

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION

POST OAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2015

www.acctexas.org

February Meeting

Understanding Water in Texas

Rita Beving,
North Texas Outreach Coordinator,
Clean Water Fund/
Clean Water Action

Wednesday, February 4, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



Rita's presentation will cover water planning in Texas from both a statewide and local perspective. Currently the local Region C Water Planning Group is finalizing its plan for meeting water needs through 2070. The discussion will also include water conservation tips for indoor and outdoor use and a review of some water bills we should look out for this legislative session.

For the past four years Rita worked for Public Citizen as an organizer and lobbyist on energy issues. She has also worked as a facilitator for the National Sierra Club for an outings/conservation program and is currently the Dallas Sierra Club Conservation Co-chair and serves on the state Executive Committee of the Lone Star Chapter of Sierra Club.

Bring something for the raffle!

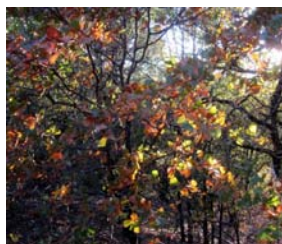
Bits & Pieces

Can Fox Squirrels Be Interesting?

Today's challenge: Choose a common creature you might actually see in February and produce a fact you don't already know. Okay, they don't like much understory vegetation. They have two types of homes called dreys. There are two litters a year, and average litter size is three. They may eat bird eggs and fungi. Most die before reaching maturity, and all of them are eating my birdseed.



Today's Inspirational Moment



I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority.

E.B. White

The Great Backyard Bird Count

Time again already: From February 13 through 16 you can contribute to a wonderful bird project by counting birds at any location for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and entering your sightings at www.BirdCount.org.

The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track changes in bird populations on a massive scale. Participate anywhere on your own, or join groups at River Legacy Living Science Center (2/14) from 10:00-2:00.

Or head to Southwest Nature Preserve (also 2/14) with Jan Miller, info@SWNP.org, from 7:30 till 9:30.



From the President **Danny Kocurek**



It's a new year, again.

Having reached the point in the new year where most folks are putting the right year on their checks

and the crowds at the gym have thinned back to baseline, it is time to make some real resolutions. Lucky for you, I have a suggestion.

I would like every ACC member to pick one day a week to devote one hour to ACC. Tuesday night after dinner would be great, but you can pick whatever works. The key is it has to be on your schedule and you can't skip it.

What you do with that hour is completely up to you. Sending emails to City Council or legislators, volunteering at one of our Friends groups' work days, writing an article for the newsletter, recruiting ACC members, posting an interesting article on our Facebook page, the choices are myriad. If you need

some ideas, please contact me anytime.

ACC does a great job with the resources we have, but the results would be amazing if everyone contributed.



Volunteers remove invasive plants at a recent workday.

THE POST OAK

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Thanks A.C.C. for working to conserve Arlington's natural resources.

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Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve Jan Miller Photos by Wes Miller

3rd Saturday Stewardship
workday
Blackland Prairie
Nature Preserve
4907 New York Avenue
February 21, 9:00 am - noon

Participate in restoration and management activities at this rare blackland prairie remnant. Please wear sturdy shoes or boots and long pants. See the website below for more information:

Friends of the Prairie
www.theprairie.org
info@theprairie.org



Prairie Extra: Prescribed Burns Jan Miller

A visit with Rob Denkhaus,
*Natural Resource Manager,
 Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge*

This season stirs plans for the new year for us humans, but stirrings of the natural new year are always underway, a continuation of the natural cycle. Winter plant rosettes unfurl tentative leaves and in a few local prairie sites, wisps of prairie smoke have unfurled as the “red buffalo” of prescribed burns is unleashed.

For thousands of years, fire played an essential role in prairie ecosystems by limiting growth of trees and brush, reducing thatch and recycling nutrients. At some point, indigenous people noticed that wildlife were attracted to the nutritious and luxuriant sprouts that emerged after a burn...and they began to set their own fires. With urbanization, fire has been suppressed, resulting in increased thatch, brushy growth and increasingly destructive wildfires.

In an effort to restore a balance, land managers may perform prescribed burns on their grasslands or prairies. The burns reduce the risk of wildfires and also their severity while improving the quality of their grasslands for grazing



animals and/or for wildlife. In January, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge carried out two successful prescribed burns, with an added benefit of providing practical experience as part of wildlands fire training programs with Fort Worth and several other municipal fire departments.

Although the actual burn lasts only minutes, planning and risk assessment starts many months earlier. Site information is critical: the historic fire interval (usually about 5 years), quantity and character of the existing biomass, the rationale for burning. Even more important in urban areas is information about the surrounding area: are there schools, residential areas, businesses, health care facilities which may be impacted by smoke? Are there airports, or

roadways which might be affected by drifting smoke? Next steps include a host of permit applications. If all approvals are secured, involved agencies, neighbors and participants are notified and as the approved date range approaches, watch begins for optimal atmospheric conditions: wind speed, humidity, soil moisture, temperature, etc. When those conditions occur, the team assembles and the burn plan is initiated according to a meticulous checklist: the crew creates blackline perimeters, then sets a head fire and monitors conditions vigilantly. The prescribed burn soon taps itself within the established boundaries and the site is mopped up; any remaining embers are doused and the site monitored. A week or so

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Prairie Extra continued from page 4

for all, but the required preparation is essential to its success.

Prescribed Burning

http://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/habitats/post_oak/habitat_management/fire/

Conservancy Staff Uses Prescribed Burns in Urban Parks to Improve Habitat

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/arkansas/explore/prescribed-burns-in-urban-parks.xml>

Classroom Inferno: Fire lab sparks memorable lessons

<http://collegian.tccd.edu/?p=24390>

later, or maybe only days if rains cooperate, sunlight warms the soil, dormant seeds now scarified by fire germinate, tender green shoots of perennial grasses emerge, and the cycle starts again.

Cities around the US include prescribed burns for fire training and for management of urban/wildlands interfaces. Fire personnel are more experienced, fire risk is reduced for adjacent properties and the ecological resilience of grasslands is restored. A good outcome is benefit

*Prescribed Fires at the Wildland-Urban Interface: Policy and Citizen Concern*

<http://chapter.ser.org/texas/files/2013/04/Ecological-Restoration-Brief-No10-Karklin.pdf>

Controlling the Uncontrollable: Fire Regulation and Incentives at the Wildland-Urban Interface

<http://chapter.ser.org/texas/files/2013/04/Ecological-Restoration-Brief-No8-Karklins.pdf>



Wildscape Update Bev Crawford

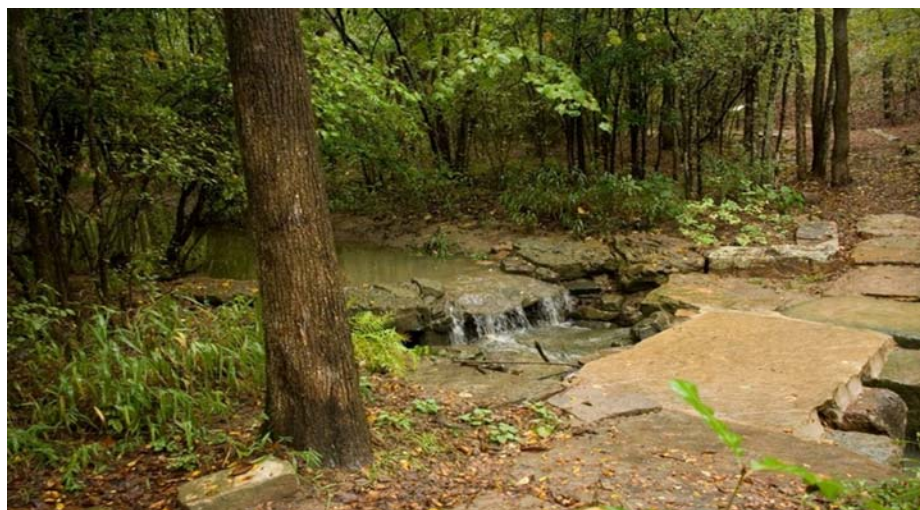
Preservation of the last piece of Eastern Cross Timbers Woodlands was a vision Molly Hollar shared with members of the Arlington Conservation Council and the Arlington Organic Garden Club. With support from these organizations and the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department, work began and a plan was submitted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1994.

Following agency approval, a hardy band of volunteers set about transforming a bare half acre into a nearly five-acre woodland of lush native plants.

The wildscape portion of Veterans Park has become the second most frequented park in a city that boasts more than 90 parks. By 2000 the Molly Hollar Wildscape was a Tarrant County Master Gardeners Association project, nurtured by the Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists and other nature lovers who have poured countless hours into educating the community on how using native plants conserves resources, attracts wildlife and promotes sustainability.

A landscape architect and an urban biologist from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department helped develop the layout, as did experts in Arlington Parks and Recreation and the TCMGA and Master Naturalist organizations. Understory vegetation barely existed, so restoration was an early focus. The city generously allowed wildscape workers to use a city greenhouse for propagating plants. Volunteers do the planting.

Grants from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Native



Plant Society of Texas and Arlington Parks and Recreation jumpstarted the work. Today, monetary support from the TCMGA, gifts from businesses and private citizens, and revenue from the yearly plant sale ensure continued upkeep.

This ongoing care generates positive results. A butterfly garden consisting of both native nectar and host plants greets visitors. A natural erosion area planted with natives alleviates runoff. A berm area planted with blue grama and buffalo grass shows lawn alternatives for ultimate water conservation. Wetlands proclaim the use of plants for the survival of this delicate ecosystem. And the woodland with its variety of trees and understory growth provides food and shelter for wildlife.

On any given day people come to walk, jog, meditate or just sit and enjoy nature. Numerous partnerships have resulted. Students from Arlington ISD take a guided tour, the Walk on the Wildside, as part of science class. Volunteers set up stations and teach hands-on lessons ranging from learning the benefits of composting to identifying plant

parts and their functions, and making wildflower seed balls. Special needs students from the 18 Plus program work alongside the volunteers.

At least a dozen young men have completed their Eagle Scout projects at the wildscape. Teens from the juvenile justice alternative education program come out periodically and work with the volunteers. The local Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership organization has chosen the wildscape as its community service project for the last five years.

One Saturday a month a mini-class for the public and volunteers presents information on subjects pertinent to successful conservation and sustainability. Such continued outreach has resulted in the park's namesake, Molly Hollar, and other volunteers receiving a variety of awards from state and local organizations.

The Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park is a vital part of Arlington. Its beauty and opportunities for relaxing, playing and learning have touched many lives. It promises to be an integral part of the city for decades to come.

Dallas Starts New Year with Bag Ban Green Source DFW, Rita Cook, January 12, 2015



For more information, visit www.GreenDallas.net/carryout-bag-ordinance

Courtesy of GoGreentriCities.org.

<http://greendallas.net/carryout-bag-ordinance/>

Dallas' new bag fee law requires a five-cent fee on all single use bags. Courtesy of city of Dallas.

This month, Dallas is blazing a new trail as the city's new bag fee goes into effect. Dallas is the first city in North Texas to adopt an ordinance intended to curb single use bags, which are considered by many to be a wasteful use of resources, a chronic source of litter and a danger to wildlife.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, the

average American family takes home 1,500 plastic shopping bags a year.

The Dallas City Council passed the bag fee ordinance in March that requires retailers to charge a 5-cent fee for single-use bags.

The law went into effect on January 1, but many residents still have a lot of questions, according to Kevin Lefebvre, senior environmental coordinator for the city of Dallas' Office of Environmental Quality.

"We continue to receive questions and feedback from Dallas residents and retailers," said Lefebvre. "Some are unsure how the ordinance may apply to them while others are embracing the opportunity to help reduce litter. Also, there have been calls to inquire about what they have heard via word-of-mouth regarding the ordinance asking for clarification." Richard Hill, senior public information officer for city of Dallas, said it's too early to tell whether the law is changing Dallasites' behavior.



Courtesy of SFEnvironment.org

"Obviously we are encouraging people to bring reusable bags from home, but I don't have a number in terms of how many people are using reusable bags in Dallas [at the moment]."

People who do not supply their own reusable bags will be charged a five-cent fee per bag for all single

use, carryout bags, both paper or plastic, said Hill.

"The fee does not apply to non-carryout plastic bags inside the store used for produce, meat, nuts or other bulk items. Also exempt are such items as laundry, dry cleaning or garment bags and biodegradable newspaper bags."



All retail stores are covered by the ordinance and the only way customers can avoid the fee is to bring their own reusable bag from home.

"Fees collected help pay for enforcement and public education," Hill adds. "Businesses keep 10 percent of the fee to offset administrative costs."

While cities in Europe have been doing this for some time, domestically bag fees and bag bans are sporadic.

Hill says in Texas there are both bag fees and bag bans. For example, Austin only allows retailers to offer reusable bags made of durable materials or that have handles.

Plastic ain't fantastic.



Get more info at www.EarthMonthMC.org

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Dallas Bag Ban continued from page 5

“Other cities that have some type of bag ban include Brownsville, Fort Stockton, Laredo and South Padre Island,” Hill said.

For questions about Dallas’ new bag ordinance, visit GreenDallas.net.

“Those who may be calling with complaints or to report problems are being helped by the city’s 3-1-1 service, where the calls are logged by type and accordingly handled,” said Lefebvre.

See a [list of other U.S cities](#) that have bag bans. See [worldwide bag ban](#) map.

The Trout Lily Jim Varnum

Spring comes early in North Central Texas. Dandelions aside, we spot one or two wildflowers by the end of January and a dozen or so by the end of February. But one February bloomer – the trout lily – stands out to both the botanist and casual wildflower watcher as a true harbinger of spring. What an odd name – trout lily – it doesn’t look like a trout. It’s also called dog-tooth violet and fawn lily; and it doesn’t resemble those creatures either. Let’s explore this interesting and amazing plant.

Trout lilies bloom from middle of February until early March. Wow – that’s it for the year. Look in shady spots on chalky soil for one or two mottled green leaves rising from the leaf litter. (Someone once thought the leaves resembled the speckled trout!) The flower sits atop a short stem (scape) about 5 or 6 inches above the ground. The stem bends over so the flower actually points toward the ground. The

flower has 6 floral parts (3 petals and 3 sepals) that are white on the front and lavender on the back. The parts bend backward (recurved) to resemble a small Easter lily. To get a good view you almost have to lie on the ground. Photographers, gently lift the flower with a pencil or twig, snap your photo and put it back.

How trout lilies propagate is an amazing story in itself. Remember the downward-pointing flower? After blooming, the plant produces a single seed almost at ground level. As the seed develops, it is deposited on the ground under the leaf litter. The seed puts out a root about 12 inches long, whereupon soil and water movement pull the seed down where it forms a bulblet. For 6 years the trout lily produces one leaf. In the 7th year it produces 2 leaves and a flower! Then the cycle starts all over again. Now think about trying to propagate trout lilies yourself. Dr. Geoffrey Stanford, founder of the Dallas Nature Center, propagated them; it took many years to see any results. And they still bloom every year.

For other photos of a trout lily



see *Wildflowers of Texas* by Gayeta Ajilsvgi, Shearer Publishing, Bryan TX. For botanical information see *Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas* by George M. Diggs, Jr, Barney L. Lipscomb and Robert J. O’Kennon, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth. Trout lilies are found in Tandy Hills Natural Area in Fort Worth, Spring Creek Forest in Garland, Cedar Ridge Preserve in Dallas, Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center in Cedar Hill, and a few other nearby locations.



Southwest Nature Preserve Jan Miller

Great Backyard Bird Count at Southwest Nature Preserve

5201 Bowman Springs Rd.
Saturday, February 14
7:30 - 9:30 am
FREE

Join us to count birds at the preserve's 58 acres of eastern cross timbers woodlands, grasslands and ponds. All levels of birding interest are welcome. See www.swnp.org for more details.

Contact: info@swnp.org

Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve monthly meeting

Tuesday, February 17
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Southwest Branch Public Library*
3311 SW Green Oaks Blvd.

**This event is not sponsored by the Arlington Public Library.*

Volunteer events

February 12: 2nd Thursdays
February 28: 4th Saturdays
9:00 am – noon
(September – May)

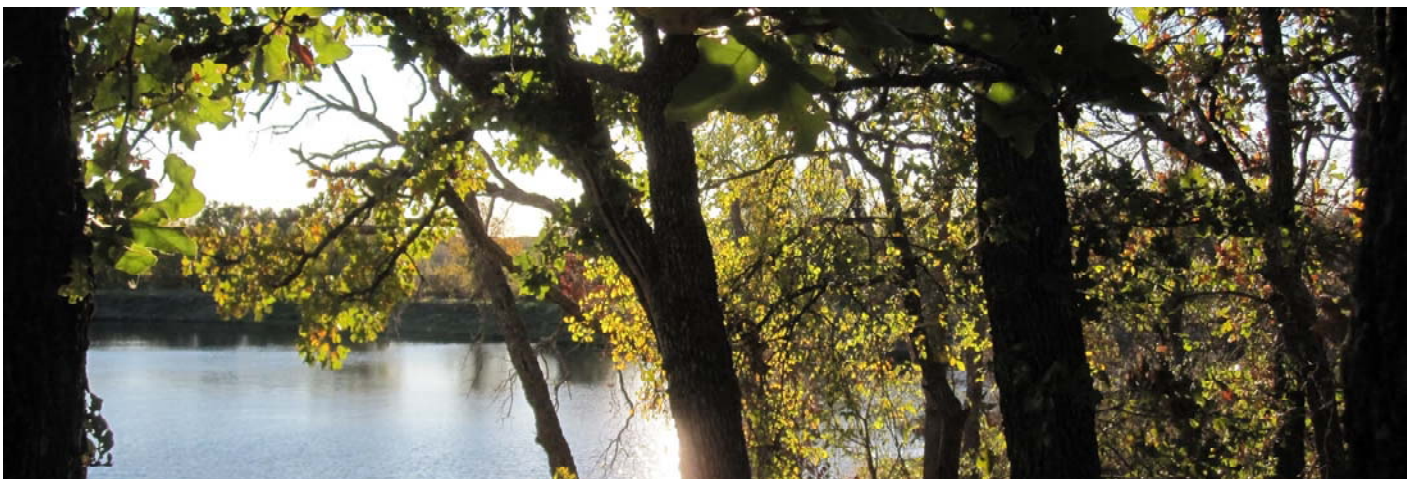
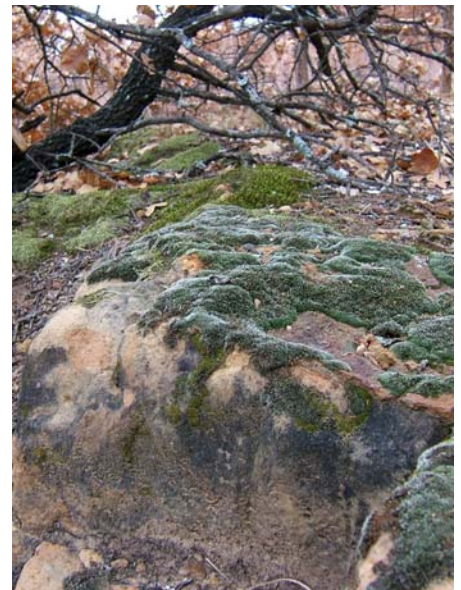
Projects focus on habitat restoration and trail management; tasks may include sowing native seed, trash pickup, invasive plant removal, etc. Wear sturdy shoes or boots and long pants.

For more information and latests updates, see links below.

Friends of SWNP Web site
www.swnp.org

Arlington Parks & Recreation Dept
Web site www.facebook.com/SouthwestNaturePreserve

Friends of SWNP e-mail
info@swnp.org



The Law of Unintended Consequences Grace Darling



A Cautionary Tale

This story begins in the neighboring city of Dalworthington Gardens, once a New Deal homestead community for subsistence farmers in west Arlington and now home to about 2,400 relatively affluent folks (median household income in 2012 was \$107,743; mean price of houses, \$303,379) who enjoy their large lots and semi-bucolic setting so close to the large cities on either side of the Trinity. Completely surrounded by Arlington and Pantego, the Gardens' 593 acres are bordered by Pioneer Parkway to the north, Bowen Road to the east, Pleasant Ridge Road to the south, and primarily Spanish Trail to the west, with small peninsulas jutting out at Sunset Drive and Indian Trail.

In the town's geographic center, adjoining the police and fire stations and city hall, stands Pappy Elkins Park with its drainage area and spring-fed pond. North of the causeway is Elkins Lake, a high and shallow pond which according to a *Fort Worth Weekly* article, "was formed in the 1960s when quarry workers hit a natural spring and

their pit filled with water. The accidental lake became one of the city's defining features. . . . In the last four years, however, the four-acre body of water has been reduced almost to a puddle. . . . Drought has taken its toll all across Texas, and many lakes have experienced record or near-record low water levels. But a small group of concerned citizens in Dalworthington Gardens believes that low levels at Pappy Elkins are due to something beyond the lack of rain," namely to illegal extraction by XTO, the operator of six adjoining gas wells.



The Pappy Elkins Restoration Group is distressed over the 4- to 5-foot drop in water level in the lake over the past few years, which they attribute to its use as a fracking pond by XTO in collusion with city officials. Frustrated by their mayor and council's perceived indifference to the plight of neighbors, the group wrote to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality asking the agency to investigate the causes of the current state of Elkins Lake and properly address their concerns. Their hope was for TCEQ to find XTO negligent and liable for the cost of restoring the lake to pre-fracking levels.

Instead, TCEQ came, saw, and declared Pappy Elkins Lake an illegal impoundment of water. TCEQ officials requested immediate breach of the dam to comply with state regulations. Those regulations are implemented by the TCEQ Dam Safety Program, which monitors both private and public dams in Texas. "The primary goal of the state's Dam Safety Program is to reduce the risk to lives and property from the consequences of dam failure," according to the agency's web site. An engineering consulting firm was called in by panicked city officials, a dam assessment was made, and a report and recommendations given to council and the public last Thursday.

Bottom line: 1) The lake needs a permit. The permitting process will take a minimum of 18 months and requires the cooperation of downstream sources – the city of Arlington and the town of Pantego – to formally agree to have "their" water withheld by DWG for aesthetic/recreational purposes. The permit application would be drafted under the dam's present state, in itself an iffy proposition. 2) If/when a permit is secured, citizens of the Gardens must consider two options: either breach the dam and drain the lake, or

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The Law continued from page 10

reinforce, remove all trees, and raise the dam approximately 9 feet, at an estimated cost of at least \$900,000. Anything short of a complete overhaul of the lake and dam would be deemed by TCEQ to be out of compliance with state regulations and subject to high (exorbitant) daily fines.

Never mind that Pappy Elkins Lake predates formation of TCEQ by a couple of decades. Or that the current Dam Safety Program requirements were only issued in 2009. Or that other industries (fertilizer and chemical plants come

to mind) routinely benefit from grandfather laws. In its zeal to protect us from our past mistakes, the state agency charged with regulating water bodies is on the road to bankrupting the very same residents who asked for its help with a potential abuser of their natural resources.

Moral of this story: Think twice before you call TCEQ.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmh_6klzJh8

<http://www.cityofdwg.net/history.html>

<http://www.pappyelkins.org/>

<http://www.fwweekly.com/2014/07/09/drying-up-in-dwg/>

Annual Business Meeting: Food, Kids, & Fun Photos by Paul Knudsen

Our annual business meeting was mostly food, fun, and happy kids who were honored as winners of the second FOCUS contest for young nature photographers. Thanks to Dick Schoech for another fine job with the kids, to President Danny Kocurek for reviewing 2014 and conducting the business meeting, to everyone who brought wonderful food, and to all of you who continue to faithfully support ACC's environmental efforts. And we can't forget Paul Knudsen, who produces such great photos. We're hoping for another productive year and already looking forward to seeing you next time.



ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Membership Information

Name _____	First-year member \$10.00	
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_____	Family \$25.00	
Phone _____	Supporting \$40.00	Renewing member ☐
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How did you hear about us? _____

Make checks payable to Arlington Conservation Council. Mail to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216. Contributions and dues are not tax-deductible. Note: If you cannot pay, please let any board member know. The only available newsletter format is electronic, and it can be obtained via e-mail and the ACC Web site.

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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, February 4
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7:00 – 8:00 pm

Rita Beving

Understanding Water in Texas