

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES
VOLUME 9, NUMBER 6

JUNE 2008

Note Meeting Location:
Central Library

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

June Meeting State of the Texas Environment

Our first joint meeting with
Tarrant Coalition for
Environmental Awareness features
Luke Metzger, Director,
Environment Texas



Wednesday, June 11, 7:00 pm
Central Library
101 East Abram Street

We're only 6 months away from the next legislative session. What are the issues and what can we be doing to prepare for this session?

Environment Texas focused on state park funding last year; they joined with the Sierra Club to protect Gulf waters from illegal dumping of chemicals; they're part of the stop coal power plants coalition; and are involved in much more.

Come learn more about the challenges we face and how we can become more effective with environmental issues that are decided at the state level. Refreshments will be provided.

Bits & Pieces

Dubious Distinction

The *Star-Telegram* reports that recent General Motors decisions will make the GM Arlington truck assembly plant "the only facility building full-size sport utility vehicles like the Chevrolet Tahoe and Cadillac Escalade." Meanwhile, GM will build a small, efficient car in Ohio and is proceeding with the Volt, a plug-in electric car. Not to whine or anything, but how come we get to build the dinosaurs and somebody else gets the Volt?



Today's Inspirational Moment

"Man is a complex being; he makes the deserts bloom and lakes die."

Gil Stern

Great Little Grebe



The bird watchers among us are used to seeing only the Pied-billed grebe here in the summer. Lately, though, the "water-witch" has gotten big competition from a pair of Least grebes at the Village Creek drying beds. They really are least, at about 9 inches and 5 ounces. We expect them to nest much farther south; the most northerly Texas record is about

200 miles south of here. So, are they nesting? Don't know yet. Stay tuned, or, better yet, go look for a nest.

Check That Web Site

We're hoping for a big crowd at the June meeting with Luke Metzger from Environment Texas, but whether you make it or not, have a look at www.environmenttexas.org and you'll quickly appreciate the efforts of this organization.

Naturalist Jim Varnum says that the plant list for Arlington's Southwest Nature Preserve has increased from 279 species to 357 species in the past two weeks. You can ask for the list and subscribe to Jim's free online newsletter at JEVarnum@aol.com.



From the President John Darling



As far as I can tell, I've been playing at being ACC newsletter editor since August 2000. It's been my job since then to give ACC presidents a

hard time about coming up with interesting columns. I've done this over 80 times and wondered why it's sometimes been so difficult. After all, isn't there always something to say about Arlington's environmental situation?

Of course there is, so why am I drawing a blank this month? Maybe it's poetic justice for all that badgering of past presidents, or maybe the summer doldrums have set in a little early. The wonderful spring flush of new growth and fresh seasonal energy has passed much too fast this year, and I'm already thinking about how nice next October will be.

Meanwhile, there's no good reason for stagnation: We just had a great meeting with the Mayor, who never once acted like he was humoring the lunatic treehugger fringe. At the Wildscape we've seen a remarkable number of visiting groups — and a wonderful number of volunteers helping out. We held our second Earth Day at the Wildscape event, with yet more volunteers. ACC won the city Litter Challenge again. And we're looking forward to our first joint meeting with Tarrant Coalition for Environmental Awareness.

There's a fly in that ointment, though, because the Parks Department has scheduled an almost simultaneous meeting to hear public input on the latest revision of the OS Gray Park development plan. Some of our staunchest members have been involved with OS Gray for more than 10 years, and they'll feel bound to attend the park meeting that night. There's more: They need your help to support the current

plan. I couldn't find the plan on the city Web site for you to look at, but here's the biggest point: The proposed parking lot is at the east end, where some neighbors don't want it, but it's far away from the heavily wooded western portion so trees will be spared. Also, traffic visibility is better at the east end, so it will be safer.

The present plan is supported by past ACC president and council member Julia Burgen and by longtime ACC member Kevin Donovan, both of whom have been involved from the beginning. That's good enough for me and your board; we just voted to send a letter of support for the plan on behalf of ACC.

Would you do the same? Send an e-mail to kevinmdonovan@sbcglobal.net. Address the letter itself to Pete Jamieson, Director, Arlington Parks & Recreation Department. You won't need lots of detail, just support for the revised OS Gray Park development plan. Thanks.

(I seem to have talked myself out of the doldrums.)

THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Wesley Miller



Editor's note: Jan Miller, our grassland guru, has been enraptured by the spring beauty of the New York Avenue Prairie Park. The prairie palpitations have been so strong this spring that she couldn't stop looking and start writing. So the job this month has fallen to Wesley Miller, whose photographic skills are more than equal to the task.

Thanks, Wesley, for the use of your beautiful photographs. And Jan, pull yourself together.



Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



Mutual uplift is a glorious thing, and hopefully the high school students in the Hugh O'Brian Youth (HOBY) program enjoyed their wildscape tour on May 17 as

much as the volunteers liked showing them around. Living up to their advance billing as potential leaders, the 38 students were eager to assist with mulching trails, weeding and replanting the original meadow. One young person was so engaged she said she plans to return from Dallas to help in the wildscape again.

Ann Knudsen recruited, organized and led volunteers for the event. The HOBY group was almost an hour late, but the volunteers stayed overtime to complete the already laid-out planting and water it in. Molly Hollar consulted with wildscape landscape architect Rosa Finsley in planning the restoration, oversaw stonework and directed the replanting.

Every year an outstanding sophomore is chosen from each high school in North Central Texas to attend the four-day, expenses-paid HOBY leadership seminar (at TCU this year). We're honored that the wildscape made the list of approved sites to learn from and explore.

Welcome, HOBY cats. Come back any time.

Highly drought-resistant plants now grace the entry area, thanks to a nearly \$10,000 grant from the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department to replant this patch and restore the pond and waterfall. Another \$10,000 came from sales of plants grown by wildscape volunteers in the greenhouse.

This area was originally seeded as a meadow with wildflowers, but a leak in the park's irrigation system drowned the buffalo grass, and the bluebonnets were trampled by people plopping down and looking cute/playful/innocent/seductive for photos.

The new plants, all of them Texas natives from farther west, need perfect runoff to keep from rotting during the

occasional deluge between droughts. An 18-inch raised bed and the addition of lava sand provide this essential drainage. They should be established after a couple of years and then are expected to have rooted deeply enough to survive with only rainfall. One or two waterings a year will keep them blooming.

Soaker hoses have been installed and covered with decomposed granite mulch. Soakers and drip irrigation save water, since traditional sprinkler irrigation loses 50 percent to evaporation. A sign and a kiosk will explain this water-conserving landscape and identify the plants used.

Farther along, the vandalized low-level waterfall has been restored and stone steps to the water and more boulders added to enhance one of the most popular places in the wildscape. Repair of the small pond is expected to be complete soon. Thanks again, Rosa Finsley, for directing this restoration.

Note that volunteer hours will change to begin and end an hour earlier to avoid the summer heat — 8:00-11:00 am.



Meadow Makes Comeback



Remember last year when the Parks Department responded to an unhappy neighbor's demand to prematurely mow the newly seeded meadow at Park Row and Pecan Street? Here's a happy surprise: It turns out that many of the wildflowers did have a chance to set seeds and they're looking good. Let's hope that they're left alone for a while longer.



Free Texas Smartscape Seminars

Arlington residents can learn about drought-tolerant plants and water conservation techniques at two free Texas Smartscape seminars. Time: 6 to 8 p.m. Dates: June 18 and July 16. Location: Southwest Branch Library, 3311 S.W. Green Oaks Blvd. Information and reservations: 817-459-6587 or Roni.Crotty@arlingtontx.gov. Tips on water conservation: www.arlingtontx.gov/water/waterconservation.html

Master Naturalist Classes Offered

The Cross Timbers chapter of Texas Master Naturalists will offer certification classes this fall at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge on Tuesdays, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. More information and applications are available on line at www.ctmn.org or contact ginger@ctmn.org.

Schedule

- Tuesday, 09/02/08: Orientation - Welcome, Program Orientation, and Statewide Program Mission
- Tuesday, 09/09/08: Aquatic Systems - Characteristics of water and local aquatic systems
- Saturday, 09/13/08: Aquatic **Field Trip - Group and individual activities
- Tuesday, 09/16/08: Herps
- Tuesday, 09/23/08: Forest Systems - Types of the Cross Timbers region
- Saturday, 09/27/08: Forest **Field Trip - Group and individual activities
- Tuesday, 09/30/08: Forest Fauna - Mammals, emphasizing forest species
- Tuesday, 10/07/08: Prairie Systems - Soils, vegetation, and eco-systems of North Central Texas prairies
- Saturday, 10/11/08: Prairie **Field Trip - Group and individual activities
- Tuesday, 10/14/08: Prairie Fauna - Invertebrates emphasizing prairie species
- Tuesday, 10/21/08: Urban Systems - The effects of urbanization on natural systems
- Saturday, 10/25/08: Urban Systems **Field Trip - Group and individual activities
- Tuesday, 10/28/08: Course Wrap-up - Summary overview and volunteer opportunities in the Cross Timbers Chapter

**Field trip dates and times subject to change. Two field trips will be at the FWNC&R. Others will be held at various locations around the Fort Worth Metroplex.



Our May Speaker

We're truly indebted to Mayor Robert Cluck for giving his time to us at the last general meeting. Our packed house provided plenty of environmental questions on a wide range of issues, and Dr Cluck fielded them with his usual expertise.

Topics included green building, gas wells, transportation, native plant landscaping, air quality, renewable energy, population growth, green cement, and others.

We didn't always hear the answers we hoped for, but we always had the impression that the Mayor gave full and serious attention to our concerns. Thanks again, Dr Cluck.

Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, June 11
 7:00 pm

Luke Metzger,
 Director, Environment Texas

*State of the
 Texas Environment*

Be sure to visit us at
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org