

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES
VOLUME 9, NUMBER 4

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www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

April Meeting The Greening of the Green Oaks Inn Site

Kenneth Reese,
a senior managing director with
Cawley Wilcox, will present a detailed look
at the firm's ambitious, earth-friendly plans
for the Fort Worth property

Wednesday, April 9, 7:00 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram Street
(corner of Fielder and Abram)

**Bring something
for the raffle**

Bits & Pieces

A Natural History of North Central Texas

Here's a Web site that is "a collection of links, data and original content intended for the support and enhancement of the study and appreciation of the natural world of North Central Texas."

Find the site at <http://www.nhnct.org/urban/biod2.html>. Our Jo Ann Duman has gotten ACC included as a link, so now even more people can learn about us. Thanks, Jo Ann.



Today's Inspirational Moment

We're in a giant car heading towards a brick wall and everyone's arguing over where they're going to sit.

David Suzuki

Ring-tail Riddle



A friend in Shreveport is working to verify the presence of Ring-tailed cats, and he reminded us that this remarkable racoon relative is known from our area. So how many of us have ever seen one? Are they really still

here? Ring-tails are almost entirely nocturnal and they prefer rocky areas, so that adds to the difficulty. Maybe they're all hiding on the roofs of shopping centers.

BRIT Brown Bag Lunch Talk

April 9, 2008, 12:00 noon. Gardening with Woody Lilies: Agaves, Yuccas and More, by Dr. Peter Schaar.

Dr. Schaar will explain how to design with and grow woody lilies to achieve visual contrast and drama in a garden that is heat and drought tolerant. Photographs from several gardens will help train the eye as he discusses growing techniques for many native and adapted plants.

Location: Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan St., Fort Worth. Bring your lunch. Coffee will be provided.

RSVP not required. For more information, contact: Pat Harrison, Assistant Director, Head of Education, BRIT, 817-335-4372, www.brit.org

From the President John Darling



I guess we've just had our chance to put up or shut up, and we're still wondering what happened. After all my grousing about Arlington's environ-

mental direction (a nose dive into a Superfund site), we looked at a house in the Valley. Lower Rio Grande Valley, that is. Home of bunches of subtropical birds, butterflies, and plants and a place where you'd never have enough time to attend all the tree-hugger meetings, much less volunteer at more than a handful of the parks, preserves and projects.

Of course the Valley isn't exactly perfect. Like us, they've destroyed almost all of their original habitat. But unlike us, there's big money in eco-tourism, especially from birdwatchers, and lots of the small towns have been smart enough to cash in with nature-

oriented projects, especially my favorite (non-desert) thing: wetlands.

So there's this very old house on 2 acres, and it's got its own Harris hawks, Long-billed thrashers, Green jays, Altamira orioles, and Pyrrhuloxias. And who knows what else? With some serious native planting, that land could become a real gem in a part of the state where that means a lot.

What's not to like? Maybe about a zillion dollars worth of fixing up, but also the psychological thing — leaving this place, this house, and the environmental friends we've come to rely on in our tilting at windmills. After almost 40 years here, we experienced a serious reluctance to get out while the getting is good.

What will we do? Nothing, I guess, but hang around and wait for the apartments across the way to get tall enough to block the view of the gas well.



Just to be clear about this: Above, Valley view. Below, Pecan Street view.



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John Darling, Editor
1316 S. Pecan St.
Arlington TX 76010
817-274-1077
1darling@sbcglobal.net

Contributors

Julia Burgen, Grace Darling, John Dycus,
Molly Hollar, Jan Miller

Proofreader Grace Darling

Mailing Specialists Peg and Tom
Kennedy

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conserve Arlington's
natural resources.

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



Development of the IDI industrial warehouse facility (immediately north and east of the park) began unexpectedly on Tuesday, 3/26/08. Unfortunately, all the trees on the north park

boundary were removed. Fortunately, someone was watching. A very special thanks to the sharp-eyed neighbor of the prairie who called to report equipment on site. By the time volunteers arrived late that afternoon, the trees were gone. Word spread quickly. Thanks to contacts by Bonnie Bowman, Julia Burgen, city councilwoman Sheri Capehart and county commissioner Marti van Ravenswaay, protective measures are being taken.

Arlington Parks Department and other city offices are taking action to prevent damage. Temporary boundary fencing is being installed, expectations for protecting the boundary and the park have been communicated to the contractor and greater vigilance by several on-site city departments has been requested. Meetings with city officials are underway to view details of the development's landscape plan and to observe the protective measures on site. That's a lot of work and it's greatly appreciated! Thanks to everyone!

Why is adjacent development a risk to the prairie?

- Disturbed soil gives those invasive exotics an open door opportunity to colonize and then invade, fragmenting the prairie.
- During construction, careful attention is needed to assure that stormwater is routed outside the prairie so that it doesn't cause erosion, introduce chemical changes from construction materials, and create more disturbed soil. With the prairie soon to be surrounded by impervious surface, water patterns will change.
- Errant truck drivers may see another open field to drive through for a short cut, to dump a load of debris, and

more. Compression and disturbance of the prairie soil is extremely harmful, causing irreparable damage to soil structure and function, especially that unique blackland characteristic: the gilgais!

- Loss of the boundary trees means the hawks have fewer roosts and observation points and the food and cover from the old hackberries. That grand prickly ash/Hercules club will be missed by migrating songbirds.
- And even though the neighboring fields weren't native prairie, they expanded the prairie's footprint for species like dickcissels, hawks and coyotes. With possibly limited access and space, will they now move elsewhere?



Update on the Temporary Concrete Batch Plant air quality permit application pending at TCEQ: The location on the permit is the Blackland Prairie Park. Because of several local requests, plus timely requests from Representatives Pierson and Burnam, a public meeting will be held. Before that takes place, a second notice and opportunity for public comment are required. During this time additional requests for a public hearing or meeting can be made. (Many thanks to Becky Redman in Senator Kim Brimer's office for this update.) However, one rumor has it that this permit application may be dropped and a new application will be made for another spot near this site. Please report any signs posting notice of application for a temporary air quality permit so that we can check it out.

Monitoring the prairie throughout the construction period is needed, so please report any activity on the prairie (e.g. vehicles, construction debris, digging, etc.). And don't forget this is a good excuse to go out to watch for...and enjoy...the wildflowers.

Activities:

Saturday, April 12, 9:00 am. NYA Blackland Prairie Park. UTA's "Big Event" Tour and workday for UTA student volunteers.

Saturday, April 19, 9:00 am. FW Sierra Club. NYA Blackland Prairie Park. Tour and workday for Fort Worth Sierra Club volunteers.

For both events, a few hosts are needed to explain what a blackland prairie is and why they're important, help ID flowers/plants, answer questions. Then an hour or so of volunteer activity (pick up litter, remove small trees or whatever's most needed).

Saturday, April 26, 11:00 am - 8:00 pm Prairie Fest 2008 at Tandy Hills, east Fort Worth.

Wildflower tours, a green festival with music, speakers and entertainment. Volunteers would be appreciated for the ACC/TCEA booth. Contact Don Young if you'd like to exhibit or be a PF volunteer. See www.tandyhills.org/prairiefest for more information.

Sunday, May 4, Spring wildflower tours — double header!

10:00 am – noon at Southwest Nature Preserve.

1:00 – 3:00 pm at NYA Blackland Prairie Park.

Join Master Naturalist Jim Varnum for annual spring wildflower tours at two really different sites that showcase our special place on the margin of the Eastern Crosstimbers and Blackland Prairies.

Anytime: trek out to NYABP to enjoy the wildflowers!

Contact: jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net

Wildscape Update John Dycus



We don't know enough yet. Time to learn some more.

Beginning in April, each first-Saturday volunteer opportunity in the wildscape will include a new learning

experience.

After a couple of hours of work — spring blooms! birdsong! butterflies! you call this work? — and a short break for water and refueling, volunteers will be rewarded with a 20-minute presentation (with handouts) followed by a 10-minute question period.

Each month will offer instruction to increase native gardening expertise.

In June, Suzanne Tuttle will lead wildscape volunteers in discovering more

about wildscape plants. Another month's learning experience will feature Heather Dowell, Arlington Parks and Recreation Department forester, demonstrating planting and caring for native trees.

Additional sessions will focus on attracting birds and butterflies, water conservation in landscapes, native plant propagation, native landscape maintenance, controlling invasive exotics and composting.

The concept launches at 9:00 am April 5 with a demonstration of assembling an inexpensive container for rainwater harvesting. Before the first Saturday in May, a calendar for 2008 volunteer/learning opportunity days will be added to the wildscape Web site, www.thewildscape.org.



More Miserable Mowing Julia Burgen

It was the first day of spring, a day to officially end winter and herald new life.

Then the city's mowing contractor trespassed on private property without notice and mowed down the field of wildflowers. Some 20-plus plant species, just as the stems began to reach up and the buds to develop: lost for spring 2008, and probably for next year, and the year after that.

So much for new life.

The octogenarian caretaker of the wildflower meadow, who has lived at the site for more than 50 years, deserved better. So did the passers-by — potentially all of us — who enjoyed this patch of paradise.

As I observed the flattened landscape, monarch butterflies arrived on their long flight from Mexico's central mountains. They were headed across Texas to eventually spend summer in New England and Canada. Last fall during the October southerly migration, I saw more monarchs on this property than I have seen at any time in my 30 years in Arlington.

Monarchs are fragile and essentially endangered from the land-altering activities of man. They require milkweed on which to lay their eggs. Although the adult butterflies will nectar on other plants, only the milkweed can provide

food for the caterpillars. Milkweed was among the plants destroyed.

One wishes that some botanical marker could direct the monarchs someplace besides this incredibly bipolar burg, environmentally alert at times, to be sure, but more often careless, inept or blind.

With all the talk about global footprints and air pollution, water (im)purity, plastic bags hanging in bushes, and so on, I thought we had reawakened to the need to be stewards of the land. Maybe I was wrong.

Mowers spew toxics and use precious fuel as they spin about their unnecessary circuits. I would much prefer the city convert its medians and rights-of-way to native plants that don't need mowing to look good year 'round. As a taxpayer I abhor my money being thrown at such hateful activity as plundering this meadow.

About the property owner. Following retirement, she has volunteered countless hours at city parks, at the Fielder Museum's rose garden, at the Front Street Historical Park. She has been a volunteer tutor at Webb Elementary School for years. She received the Star-Telegram's Woman of the Year Award in 2003 in recognition of her role as a community volunteer and leader.

The city says it's sorry. Really. Truly. How about the city use gas-drilling proceeds to establish a permanent mitigation fund to compensate owners when these misfortunes happen. The city should protect this meadow and others like it (see accompanying story on the New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park) and reseed it.

And the man astride the mower on that first day of spring, and the man who told him to cut right there, have them fling the first seed.



O.S. Gray Park to Be Developed

At last it looks like that bit of park property on West Abram will be developed into a functional park.

Our Parks Department held a meeting on April 2 to gather input from the public on the proposed plan for improvements. A big, vocal crowd was strongly divided on major points, including parking and playground.

There will be another meeting in about 6 weeks, after Parks staff have worked to update the original plan (at right) in order to accommodate at least some of the neighbors' divergent wishes. What will that meeting be like?



From the Eco-Front Grace Darling

"They only have to win once." Dr. Bill Pyburn, the late UTA biology professor, used to say that back in the 1970s about victories by anti-environment forces. He would remind his students about the fragility of our natural world, how one stroke of a pen by someone in authority or the action of a single individual could undo decades of preservation work. Dr. Pyburn's words came to mind recently after a month of setbacks on the Arlington environmental front – see stories in this and other issues of the *Post Oak*.

A TCEQ permit application for a cement batch plant right smack on the New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park that went unnoticed by everyone until 2 days before the deadline for public comment.

Expansion of a warehouse adjoining the NYABPP. The promised 30-foot buffer between the complex and the park was "forgotten" by the contractor. All trees and other sight and sound barriers were cut during grading, with some disturbance of the park itself.

The destruction of the wildflower meadow on North Cooper. Lacking proper supervision, a laborer on a mower wiped out decades of native plantings in 1 hour.

Threats to Treepoint Park off Hwy. 287. Bulldozers from nearby projects have been at work removing the vegetation and altering the drainage of this so far undeveloped piece of public land.

The long-awaited development of O S Gray Park (the master plan dates to 2001) is stalled because neighbors cannot agree on the design and features they want for the area.

Safety issues of the gas well drilling operation on Ledbetter Road. The well is very close to the roadway and the very dangerous intersection of Curry and Ledbetter. The gate to the site, just opposite the school, is often wide open at 4:00 pm.

Much of the anguish we are suffering now could have been avoided had we known about some of these happenings

before they became crises. ACC will be working more closely with APRD and the Planning, Environmental Services, and Neighborhood Services departments to suggest ways to improve their interdepartmental and external communications. Meanwhile, let us stay vigilant and report any potential violations to ACC and city officials. Eco-code Rangers – why not?

Thanks to our March speaker

Marilyn Sallee, Master Naturalist and a whole lot more, gave us a spirited talk on exotic invasive plants. You could say that we were a

receptive audience: We peppered Marilyn with so many questions, she must have thought she'd never get home.



Earth Day at the Wildscape

**CELEBRATE THE
PLANET WITH
AN OUTDOORS
AFTERNOON OF
FAMILY FUN**

1-4 p.m. Sunday, April 20
Molly Hollar Wildscape
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in the old meadow, at the
entrance to the wildscape

2008

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**FOR THE KIDS, FACE
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JUST AS GOOD AS
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AND EROSION CONTROL**



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817-274-1077 1darling@sbcglobal.net

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817-516-7453 jduman@juno.com

Second Vice President Roy Miliner

230-4295 rlmiliner@tx.rr.com

Treasurer Marian Hiler 277-3998

mernhome@sbcglobal.net

Secretary Jo Briggs 460-8483

briggs.robert@tx.rr.com

Editor John Darling 274-1077

1darling@sbcglobal.net

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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council

PO Box 216

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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, April 9

7:00 pm

Kenneth Reese

*The Greening of the
Green Oaks Inn Site*

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Be sure to visit us at

arlingtonconservationcouncil.org



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