

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 10

**NOVEMBER-
DECEMBER
2009**

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

November Meeting

**Wild Baby Shower
in Support of the New
Wildlife Emergency Care Center
Bonnie Bradshaw,
Wildcare Texas**

**Wednesday, November 11, 7:00 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)**



**Come have some fun while we
learn how we can support the
Wildcare Triage Center — a place
where injured wildlife will receive
immediate care.**

Bits & Pieces

Our Smallest Vertebrate

As winter approaches, it's good to know that our northern cricket frogs will be out on warm days in wet places. Best cricket frog tidbit: These one-inch brutes can leap up to six feet in a single bound. And if that's not enough, they eat mosquitos.



Today's Inspirational Moment



This is the first age that's ever paid much attention to the future, which is a little ironic since we may not have one.

Arthur C. Clarke

Happy Plant

Your editor is known for turning green plants into brown compost, but here's an exception: The tiny bits of skeleton-leaf goldeneye planted at Mission Arlington a while back seem to be thriving and they don't look at all like compost (so far).



Duck Days Have Begun



The Village Creek drying beds are absolutely full of water and masses of winter ducks are already showing up. If you like ducks, get out there, but watch out for the mud.

From the President John Darling



Superannuated, tree-hugging, amateur editor burns out! Won't last until his 100th issue! Resorts to exclamation marks and meaningless doodling during meeting! Critics divided: some remain calm; others welcome premature demise; most don't notice!

In an exclusive interview the reclusive, possibly cynical editor revealed that the absorption of Arlington's Environmental Services division into Public Works was the final blow to his increasingly fragile grasp on environmental hope. Despite highly placed assurances that remaining personnel (all 3 of them) would continue their efforts unfazed by their apparent demotion, the editor has regressed into childish drawing.

"I want a city that will come out of the reactionary closet and use the E word proudly," he whined. "Why can't we be like those cool guys in the northern tier?"

Terminating the interview abruptly, he hefted a pitchfork and lumbered off toward an enormous pile of leaves and something that appeared to be rotting food.

We're left with myriad questions, most of which are boring. Informed sources report that this outburst is a childish ploy to avoid writing a president's column.



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conserve Arlington's
natural resources.

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



Workdays resume at NYABP!

Blessed with a beautiful Halloween workday, volunteers bashed trees, surveyed the fence lines for invasives and collected

native seed for on-site restoration. Thanks very much to volunteer prairie stewards Bonnie Bowman, John Darling (aka your editor), Wes Miller, Kathy Scott, Barbara Fleischman and son. We had some great discussions at the workday, including the when and how of mowing to exploring alternatives to mowing.



Despite rants against the evil mowers, the prairie does need mowing as the trees have taken great advantage of the generous fall rains. Even after cutting the trees at least annually since 2004, most is from regrowth, not from seed. Like Medusa, cut trees seem to come back stronger, with sprouts coming from multiple sites along the roots. We also noticed that thatch is deep and while that may be great for mouse tunnels (and ultimately the coyotes, snakes and hawks) it's not so great for prairie plants. Could that be why the "big" bluestem is only about 4' tall? Still, there is a great diversity of native grasses this fall: little bluestem, big bluestem ("turkeyfoot"),



side oats grama and the queen of the fall prairie, Indian grass. Amazingly, there are still lots of goldenrod, pitcher sage and asters to keep the bees and butterflies fueled.

So how about another workday? Let's plan another one for this month: Saturday, November 28, 2009, 9:00 am – noon.

Work off the turkey and push away from the TV. Join us to cut trees, gather native seed, etc. We'll meet for lunch after if anyone's interested. RSVP to jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net appreciated but not required.

More prairie news, near and far: Fall means bison roundups. Bison from Wind Cave National Park, one of few genetically pure (no cattle genes) and brucellosis-free herds, were reintroduced to several new locations last month. The Nature Conservancy arranged for bison to be shipped to Broken Kettle

Grasslands in Iowa, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas and Rancho El Uno in Mexico. Closer to home, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge also manages a herd of about 30-40 genetically pure bison.

From the Friends of Konza Prairie (Kansas) "Bison and Bluestem" newsletter: news and photos of their fall bison roundup, details of the multi-disciplined Konza Environmental Education Program and materials they developed



and are providing for area schools, and a link to an "Atlas of North American Prairies": www.1001prairies.com. There's a good discussion of prairies, photos, and a directory of prairies complete with links for more information. Check it out; it even lists NYABP!

If you like your prairie inspiration indoors, check out "Romancing the Prairie", an exhibit of poems and abstract paintings by Arlington artist/poet Vern Johnson: Opening reception: Nov. 14, 5:00 – 8:00 pm. Nov. 7 – Dec. 5, 2009. Upstairs Gallery, 1038 W. Abram. www.upstairsartgallery.com

Role model for all.
Rooted to the earth.
Reveling in life.
Reaching for the sky.
Vern Johnson

Next Workday:
Saturday, November 28
9:00 am – noon



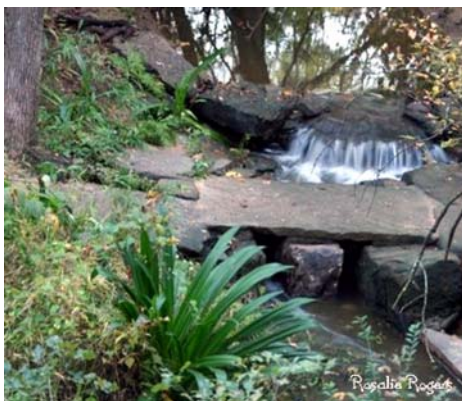
Wildscape Update John Dycus



Suddenly everything's green again. Gallons of rain will do that. The low waterfall is overflowing, the flowers have reappeared, and the butterflies, bees, squirrels and lizards are out in force, adding motion and color to the scenery.



In memory of Jim Kunde, the volunteers planted trees, shrubs, groundcovers and wildflowers in Village Creek Park to enhance the area around a bench donated by Jim's wife, Diana, and their children.



by John Snowden. John is on the wildscape best friends list for donating most of the hundreds and hundreds of native grasses, many hours of his own labor eradicating privet, and as the resident grass and prairie expert.

All of the other hundreds of native plants were grown in the greenhouse by volunteers led by greenhouse manager Josephine Keeney and her assistant, Marylee Thomason. Added planting muscle has come from 10 snappy UTA volunteers, who plan to help again this month.



Wildscape volunteers are enjoying the outdoors while digging in the moist, soft soil, the lovely weather making everything even more pleasant. They've planted more than a thousand plants this fall, including 100 gayfeather bulbs donated



Left, Peggy Quinn and volunteers. Top, gayfeather. Above and below, UTA volunteers.



Jim and Diana walked daily in this park near their home, especially enjoying the birds there. Jim was a much-loved wildscape volunteer.

In October, Molly Hollar's college roommate, author Jane Roberts Wood (*The Train to Estelline, A Place Called Sweet Shrub*), brought her garden club from Argyle to visit the wildscape. Jane is a retired teacher of graduate literature and fiction courses at SMU and, in Molly's estimation, a "fabulous people person." Lunch at Mijo's, plus a donation from the generous and beguiling Argyleans, completed a great day.



continued on page 5

Wildscape Update continued from page 4

October and September also were big months for tree-hugging symposia, beginning with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's native plant conservation conference. Next, at the Native Plant Society of Texas state meet in Wichita Falls, major awards went to several wildscape luminaries, including Rosa Finsley, its landscape architect for all of its 15 years; the aforementioned John Snowden, owner of Bluestem Nursery; and bird expert David Hurt, who early on furnished birdhouses (climbing 20 feet to install the screech owl house) and presented the wildscape's first (and his first) educational program on attracting birds.

David and his wife, Kim, donated their 40 acres for creation of the \$7 million



Audubon Dogwood Canyon Project. It opens in 2010, and David has been the driving force behind it.

Texas Parks and Wildlife urban biologist John Davis, a force of nature in the wildscape's early days who helped secure the first TPWD matching grant for wildscapes, was the keynote speaker at the Texas Master Naturalist state symposium at Mo Ranch near Kerrville. John moved to Austin last year after being promoted to supervise the TPWD outreach programs, including all of the wildscapes in Texas.

We're honored to have the support of these outstanding leaders, and their contributions are largely responsible for successes the wildscape has enjoyed.

No Meeting in December

We won't meet next month, so there's one less thing to do during the busy holiday season. But don't miss the special November meeting: Come out and help Wildcare!

Thanks to Our October Speaker



We're indebted to Bonnie Bowman, President of Tarrant Coalition for Environmental Awareness and Past President of ACC, for her fascinating talk on social marketing and its importance to environmental campaigns. Bonnie made a complex topic sound easy, and she generated lots of interest and good questions.



In defense of thatch: Those prairie people are so focused on grass, they could overlook the wonderful microhabitat the heavy stuff provides for all sorts of animals. *Above*, a rodent runway, probably made by Hispid cotton rats, at New York Avenue Prairie.

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

For more information visit <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>



Green Democracy **Grace Darling**

ONCOR ANSWERS COMPLAINTS (OR NOT)

The much-anticipated public meeting with Oncor last Saturday to discuss their tree-trimming practices in Arlington was a disappointment. Alternating between defensiveness – “our only concern is the safety and reliability of electricity delivery” – and defiance – “Oncor services an area from the Red River to Austin, maintains 2800+ electric feeders, provides 6000 jobs to the North Texas economy, and pays many millions to the city in ad valorem taxes” – the presenter ran through a prolonged infomercial that failed to address most citizens’ complaints. The format of the meeting, where only written questions to the speaker were considered and follow-up was not possible, left many people frustrated when his answers were vague and nonresponsive. Other than assurances that “we’re working on that” or “we’re monitoring the situation,” I learned only two things: Oncor has installed a state-of-the-art smart grid in Cowboys Stadium, and the emergency number to call in case of a power outage is 888-313-4747. Many thanks to Arlington City Council member Kathryn Wilemon and State Representative Diane Patrick, who brought us together to try to resolve our differences with Oncor. It was a good thought and not your fault the effort failed.



SOUTHWEST NATURE PRESERVE LIVES



The first meeting of the Southwest Nature Preserve Advisory Committee was a resounding success. Despite the diverse backgrounds of committee members and the organizations they represent, a remarkable unanimity of vision was in evidence. All present agreed to minimal development of SWNP to keep it as a 58-acre natural area of primary interest to hikers, birdwatchers, and nature lovers. Man-made enhancements such as parking lots and toilets are to be limited in number and size, ecologically friendly, and confined to sites that offer easy access to the roadway and will not affect the interior of the preserve. No plans were made for resurfacing trails or adding observation towers, fishing piers, picnic tables, or playgrounds. Educational signs and perhaps a building where outdoor classes are held will also be incorporated into the request for proposal (RFP) that APRD will issue soon to select a designer for the preserve. Congratulations and thanks to the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department on a very satisfying process of community involvement; may other departments follow your lead.



UPDATE ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

The results of the consultant’s traffic study on the stretch of Bowman Springs Road bordering Southwest Nature Preserve are in, as follows:

2009, vehicles/day (actual) 4,000-5,000

2019, vehicles/day (projected) 9,500

2030, vehicles/day (projected) 13,500

The traffic projections are based on complex models of anticipated develop-



ment, usage, density, route patterns, etc., but roughly it means that the existing two-lane road is sufficient to carry the estimated car load until some time between 2019 and 2030. Once vehicular traffic exceeds 12,000 per day, a wider road is considered desirable. This finding raises more questions about whether to prevent a potential, far-in-the-future bottleneck by widening the road now, or wait at least 10 years to see if the growth projections come true and address the situation then. It is complicated by the three-way interlocal agreement for funding undertaken by the cities of Kennedale and Arlington and Tarrant County, plus the new five-lane bridge TxDOT will build where the road curves west. In the next few weeks city staff from Public Works, Planning and Development, and Parks and Recreation will weigh all the angles and make recommendations to Council, who will take the final decision. Keep up your letters to save the SWNP as is.

Dr Al Armendariz to Head EPA Region 6 Texas Campaign for the Environment

Environmental Groups Applaud EPA Choice

Environmental advocates across several states are applauding the Obama Administration's choice of Dr. Al Armendariz to lead Region 6 of the Environmental Protection Agency, which includes Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Arkansas. Armendariz, an engineering professor at Southern Methodist University, has worked with diverse constituencies ranging from corporations to citizens groups and has published dozens of studies on myriad environmental issues throughout his career. His appointment garnered high praise from the environmental community.

"Our region has typically provided a haven for some of the worst polluters in the country, and has paid a steep price," said Tom "Smitty" Smith, Texas Director for Public Citizen. "I believe the appointment of Dr. Al Armendariz signifies a new direction for Region 6."

In an effort to make sure EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and the White House chose a strong environmental leader for Region 6, about twenty prominent advocates signed on to a list of principles that they hoped would guide the appointment. Dr. Armendariz was one of two candidates the groups endorsed for the position. Their list of qualities for an ideal administrator included a commitment to environmental justice and science-based policy, minimal ties to industries regulated by EPA and a strict adherence to the President's Executive Order on Ethics, which was intended to prevent conflicts of interest between lobbyists and government agencies.

"Al Armendariz demonstrates the kind of vision, integrity and grassroots approach to enforcing environmental law this region needs if we're truly going to clean up our act," said Jeffrey Jacoby, Program Director at the Texas Campaign for the Environment (TCE). "He embodies the 'Principles for Environmental Leadership and Real Change' we believed should guide this appointment." Indeed, many within the environmental community see appointment of Armendariz as indicative of a new approach for the regional EPA.

"We are thrilled with Dr. Armendariz's appointment," said Luke Metzger, Director of Environment Texas. "After eight years of the Bush EPA, it's a new day for Texas' environment. Move over, polluter lobbyists, science and human health are in charge now."

In addition to environmentalists, some within the business community were also pleased with Obama's choice. Former Austin City Councilmember Brigid Shea, now principal and co-founder of an environmental consulting firm, stated, "As a businessperson who's concerned about the environment, it's time this region got someone who understands that we can have both a healthy environment and a strong economy, that the two are not at odds."

Move over, polluter lobbyists, science and human health are in charge now.

Dr. Armendariz will take over for Acting Region 6 Administrator Larry Starfield. During his tenure, he will face a number of pressing environmental challenges, including potentially overseeing the implementation of federal climate change legislation, bringing metropolitan areas in Texas into compliance with the Clean Air Act and working to clean up toxic "hot spots" along the Gulf Coast.

"Texas needs a tough air enforcement chief at EPA 6 Dallas like Dr. Armendariz who's willing to tackle head on the state's serious air quality challenges with large urban areas like Dallas and Houston failing to meet new ozone standards, and who is willing to require Texas to clean up its large dirty coal plants and refineries," stated Dr. Neil Carman of the Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter. Environmental justice activists from communities across the state are also hopeful that the appointment of Dr.

Armendariz will benefit Texans living directly adjacent to polluting facilities.

"The Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice is a document that looks good on paper, but in the real world EPA's office of Environmental Justice has at times sided with industry over our communities; and pollution problems in poor communities have gotten worse, not better," said Suzie Canales, Executive Director of Corpus Christi-based Citizens for Environmental Justice. "Now under Armendariz, we have real hope that environmental justice issues will be a serious priority to the agency."

Many environmental justice groups endorsed Armendariz from the beginning of the Regional Administrator selection process, citing his commitment to science, his understanding of the issues and his dedication to enforcing the spirit of environmental laws such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts.

"Dr. Armendariz is exactly the kind of person you'd want to have this job, but seemingly never gets it," said Jim Schermbeck, long-time Field Organizer with Downwinders at Risk. "Because of what's at stake and the fact that Texas is the belly of the polluter beast, this may be one of the most important, far-reaching appointments the Obama Administration makes. Downwinders at Risk is proud to have been the group that first utilized Dr. Armendariz's expertise for our cause of cleaning up the Midlothian cement kilns back in 2005. That work lead directly to his becoming the premier 'citizen's scientist' in Texas on air pollution, and paved the way for his much larger influence on the state scene. Congratulations to both Dr. Armendariz and the EPA."

As enthusiastic as environmentalists are about the appointment, they also promised to hold Dr. Armendariz accountable to the people affected by pollution issues in the five-state region. "As outstanding as Dr. Armendariz has been on paper and in interviews, we'll be watching to make sure he walks the walk," says Jacoby, who works in TCE's Dallas office, "Remember, Al, my office is right down the street."

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Bonnie Bradshaw

Wildcare Baby Shower

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