoccupied habitat (a doubtful proposition), but what about less mobile animals? An old female three-toed box turtle was an emotional sort of find. Signs were that it was at least

30 years old, still young for a species that might reach 100, but showing lots of wear and tear. Somehow an age of 30 was compelling: We moved to our Pecan Street house in 1977 and never dreamed (as the saying goes) of the ugly changes we would see.

But there's more: this turtle may spend its life in an area less than 750 feet on a side. What to do? Keep it in the back yard, thereby removing it from the natural population? Take it far away to a quiet place already filled to capacity with its kind? After animated discussion and lots of turtle-claw scratching in the bathtub, I released it in the woods on the far side of the destruction.

Maybe it will work out for this turtle and for some other animals here, but probably not. Could they get a student rate on a nice apartment?



Good news: They're taking pains to save several crepe myrtles.

A Tale of Two Meadows



The meadow before complaints



And after

Just last month we had kind words for our Parks Department regarding the big lot at Park Row and Pecan Street (above). Last year they seeded it with native grasses and wildflowers, watered during the drought, and most of all, resisted recent complaints about a “fire hazard.”

Things do change fast around here: By the end of June the complainer had escalated and Parks capitulated, mowing everything in sight. Standard wisdom says to mow around the end of July in order to give seeds time to set for next year’s crop. One loud voice has caused a loss that will be felt next spring and perhaps for years to come.

It was a different story at another flowery lot, according to OK Carter in the *Star-Telegram* on July 3. The Hill-Gilstrap law firm planted a parcel at Abram and Davis (below) with wildflower seeds and recently received notice that they were in violation of a nuisance ordinance. Some silly thing about grass and weeds needing to stay under 12 inches high. Evidently lawyer Frank Hill responded with passion and great clarity, and nobody has mowed anything. That’s a lot more like it.



Getting Around the Landscape Ordinance



Pay attention now, and you’ll see how to make a wooded lot into something like a parking lot without being bothered by that pesky landscape ordinance. First, get a lot zoned residential that’s smaller than one acre. Then cut down all the trees. Wait a while, then apply for a zoning change, noting in the process that the site is treeless. Last, pave and park. Check the handy example on Park Row just west of Collins, and you’ll see the procedure in progress.



Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

Memberships are good for one year, renewable each January. Your dues go directly to our public education efforts.

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Please circle membership category.

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Wednesday July 11,
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Matina Garrett

North Central Texas Council of Governments

*The Upper Trinity
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