ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

# POST OAK

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OCTOBER 2026



RAIN! • JOHNSON CREEK • SEPT. 20, 2026 • GUY RANDOM PHOTO

# September Zoom Meeting




See more on page 6

## Did you miss this fine talk?

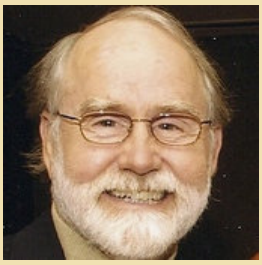
## Watch it any time here.



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# From the President Dick Schoech



We know that interacting with dogs and cats improves mental health, but the benefits go beyond people feeling calmer and less lonely. A report from the Green Care Lab at the University of California, Davis, shows that animals play an active role in shaping feelings like nervousness, sadness, and excitement. "Spending just three minutes with miniature horses and donkeys improved the mood of the animals, which is transferred to the adolescents."[1] The research also examined how benefits shift between humans and other species and what makes the interaction reciprocal.

Growing up, I spent many hours in our dairy barn, and let me tell you, each cow had its own personality. Learning a cow's likes and dislikes made the milking rewarding, thus the motto "the contented cow gives more milk." There's so much we don't know in human-nature interactions that are reciprocal, whether it be animals or plants. Often this reciprocal knowledge is not formalized but learned through observations that are passed down, as in the stories from horse, cat, and dog whisperers.

Much of ACC's work involves the interactions among all species in natural areas. Human-wildlife reconciliation studies the practices and ecological approaches that benefit humans and wild animals living within shared landscapes. Our Master Naturalist training encourages these mutually beneficial interactions. Instead of eliminating or separating wildlife from human spaces, we need to adapt human-animal environments to those that benefit humans and other species.

ACC's volunteer work encourages children and adults to frequent natural areas for release of stress and other anxieties. A knowledge of human-wildlife reconciliation can be critical, as when quick

*continued on page 4*




## ACC POST OAK

**Our mission: ACC works to protect Arlington's natural environment through education, community service, and advocacy for a sustainable future**

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P.O. Box 216
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John Darling, editor
*1darling@sbcglobal.net*

**Contributors**
Annabelle Corboy, J. Lewis Corner, Grace Darling, John Darling, John Dycus, Jim Frisinger, Marian Hiler, Ann Knudsen, Carol Marcotte, Jan Miller, Guy Random, Dick Schoech, Michael Smith,

**Proofreaders**
Marian Hiler, Grace Darling

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of every month. Please send them to *1darling@sbcglobal.net*.

# From the President Dick Schoech

decisions are required if a human meets a skunk on a nature path. Unfortunately, human-animal experiences are often hostile, resulting in injuring or killing the wild species. Think of human encounters with a snake.

Even dangerous interactions can benefit both species, as when beekeepers safely tend their hives without skin protection. Knowing which animals in urban environments produce reciprocal benefits can lateral the goal from removing problematic species to managing them. Understanding whether the effects occur in animals that are active, passive, or simply observers of nearby humans would also help. This knowledge could help prevent the extinction of endangered species not typically seen as beneficial to humans, thus preventing the loss of reconciliation knowledge before the endangered species are lost forever. It would also be useful to learn what other reciprocal benefits may occur in plants.

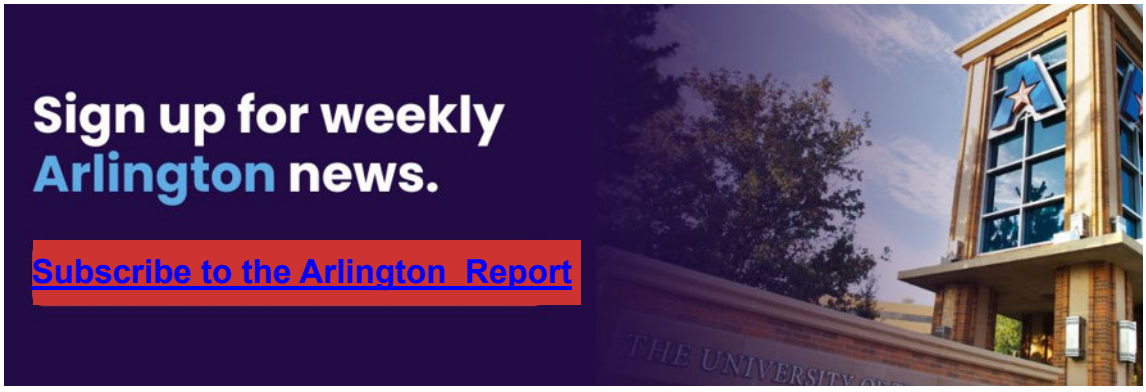
A number of examples come to mind of using reconciliation knowledge and perspectives to turn wildlife into a shared community asset:

1. Turning highway medians and utility rights-of-way into native wildflower corridors where humans enjoy watching pollinators feed on beautiful plants
2. Bird-safe glass on tall buildings that reduces bird collisions
3. Guardian dogs, like the Great Pyrenees, that protect livestock from predators
4. Using vegetation on overpasses and underpasses to prevent vehicle-animal collisions
5. Using bat-friendly architecture such as the Congress Avenue-5th Street Bridge in Austin
6. Planting blackberry thorned bushes at field edge rows, which is common in England
7. Observing Dark Sky initiatives during spring and autumn bird migrations
8. Bird-safe wind energy production using AI-powered cameras to detect incoming birds and automatically slow or pause turbine blades until the birds have passed safely through the wind farm
9. Producing whale-safe shipping lanes using acoustic buoys that listen for whale calls and alert massive container vessels to slow down to reduce lethal ship strikes

Prioritizing coexistence over conflict and win-win over win-lose; reconciliation research; and changes in our thinking, environmental designs, and customs can make a huge difference in the natural world.

Reference

[1]https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/just-three-minutes-miniature-horses-and-donkeys-improved-teens-mood

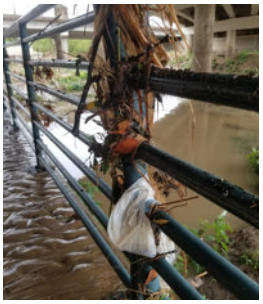


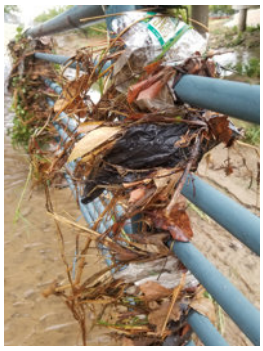
# A Plastic Plague Guy Random

The recent hard rains had me wandering along Johnson Creek near the Center Street bridge, remembering when the city chose widening part of the creek here instead of ruining it with a concrete ditch in the name of flood control. Years later, they faced the need to dredge the sediment that builds up in the widened area. If they don't, the creek floods here, carrying debris over the railing of the pedestrian trail in Julia Burgen Park, as it did the other day. What struck me on October first was not the quantity of debris but the prevalence of plastic almost everywhere in the mass of otherwise useable (compostable) organics. Here's an unhappy sample:
















# October Zoom Meeting: Wednesday, Oct. 7

## Nature's own fireworks: the enchanting firefly

### Ben Pfeiffer

#### Firefly Conservation & Research Founder

**Did you miss this fine talk? Watch it any time here.**



You've wanted to know this since you were 9 on a summer night. How do fireflies, a.k.a. lightning bugs, flash? Why do they flash (hint: sex). How many types of fireflies (Lampyridae) can be found in river basins and riparian areas in Texas and across the U.S.? Sixth-generation Texan Ben Pfeiffer has all of the answers to light up your switchboard, including how to spot common firefly species; how to identify flash patterns in the wild; how to champion the cause (while there's still a cause to champion); how to certify your property as a firefly habitat; and what native plants these enchanting creatures especially love. If you ask, maybe he will reveal how his website, firefly.org, came to have the best headline on the internet — Glowing. Glowing. Gone.

Ben founded the nonprofit Firefly Conservation & Research in 2009 to advance firefly conservation through field research, public education, habitat protection, and partnerships with landowners and conservation groups. FCR focuses on eliminating environmental threats while empowering communities to take action.

Ben studied biology at Texas State University and is a Master Naturalist. He is a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature firefly working group, and he frequently consults with Xerces, Texas Parks & Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, land trusts, state and local commissions, and private property concerns, among others.

# Positivity John Dycus and John Darling

Here is more positive environmental news, thanks again to John Dycus. Like me, he sees way too many negative developments, but he finds answers, as you see on this page. Try it! See something positive you like? Send **me** a link to something good. Just try to spot new things so we don't repeat ourselves.



John Dycus is so right about this site. Too much good to choose from, so you get the whole thing, from big trout returning to Lake Tahoe to recovering Australian wetlands to free solar power to green successes in the UK to Burrowing bettongs (above). Did I mention cute?




In July, India inaugurated its first domestically built hydrogen-powered train,expanding the use of clean energy in its huge rail network. While it reaches only 43 mph, the train can carry up to 2,600 passengers and its only direct emission is water vapor.



Cuba is experiencing its worst fuel crisis in years, and with typical ingenuity people there are responding with Chinese-made electric tricyles. They are moving people, hauling goods, and even collecting garbage in places. And many are being fitted with solar panels for recharge rather than wait for unreliable grid power.



Warning: This item feels cheesy, but it's apparently the real deal, with other sources backing it up, at least in part: Between 2007 and 2024 Florida dumped over 500,000 tons of oyster and clam shells into the Gulf in an effort to rebuild its damaged ecosystem. Results appear to be good, and a number of projects are continuing.

# Our YouTube Videos Marian Hiler

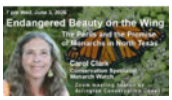
Take a look at any of our programs since January 2024 on ACC's YouTube channel.




Creative Regionalism, Plants, and Natural Systems
David Hopman, September 2026




Exploring Water in All Its Wonder
Bill Gaze and Traci Peterson
August 2026




Endangered Beauty on the Wing
Carol Clark
June 2026




Seeing Wild Texas, One state park at a time
Suzanne Tuttle
May 2026




Coyote Coexistence: Living in Harmony with America's Song Dog
Karin and Roberto Saucedo, April 2026




Beyond Parks – Update on the redesigned department
Gary Packan, March 2026




Horned Lizards and Horny Toads
Michael Smith
February 2026




2025 Environmental Progress; Planning for 2026
January 2026




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Meghan Cassidy
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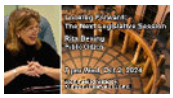
Prairie Seekers Training: Learning in Nature's Classroom
Kate Morgan, February 2025




2024 Environmental Progress; Planning for 2025
January 2025



What I learned in South Africa: climate adaptations for Texas plants
Laura Miller, November 2024




Looking Forward: The Next Legislative Session
Rita Beving, October 2024



Solar Hybrid Pumping Solution
Larry Bentley
September 2024




Native Plants Are for the Birds
Charley Amos
August 2024




Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation
Ian Bryant, June 2024




The Benefits of Native Plants
Ann Knudsen
May 2024

# In Case You Missed It Grace Darling




Toronto spent $31 million on **raccoon-proof green garbage bins** in 2016. Two years later, a Scarborough resident filmed a raccoon opening one in under 30 seconds.

The city had been fighting raccoons over garbage for decades. Canadian media called it a raccoon war. The older bins, introduced between 2002 and 2005, had been defeated so thoroughly that the city commissioned new ones from Rehrig Pacific Company under a 10-year, $31 million contract. The new design featured a circular twist handle on the lid connected to a disk on the inside that fastened into a made-in-Germany gravity lock. You opened it by turning the handle or by tipping the bin past 110 degrees, which triggered the gravity release so a robotic arm on a garbage truck could empty it. Raccoons do not have opposable thumbs. In laboratory testing overseen by York University behavioral ecologist Suzanne MacDonald, raccoons could not open the bins.

Graeme Boyce posted the video on Facebook in April 2018. The raccoon in his footage climbed the side of the bin, gripped the circular handle with both front paws, turned it, lifted the lid, and climbed inside. Boyce had three toboggans stacked on top of the bin as extra weight. The raccoon threw them off first. He could actually hang on the side of the bin with his hind legs, reach down and grab a bag that was way down at the bottom, Boyce said. He has obviously done it before and is quite good at it.

Jim McKay, general manager of solid waste management services for the City of Toronto, said he was impressed by the ingenuity and dexterity of this raccoon. Mayor John Tory said the bins were performing well citywide and that out of 450,000 deployed, only a handful of complaints had come in. Then he added a line that made the evening news: "Those who have posted the video are running the risk of making information available to others in the raccoon population that may take advantage of that."

MacDonald had been studying the raccoons since before the rollout. She weighed and measured dead raccoons for a year before and after the bins arrived to see whether cutting off access to compost waste changed their body condition. They were not starving to death, she said. They had found other food. Her concern was not that the bins would fail completely but that they would fail selectively. The raccoons smart enough to figure out the lock would eat. The ones that could not would go elsewhere. Over generations, the lock would apply selection pressure for the most dexterous, most persistent, most mechanically creative individuals in the population. Every effort to thwart raccoons, MacDonald warned, may be creating an uber-raccoon.

The $31 million bin was the most expensive single attempt any city in North America has made to keep raccoons out of garbage. The raccoon in Boyce's video defeated it with the same hands it uses to open a crayfish.

Toronto has roughly 100,000 raccoons, one for every 28 residents. The city declared them officially unmanageable in 2002. Raccoons occupy every neighborhood, den in every type of structure, and eat every type of waste the city produces. A raccoon in Toronto has access to a more diverse and reliable food supply than a raccoon anywhere in the species' natural range.

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The bins are still on the curbs. The 10-year contract with the manufacturer runs through 2026. The city has not announced a replacement design. MacDonald's multi-year study on whether the bins were starving raccoons found them, in her words, as fat as ever. No final results were published.

https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/toronto-built-a-better-green-bin-and-oops-maybe-a-smarter-raccoon/article_5e821e52-8a21-5517-bbb3-b8a4831a8a87.html
and
https://www.npr.org/2018/09/16/647599627/theres-no-stopping-toronto-s-uber-raccoon



The New York Times put it on the front page under the headline "That Cuddly Killer Is Deadlier Than You Think." **Free-ranging domestic cats in the United States kill between 1.3 and 4 billion birds** and between 6.3 and 22.3 billion mammals every year, wrote researchers at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in 2013. The estimate exceeded every other human-caused source of bird deaths in the country, including pesticides, collisions with buildings, collisions with cars, and wind turbines, combined. The scientists, Loss and Marra, built the estimate by pulling together every published cat predation study they could find, some going back more than 50 years. While previous attempts at a national number had relied on rough extrapolations from one or two local studies, the authors treated it as a systematic review: They identified how many owned cats live in the United States, roughly 84 million. They estimated how many of those go outside, about 60 to 70 percent. They estimated the unowned population, feral, stray, barn, and colony cats, at 30 to 80 million, a range so wide it reflected the fact that nobody had ever counted them. They applied per-cat predation rates drawn from the published literature and ran the model.

The finding that drew less attention was where the killing was coming from. Unowned cats, the ferals and strays and barn cats and managed colonies, accounted for the large majority of the mortality. Owned pet cats that went outside contributed a smaller share. The study did not say house cats were the primary problem. It said the 30 to 80 million cats with no owner at all were. The unowned cat population has never been reliably counted. The per-cat kill rates vary enormously depending on geography, season, prey availability, and whether the cat is fed by humans.

The study did not settle what the killing means for bird populations. A cat that kills a house sparrow in a suburban backyard is removing one bird from an abundant, non-native species. A cat that kills a piping plover chick on a beach is removing one bird from a federally threatened population that cannot absorb the loss. The 1.3 to 4 billion figure does not distinguish between the two. Subsequent research by Doherty and colleagues in 2016 estimated that cats have played a role in the extinction of 63 bird, mammal, and reptile species worldwide, nearly all of them on islands, but the mainland population-level impact remains debated.

What the study did settle is scale. Before 2013, the most commonly cited estimate for cat-caused bird mortality in the United States was in the hundreds of millions. Loss and Marra put it in the billions and provided the methodology to support it.

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## In Case continued from page 10

The number has been cited in more conservation papers than almost any wildlife statistic published in the last two decades. Whether it changes anything depends on what anyone does with it, and 13 years after publication, the number of outdoor cats in the United States has not declined. The study estimated 30 to 80 million unowned cats in 2013. Current estimates put the number at 60 to 100 million.

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/learning/collar-the-cat.html#:~:text=The%20Fish%20and%20Wildlife%20Service,effect%20on%20the%20bird%20population.
And
https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms2380




USDA researchers in South Texas built a **battery-powered sprayer**, hid it at a fence crossing where wild nilgai antelope squeeze through the wire, and loaded the tank with billions of microscopic parasitic worms suspended in water. When an antelope walked through the gap, an ultrasonic sensor detected its movement, an onboard computer started the pump, and the machine sprayed the animal's belly and legs with living roundworms that kill ticks.

The target was the southern cattle fever tick. The tick carries bovine babesiosis, a blood disease that could devastate the American cattle industry if it spreads beyond the quarantine zone along the Rio Grande. Cattle can be gathered and dipped. Nilgai cannot. A nilgai antelope stands five feet at the shoulder, weighs up to 600 pounds, jumps fences, and does not cooperate with livestock handling in any form. The USDA had been shooting them from helicopters at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, killing hundreds, and the tick kept spreading because the surviving nilgai kept carrying it across ranch boundaries.

John Goolsby, a USDA research entomologist at the Cattle Fever Tick Research Laboratory in Edinburg, Texas, proposed a different approach. It is no surprise that the cattle fever tick gets on nilgai, he said, because they both come from India, the tick and the nilgai. Nilgai were imported as zoo animals in the 1920s and later released in South Texas. The tick was already in the region. The two species from the same subcontinent found each other on the same ground 10,000 miles from where they evolved together.

The weapon Goolsby chose was *Steinernema riobrave*, a microscopic roundworm native to the Rio Grande Valley. It is an entomopathogenic nematode, meaning it parasitizes and kills insects and ticks. It enters the tick through a body opening, releases bacteria that liquefy the tick's internal organs, feeds on the resulting material, reproduces inside the carcass, and sends its offspring into the soil to find more hosts. Goolsby's team had already demonstrated in the lab that the nematode kills cattle fever ticks. The problem was getting the nematode onto a nilgai.

The sprayer solved it. Goolsby and colleagues at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, including Diana Cantu, Alejandro Vasquez, and Alexis Racelis, built the device from off-the-shelf components. The tank held the nematode solution. An aerator ran continuously to keep the worms alive and oxygenated in the Texas heat. Tests showed the nematodes stayed viable in the aerated tank for more than two weeks. The ultrasonic sensor triggered the spray when an animal passed. The system ran on batteries and required no human presence.

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## In Case continued from page 11

Later work placed motion-triggered sprayers at water troughs and monitored them with 16 cameras from 2020 through 2022. The nilgai kept visiting the equipped troughs. They did not avoid the spray. An animal walking through a mist of water on a hot South Texas day has no reason to object, and the microscopic worms landing on its hide are invisible, odorless, and already native to the dirt under its feet. The nilgai does not know it has been treated. It walks through the fence crossing or drinks from the trough, picks up a few billion roundworms, and carries them into the brush where the ticks are waiting.

The technique remains experimental. "We have been able to prove that we can spray nilgai, and we know that the nematodes kill the tick," Goolsby said in 2019. "But what we do not know is, when the whole thing comes together, can we reduce ticks enough to make a difference at scale."

https://myrgv.com/uncategorized/2019/02/04/six-ranches-testing-antitick-method-on-nilgai/
and
https://www.ars.usda.gov/research/publications/publication/?seqNo115=370777

**A coyote found a newborn pronghorn** on the open grassland of southwestern South Dakota and moved toward it. The mother charged. The coyote dodged her, circled, and came back from a different angle. Then two yearling males stepped forward and began taking turns. Christopher Jacques and Jonathan Jenks of South Dakota State University documented the encounter and published it in the Western North American Naturalist in 2011. They described it as the first reported case of yearling male pronghorn defending a neonate against a predator.

Adult females defending fawns is well documented across the species' range. Adult males have been recorded assisting in Wyoming. But yearling males, animals 12 to 18 months old that have no parental relationship to the newborn, had never been observed joining the defense.




The geometry of the encounter is what made it work. A single pronghorn charging a coyote is a problem the coyote can solve. The coyote is smaller but quicker in tight turns. It can dodge a charging pronghorn, let the animal overshoot, and loop back toward the fawn before the mother recovers her angle. One defender creates a gap every time it commits to a charge. Two create a smaller gap. Three close the gap entirely. Every time the coyote evaded the mother's rush, one of the yearling males was already advancing from a different position. Every dodge that solved one threat opened the coyote to another. The pressure rotated. The coyote could not find a line to the fawn that did not run through a pronghorn already moving toward it. The coyote abandoned the attempt.

This is not the only documented case of pronghorn running a coyote off through cooperative pressure. In June 2025, Krisztina Gayler, a field assistant with the American Canid Project in Yellowstone National Park, watched a mother pronghorn and several does chase a coyote that had approached a fawn in the Lamar Valley. She told Cowboy State Daily that the pronghorn refused to quit. They pursued the coyote across the valley floor and kept hunting for it after it found a hiding spot along the banks of the Lamar River. At one point, she said, there was a contact. One of the does walloped the coyote. The chase continued after the hit. The pronghorn were not just defending: they were retaliating. Gayler added that kicks and stomps from prey animals are one

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## In Case continued from page 12

of the most common causes of injury and death for wild canines. A pronghorn's front hooves are narrow, hard, and driven by legs built to sustain 55 miles per hour across open ground. A strike to a coyote's ribs, skull, or spine can cripple or kill. The coyote knows this.

**Coyote predation is the leading cause of death for pronghorn fawns** across the western United States. Jacques and Jenks documented this in a separate study across multiple sites in western South Dakota, finding that coyotes accounted for the majority of neonatal mortality. Pronghorn mothers counter with a layered defense: they synchronize births so that hundreds of fawns arrive within the same narrow window, overwhelming predators with numbers. They hide newborns in shallow depressions in the grass and forage at a distance to avoid drawing attention to the hiding spot. They attack any coyote that comes close enough to detect. And occasionally, as Jacques and Jenks documented, other pronghorn join in.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1861&context=wnan
and
https://animals.sandiegozoo.org/animals/pronghorn

UPDATE: EL PASO, Texas. On Oct. 2, A federal judge issued an emergency injunction to block border barrier and road construction across the Big Bend region. The injunction will remain in place while the court considers a lawsuit challenging the federal government's sweeping waiver of environmental laws and other laws to fast-track construction. [biologicaldiversity.org, 10/2/26]

A recent *New York Times* investigation revealed the massive scale of the Department of Homeland Security's plan to build border infrastructure in Big Bend National Park. It also exposes how the federal government has been lying to its own citizens. U.S. Customs and Border Protection has said work was limited to survey and design, but evidence shows construction has already begun.

Today, this Texas treasure along the Rio Grande is under assault by our own government. You cannot help but wonder what Amon Carter, one of the visionaries of Big Bend National Park, would think. As president of the Texas Big Bend National Park Association, Carter led the effort to raise funds to purchase lands along the Rio Grande. On June 6, 1944 — the same day the Allies were landing at Normandy — Carter personally handed the deeds for 700,000 acres to President Franklin Roosevelt.

# Bits & Pieces

## The Terse Treehugger




There goes the neighborhood?

Doesn't look like a wildscape, but those are natives, after all.

Maybe it's okay.



**Visit ACC's Facebook page and Discussion Group**

## Pigeonberry, Smidgenberry



A happy Pigeonberry just sprang up in the vacant lot next door, but this plant refuses to live 20 steps south with nice shade and water. Even a little compost now and then. One of Nature's Mysteries.



Mexican sage

## Opossum, Oh, No



There's a dead opossum in the dark center of this view of a local yard. Probably injured by a car and made its way to this sheltered spot. But was it hit because this yard is a wildlife magnet?

**Join us and act locally. Use the application form on the back page.**



# Question Corner Professor J. Lewis Corner

Q: The other day somebody proclaimed there are clean trees and dirty trees, and that Post oaks are dirty. I can't recall if he mentioned any clean trees because I was shocked, stunned, outraged, appalled. You know, the usual treehugger reaction to tidbits tossed out by the not-nearly-silent-enough majority. Our dominant native tree was vigorously condemned for dropping branches, leaves, and acorns. All oaks do that, and all trees do most of that. So?



A: Easy. Forget all that environmental stuff about Post oaks being essential ecological anchors over much of the eastern US and supporting hundreds, maybe thousands of insects and other creatures, stabilizing dry, fragile soils and often looking great. Remember Neil Sperry, the Garden Guru, who clarified it all: Nature is over there. My house (and sterile chemical yard and exotic plants) are over here the way I want them. You won't change those bums. Don't bother. Next!

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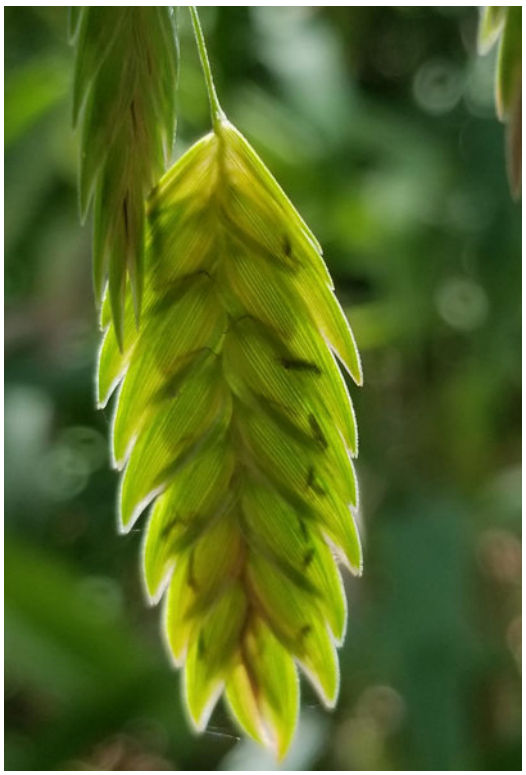
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Arlington, TX 76013
(817) 271-2138
john@rdycus.com

Paul Knudsen's ArlingtoNOW.com Event Photography
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817.265.4441

Law Office of
SHANE GOETZ
3705 N Shadycreek Dr
Arlington, TX 76013
shane@goetzlawtx.com
817-265-2902
Fax: 817-549-4438

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Inland sea oats.

# My Nature Notebook

Stinky and sad



My little brother Brainiac and me smelled something really bad so we looked for it in the Creepy Old Guy's yard of course and a poor dead possum was just lying in some bushes all puffed up. Well you know the COG came hollering at us as always. But I said how we just thought everything in his yard was SO interesting and would he please tell us about his poor possum? And he said I'm afraid it was hit by a car right there because my yard is full of things possums need like food and water and shelter. Plenty of ticks live here, so maybe that was a deadly opossum magnet. Then Brainiac woke up. Didn't you know that tick thing was probably inaccurate? Actually their diet appears biased toward snakes including all the venonous species because of a fortuitous blood protein mutation that promotes resistance to venom. Anyway, this temporary decomposition micro-ecosystem is always worth a look to learn more about the interdependent successional changes that constitute the ultimate recycling mechanism.

**Heartfelt recommendation. And unbiased.**



# Randol Mill Park Carol Marcotte

Our last workday was August 27. Although the temps climbed to the upper '90s, the volunteers fanned out to deadhead, weed, and thin out spent plants. The seeds and usable plants we collected are placed along the creek or saved for use next year. Nothing is wasted.




August 27 volunteers from left, Ann Brouillette, Ramona Gratton, Alex Whitney, and Dick Schoech. Carol Marcotte photo.

Friends of Randol Mill Park, our new public Facebook page, is now open. Visit us and please join at https://www.facebook.com/groups/1692612931962977

Arlington Parks, Recreation and Culture Department asked FAUNA (Friends of Arlington's Natural Areas) to review, comment, and make suggestions to the Innovate Arlington Comprehensive Plan. They specified Chapter 1.5 as the area of the plan where the city wants our input. FAUNA team members met on Zoom to discuss the plan and made suggestions to present to the FAUNA/APRC quarterly meeting on Aug. 14. The team consisted of Jan Miller, Dick Schoech, Kevin Donovan, Laura Capik, and Carol Marcotte among others.

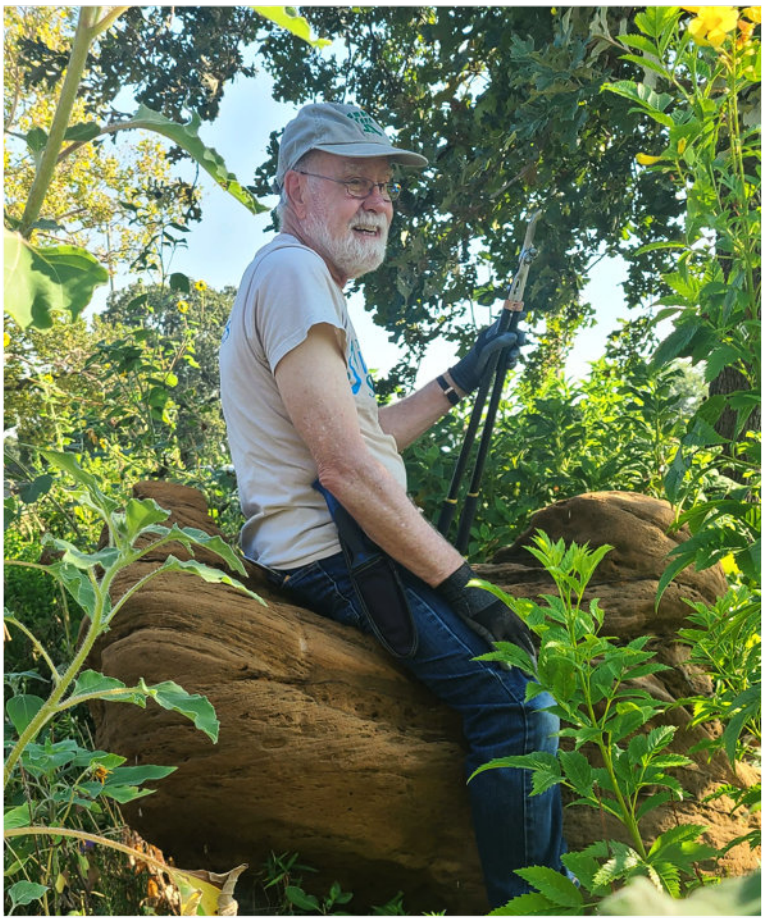
*continued on page 10*



Recently observed in the park: Panicled ticktrefoil, *Desmodium paniculatum*

## Randol Mill Park continued from page 18

This park has everything. Miscellaneous recent observations from upper left, Dick Schoech holding down a boulder in the Triangle Garden. A shiny new Poo-Free Park station featuring LARGE bags for waste disposal. And sadly, a fallen Post oak, possible victim of interior rot exacerbated by the drought. Carol Marcotte photos.








# Wildscape Update Marian Hiler

September ended with a promise of much-needed rain and slightly cooler temperatures, inspiring us to keep at it after such a long hot, dry period. This month, progress continued to clear and mulch the trails. In addition, our annual fall plant sale was a success.

The trail cleanup is about 75% complete thanks to the efforts of our hardworking volunteers. In addition to the weeding and mulching, some volunteers took care of more strenuous work needed for safety reasons. Kent Underwood, Josh Parkerson, and Joe Martinez removed overhanging dead branches and a rotting dead tree too close to the trail.





*Upper left,* The High Trail gets attention from front, by Christine Brinson, Ruth Kinler, and Cindy Underwood. Ann Knudsen photo. *Below,* Randy Walker and Patti Bartlett, front, and Katie Cockroft, back, work on the trail by the LTV bridge. Ann Knudsen photo. *Lower left,* Cindy Underwood, left, and Ann Knudsen clear overgrown path by Eagle Scout bridge. Marian Hiler photo.

*comntinued on page 21*



# Wildscape Update continued from page 20, continued on page 22

*Below,* It's hard work to load up and haul the mulch. Ann Knudsen photo. *Right,* Many a load delivered by Chris Raney, left, Joe Martinez, Sezar Fakhimi, background, by the stone bridge. Marian Hiler photo. *Bottom left,* Volunteers spread the mulch along the Creek Trail. Carol Marcotte photo. *Below right,* Creek Trail finished. Ann Knudsen photo.









## Wildscape Update continued from page 21, continued on page 23

# *Branching out*

*Right,* Joe Martinez coaxes down a dead branch hanging over one of the trails. Ann Knudsen photo. *Below,* Kent Underwood, left, and Josh Parkerson consider branch extraction approach as Joe Martinez looks on. Marian Hiler photo.





# Wildscape Update continued from page 22, continued on page 24

We appreciate our tireless workers, but we are also grateful for the ongoing support that Juan Gonzales, Arlington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Veterans Park caretaker provides. He ensures that we have a steady supply of mulch for the trails, keeps the wooden benches in shape, and repairs the aging planks in the vehicle bridge. We only need to ask, Juan is ready to make it so.





*Left above,* Friend of the wildscape Juan Gonzales, APRC. Ann Knudsen photo. *Left below,* The abused overlook bench. Marian Hiler photo. *Below,* Same bench after Juan had it sanded and made good as new. Ann Knudsen photo.



## Wildscape Update continued from page 23

# *Native Plant Sale*

After 26 years holding sales at the Randol Mill Park greenhouse, the wildscape held its first one at the new greenhouse at the ACTIV Center on September 27. It went smoothly, thanks to well-organized leadership, lots of dedicated helpers and cooler weather. The heart of the greenhouse, Josephine Keeney, was indebted to all who played a part in another successful sale, saying,

"A big thank you to our friends for all you do for the wildscape and for native plant conservation.

Especially the greenhouse crew, who have worked all year long to make the sale happen.

Thanks to all the people who made the day go smoothly, the door keeper, the cashiers, the ticket writers, the plant arrangers who moved the plants out and back in record time. Everyone did their best and it showed. The customers were impressed with the service they received. Many thanks also to Frank for designing the beautiful plant gallery and the flyer. Also, many thanks to Kevin and Carrie Donovan for providing the lovely canopies. They kept us from burning in the sun.

The sales numbers were higher than last year, despite the fact that it was Sunday at a time when many people are in church and at a new location. Also, the crew had half the usual time for propagation due to the big move to the new greenhouse. All things considered, we are very happy with the result."

*continued on page 25*



*Right,* Crew members had lots of plants to move outside for the sale. Marian Hiler photo.

# Wildscape Update continued from page 24, continued on page 26

*Left below,* Dana Austin and Chris Raney bring out the goods. Marian Hiler photo. *Right below,* Denise Pederson, left, and Carol Marcotte set up the vines. Marian Hiler photo.





*Left below,* Plenty of carrying trays made available for customers. John Darling photo. *Right below,* Carol Marcotte brings out carts for the serious buyers. John Darling photo.





*Left below,* Joe Martinez and Dana Austin are ready for customers. John Darling photo. *Right below,* Native enthusiasts wait patiently to start. John Darling photo.






# Wildscape Update continued from page 25, continued on page 27

*Right,* Greenhouse crew leaders Josephine Keeney and Kay Sekio. Paul Knudsen - ArlingtoNOW.com photo. *Below,* The sale in full swing. Paul Knudsen - ArlingtoNOW.com photo.






## Wildscape Update continued from page 26, continued on page 28

# *The Plant Sale Crew*




*From left, seated* Carol Marcotte, Hester Schwarzer, Marian Hiler, Christine Brinson. *Second row,* Denise Pederson, Ann Knudsen, (*squatting*), Charley Amos, Kay Sekio, Dana Austin, Ramona Gratton, Josephine Keeney. *Third row,* Joe Martinez, Ruth Kinler, Chris Raney, John Darling, Frank Keeney. Paul Knudsen - ArlingtoNOW.com photo.

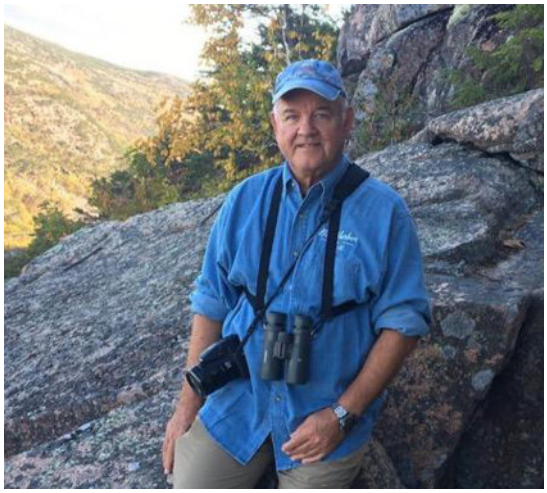
# *And at the very end,*

after the leftovers are safely back in the greenhouse and almost everyone has left, Josephine Keeney remains to ensure they are well watered. John Darling photo.



# Wildscape Update continued from page 27

## *ACTIV Center classes*



Third in the wildscape's ACTIV Center educational classes is Charley Amos's presentation about winter bird feeding on **October 27 at 1:00 pm in the Post Oak Hall**. Charley has been birding for over 20 years and leads birding trips all over the state. He is a two-time past president of the Fort Worth Audubon Society.

Presentations are open to all ACTIV Center members. Membership is available for residents and non-residents 50 and older. To become a member, visit the official Arlington Parks and Recreation Membership Portal.

## *First Saturday mini-classes*



On **September 5**, Texas Master Naturalist and Native Plant Society representative, Sandy Fountain, introduced the Native Landscape Certification Program (NLCP), a state-sponsored initiative by NPSOT to promote native plants and natural landscaping. NLCP consists of four levels: Level 1 Introduction to Native Plants, Level 2 Design with Native Plants, Level 3 Installation and Maintenance, Level 4 Stewardship, plus an optional companion class, Landscaping for Birds. NLCP classes are offered to both members and the public and count toward advanced training hours for Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners. Full class schedules are listed here. You can watch Sandy's mini-class and ones from Saturdays past on the wildscape's YouTube channel.

At the mini-class scheduled for **November 7**, Kate Rugroden, Director of the Bat World MidCities rescue center for Bat World Sanctuary, will talk about the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation services they provide not only for bats but local wildlife as well.

Mini-classes are held in the compost area and begin about 11:30 as the workday volunteers put away the day's tools.

## *Volunteer Opportunities*

We have returned to our cool season hours.
9:00 – noon Wednesdays and first Saturdays
All are welcome, no experience necessary.
Members of ecology and garden groups can receive credit hours.

For more information contact info@thewildscape.org

# Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve

## Review: Bats of the Area and How to Find Them

### It was hot, but we found a few! Annabelle Corboy

Thank you to Kate Rugroden, Ellen Ravkind and Anne Alderfer for sharing their appreciation for bats with an enthusiastic audience, on a very warm and humid evening, Saturday, September 12.

Kate talked about the bats in this area and the role she and the Bat World Sanctuary play in education and rehabilitation. Ellen and Anne demonstrated the use of the echolocation devices from Wildlife Acoustics (Echo Meter Touch 2).

*continued on page 30*

Left above, Jan Miller introduced the speakers. Right, Bat expert Kate Rugroden easily held the crowd's attention despite the heat. Left below, Authorities Ellen Ravkind and Anne Alderfer covered the local bats. Right, Anne demonstrated her echolocation device.





## SCNP continued from page 29

## iNaturalist Observations – August 2026

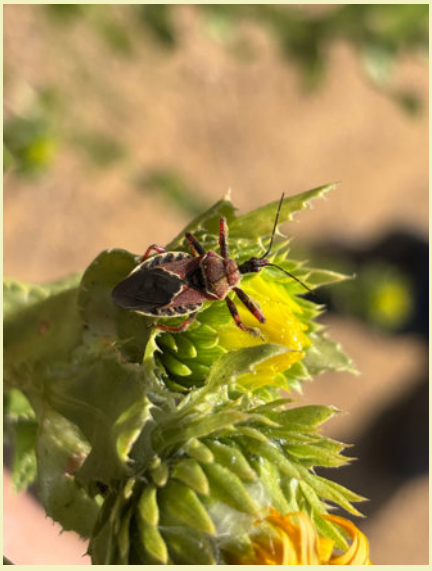
**For August: 43 Observations; 33 Species; 4 Observers.**

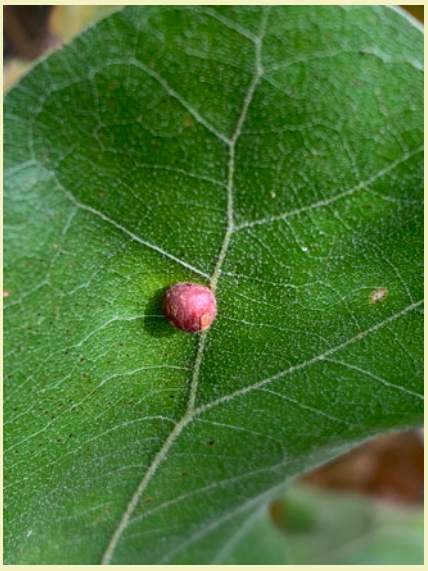
**Totals at SCNP at the end of August:**

**27,646 Observations / 2,261 Species / 2,217 Identifiers / 366 Observers**

*continued on page 31*







*Above from left,* Raccoons (3!) (*Procyon lotor*) – drawntoscales. Plains bee assassin (*Apiomerus spissipes*) – drawntoscales.Oakleaf gall midge (*Polystepha pilulae*) – saltyhiker. *Below from left,* Eastern pondhawk (*Erythemis simplicicolis*) - drawntoscales. (*Hypericum sp.*) – drawntoscales. Rusty blackhaw (*Viburnum rufidulum*) – apcorboy.







## SCNP Jan Miller continued from page 30

### Trail Project Complete Jan Miller

All trails at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve are again OPEN! A significant construction project completed September 23, 2026.

Over the years, several trails have needed ongoing repairs for erosion and poor drainage. To better ensure the safety of visitors and to preserve habitats, the Friends of SCNP, with the agreement of Arlington Parks, Recreation & Culture, enlisted KOM Trails of Leander, Tx to improve several trail segments.

KOM Trails' work was made possible by the generous donors of Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve. Thank you!

**RED/YELLOW TRAIL**

Starting from the parking lot, this trail crosses the bridge and heads toward the main pond, bordering its north edge. The trail here was eroded in parts, resulting in several muddy areas after heavy rains. Several solutions had been attempted to prevent the erosion but weren't sustainable long term.

The project re-aligned the trail with improved slope, grade and drainage. This trail is heavily used by hikers and fishermen alike. This work means a trail that is safer for all and less prone to erosion, so easier to maintain. It should also improve water quality by reducing the amount of sediment reaching the ponds.

*continued on page 32*

**RED/YELLOW TRAIL** Left, before. Right, after.





## SCNP continued from page 31

### Trail Project Complete

**ORANGE TRAIL**

The Orange Trail starts from the parking lot, parallels Bowman Springs Road, heads toward the North Pond, and passes along a patch of Little bluestem. Much of the trail is shaded by Post oaks and Eastern redcedar. This trail is used by visitors to the north pond and hikers heading for the north prairie.

The trail was eroded in parts with several muddy areas after heavy rains. South-Point Constructors volunteers added bridges to make the worst areas passable, but more modifications to the trail were still needed. The steeply sloped north end of the trail was difficult to navigate and continued to erode despite best efforts.

The steepest parts of the trail have been rerouted to improve the grade.

*continued on page 33*

**ORANGE TRAIL** *Left, before. Right, after.*





## SCNP continued from page 32

### Trail Project Complete

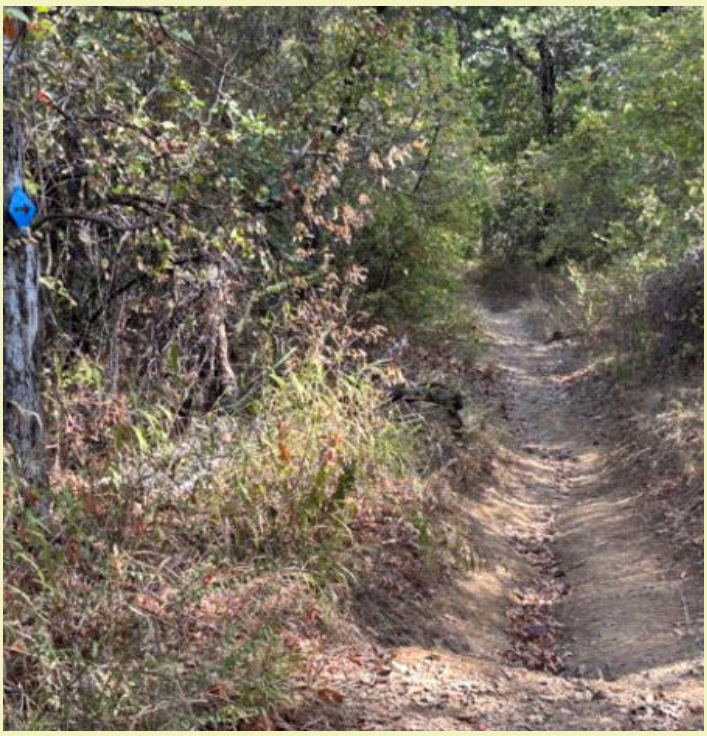
**BLUE TRAIL**

Starting from the bluff and heading down to the north prairie, the work on this section of the Blue Trail was one of the biggest challenges but now the most rewarding with the work finished.

This trail is steep and had resisted volunteers' attempts to slow erosion by adding steps and berms to the trail. The Blue Trail's major revision installed grade reversals and switchbacks resulting in a new route and opening up parts of the forest that weren't accessible before - maybe some new species to find!

*continued on page 34*

**BLUE TRAIL** Before, left. After, right.





## SCNP continued from page 33

# Trail Project Complete

**TRAILHEAD**

This link slopes from the north end of the parking lot up to the Kiosk and to the beginning of the preserve's natural surface trails.

The project removed the existing limestone steps and the deteriorated surface, then resurfaced and regraded the area to provide a durable and accessible tread and a smooth continuous surface.

As with all the other trail improvements, this work created trails that are safer for visitors, less prone to erosion, so easier to maintain.

*continued on page 35*

**TRAILHEAD** Before, left. After, right.






## SCNP Jim Frisinger continued from page 34

### The Great Crack Jim Frisinger

***Lest we forget:*** With the 2026 drought still upon us, the earth has literally opened up at Sheri Capehart Preserve. *Left below,* Michael Smith watches as Josh Parkerson reaches two feet into the Great Crack, which opened up in the forest just northeast of the North Pond.

### Yucca Census Jim Frisinger

Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve completed its first plant census of the Glen Rose Yucca Meadow Sept. 19. It follows three other censuses of much smaller yucca colonies in the preserve.

Glen Rose Yucca (*Yucca necopina*) is rare, discovered by the late SMU botanist Lloyd Herbert Shinners. It appears in the wild in only 7 counties in the world, all in Central Texas. It is under threat from urbanization, ranching, and even green energy infrastructure.

Friends volunteers counted 604 yucca plants in the main colony at Sheri Capehart. This will be our benchmark to measure the sustainability of the species here. The meadow is particularly friendly to the yuccas. They thrive in the sandy soil even in this year's drought.

The meadow has also drawn scientific interest. One study involved the yuccas, and a new one under way focuses on Comanche harvester ant colonies by Dr. Seal from the University of Texas-Tyler. The ants thrive in this unique meadow ecology.

The site also drew statewide notice due to the spotting of the Texas Micropirate, a tiny fly (*Townsendia pulcherrima*). Glen Rose Yucca Meadow and Thora Hart Park in Arlington were the only locations in Texas where the fly was recorded this year and last since a 1903 specimen in a natural history collection in Austin.

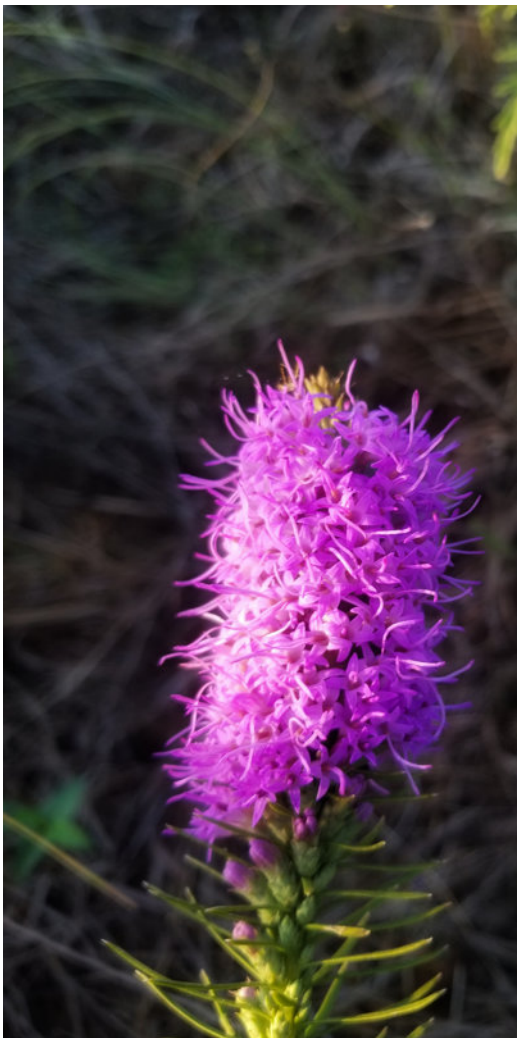


*Below,* Volunteer Josh Parkerson counts yuccas while Matt Beltensberger tallies the totals of the Glen Rose Yucca Meadow census this month. 604 plants were recorded.



# Blackland Prairie Preserve Guy Random







Gilgai ponds? Let's hope!
No, just damp after big rains.
It's a big sponge here.
Gayfeather's happy.
Snow on the prairie still good.
Last bits of color.



### 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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Address _____

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First-year member $10

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Supporting $40

Sponsor $100

Lifetime Individual $250

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# Watch this fine talk any time here.




**See page 5 for more on this meeting.**