

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POST OAK

ACC WORKS TO PROTECT ARLINGTON'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH EDUCATION,
COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND ADVOCACY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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APRIL 2015

www.acctexas.org

April Meeting

**Talking Trash: Wasted Resources,
Missed Opportunities,
and Hope for the Future**

**Debbie Branch, Resource Recovery
Planner, City of Fort Worth Solid
Waste Services Division**

**Wednesday, April 1, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)**



Is garbage waste or simply a missed opportunity? Join this presentation to consider some low hanging fruit in resource recovery trends in the state of Texas and the country and find out how individuals can make a difference.

Bring something for the raffle!

Bits & Pieces

Our Invasive Exotic Worm

Lumbricus terrestris is a native of Europe that came over with Columbus and became the common earthworm of North America. Earthworms feed at night on decaying vegetation and microorganisms, moving through the soil by dint of muscular contractions. They can burrow down to 2 meters, aerating soil with their tunnels and transporting minerals and nutrients from below to the surface and back with their waste. Lacking gills or lungs, they breathe through their thin skin, absorbing air trapped between the particles of soil. When it rains these spaces fill with water and worms must come to the surface or drown. Clue: The pale encircling bulge (clitellum) is near the mouth end.



Today's Inspirational Moment



Thousands have lived without love, not one without water.

W. H. Auden,

First Things First, 1956

Silent Sperry Spring

Bits of Neil Sperry wisdom from the Startlegram: Sorry, but it's already too late to apply Dimension or Halts to get rid of weedy grasses. Likewise too late for those pre-emergent poisons to kill summer weeds.

But we're still okay for applying all-nitrogen fertilizer, and Neil says the plants don't care if it's organic. But what's involved in the production of inorganic nitrogen fertilizer? Great billowing clouds of natural gas for hydrogen and for heat to make the fertilizer, huge transport costs, enormous quantities of water for fracking and for fertilizer production, and the stuff is so strong it can kill soil organisms and burn plants. Thanks once again, Neil.



From the President **Danny Kocurek**



Lip Service

Many of you probably remember when ACC attempted to protect the Southwest Nature Preserve from a proposed gas well on its northern border. We asked many

questions and got no answers. The Parks Board held hearings and listened to our concerns but could only come up with a recommendation that approval of the gas drilling site "requires identification of impacts on native wildlife." The date was August 9, 2010.

I was curious at the time about how this would actually be implemented. Would the city or the gas company hire a naturalist to study the native wildlife? How would they test for deleterious impact? How much would this cost and how long would it take?

Recently I got an answer to all my questions. No. According to the Parks Board, they can only recommend things to Council, and Council took the recommendation and filed it in the closest trash can. I am not sure this even qualified as lip service but the end results were the same. Lesson learned.



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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

Introducing First Monday Prairie Hikes 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Master Naturalist Jeff Quayle will lead these hikes at local metroplex prairies on a monthly basis except July and August. All hikes are local (Tarrant County) and open to the public.

The April hike at Lake Benbrook will explore some of the prairie and outcrops. Meet off Highway 377 at the intersection of Stevens Dr and Lakeshore Dr. Just south of Highway 377 @ FM 2871.

The May hike will be at Stella Rowan Prairie in SE Fort Worth. Located north of I-20, south of E. Seminary Dr. and west of Campus Dr.

The June hike will be at Marion Sansom Park, at the Lake Worth spillway. The address is 2501 Roberts Cut Off Rd., Fort Worth 76114.

For all hikes, please wear proper footwear, long pants, and bring sunscreen and plenty of water.

Contact Jeff for more information or where to meet: 817-729-0283 or squaylei2000@gmail.com



Third Saturday Stewardship workday Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve 4907 New York Avenue April 18, 9:00 am - noon

Spring wildflowers should be prime, so don't miss it! Participate in restoration and management activities at this rare blackland prairie remnant.

Since we were rained out in March, we'll again attempt the boundary walk and pick up litter. Photo and birding opportunities too. Please wear sturdy shoes or boots and long pants; gloves too. Though not required, an RSVP is helpful in case of inclement weather.

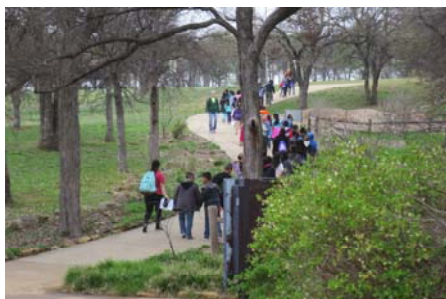
See the links below for more information:

Friends of the Prairie www.theprairie.org

Friends of the Prairie e-mail
info@theprairie.org



Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason



March Madness has nothing on Walk on the Wildside at the Molly Hollar Wildscape. One second-grader at this year's WOW declared with great enthusiasm, "This is more fun than Six Flags!"

On Thursday, March 19, 86 Goodman Elementary School third-graders clambered from two long school buses. If they had not been so well behaved, they would have been intimidating! But they formed lines and joined up into groups of 10, clutched their notebooks and trooped off behind their guides to absorb bits of nature magic.



Why is this so important? Scott Sampson in his book *How to Raise a Wild Child* says American children spend four to seven minutes a day playing outdoors — 90 percent less time than their parents did. Yet recent research indicates that experiences in nature are essential for healthy growth.

"Regular exposure to nature can help relieve stress, depression and attention deficits," Sampson writes. "It can reduce



bullying, combat illness and boost academic scores. Most critical of all, abundant time in nature seems to yield long-term benefits in kids' cognitive, emotional and social development."

WOW volunteers delivered all of that and five activities that were enjoyable and interesting to do.

Molly Hollar and Anne Alderfer had the messy, hands-on seed ball creation. It was so much fun it's a wonder food fights didn't erupt over the tables.



Josephine Keeney and Jane Oosterhuis detailed the wonders of butterfly metamorphosis. Mouths were agape as the students imagined the changes.

Peggy Quinn and Terry Gratton explained the water cycle, prompting giggles over getting "rained" on with a squirt bottle.



Dawn Hancock and Joyce Duty led the children through identifying flower parts. "Goodman Elementary students are the best!" Dawn said. "And Goodman Elementary teachers must be doing something right. Many students knew what pollination was all about, which put learning parts of the flower in context."

Hester Schwarzer and Dick Schoech made necklaces cut from quarter-inch



cross-sections of small trees the most fascinating lesson in tree growth ever. The kids beamed with pride at their tree cookie necklaces. Artistic abilities blossomed when marker pens were provided to "write your name" on your tree cookie.

The students inspired each other. Not a single tree cookie left the table with just a name. There were hearts, curlicues, flowers, each letter in a different color, and many creative designs.



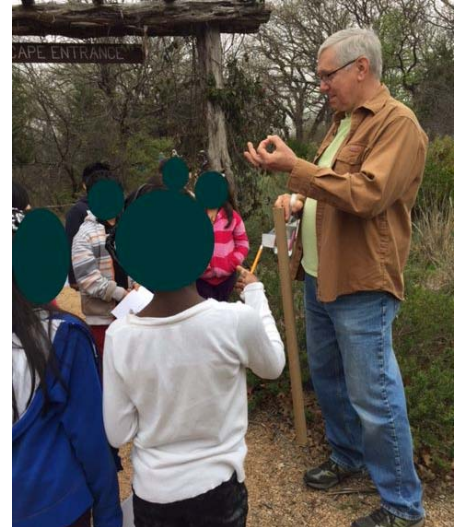
Deepest appreciation goes to the 12 volunteers who wended their way through the forest trailing students and managing to keep the 10-minute schedule working perfectly. It was tons of fun to watch the presentations and see the children's reactions.

And thank you, Carrie Donovan, science teacher extraordinaire, who teaches all of the science classes at Goodman Elementary and brings her students to WOW every year.

From the beginning, Molly intended the wildscape to be a place where people of all ages could learn about native plants and enjoy being outside. WOW provides the perfect opportunity to make nature more interesting and learning about it more fun.

WOW is better than Six Flags for the adults, too.

Wildscape Update: Special WOW Edition



Thanks to our last speaker

The remarkable Jim Schermbeck always draws a crowd, and last month was no exception. Jim, Executive Director of Downwinders at Risk, gave us a first look at early results of an ozone modeling study commissioned by Downwinders.

Our chronic air problems are hopelessly complicated by conflicts between federal and our (apparently biased) state agencies. Jim's big message: This independent, academically rigorous study will provide the first regional data that should help us progress toward healthy air. *Right, Jim Schermbeck with Grace Darling, March speaker chair.*



10th Annual Prairie Fest at Tandy Hills Natural Area Don Young



Tandy Hills Natural Area, a 160-acre native prairie remnant, located minutes east of downtown Fort Worth, will host the **10th Annual Prairie Fest, Saturday, April 25, 2015**. A *FW Weekly Best Outdoor Cultural Event* winner, this free, family-friendly festival will run from 11:00 am till dusk. Set amongst wildflower-covered hills, the festival fosters environmental awareness with a fun, innovative, yet down-home event.

Come celebrate the festival's 10th anniversary with live, local music on 2 solar-powered stages, including *End of the World Parade* and *Brave Combo*. Enjoy guided wildflower tours for young and old at the Best Place to View Wildflowers in the Metroplex.

Explore local art, craft, and green living exhibitors in the "Prairie Circle." Experience site-specific interactive art installations, plein air painters and "live artist," creating art on site. The festival features a kids' area with educational activities and discovery hikes. Don't miss performances by storytellers, belly dancers, and more! Tasty local food and beverages will be available.

Prairie Fest — the greenest outdoor festival in Texas — is presented by Friends of Tandy Hills Natural Area to sustain and grow their award-winning environmental education and conservation programs at Tandy Hills.

Web Site:

<http://tandyhills.org/fest>

Contact:

Jen Schultes information@tandyhills.org
817-888-0594



Molly Hollar Birthday Bash and Privet Pull

On March 14, Molly's friends gathered once again to pulverize privet at the OS Gray Natural Area. Actually, this is an assumption based on past events, Molly's strangely magnetic effect on otherwise normal bystanders, and some much-needed photographs that drifted in. (Thank you, Kevin, Marylee, Josephine, and whoever I have omitted.) One certain thing: Molly was immensely grateful for even the smallest effort. *(Your editor was untouched by the Molly Effect because he was required to be 500 miles away, engaged in completely unscientific observations of subtropical birds.)*



The Plight of Pollinators Part 2: Bats Grace Darling



Background

Bats are among nature's most beneficial animals, not only for their role in the pollination of plants and dispersal of plant seeds, but also as superb pest control agents because of the bugs they eat. The Center for Biological Diversity cites "a recent scientific paper on the economic value of bats to agriculture [which] estimated that bats provided non-toxic pest-control services totaling \$3.7 billion to \$53 billion per year. This study did not even consider what the indirect costs of 'replacing' bats with pesticides would be in terms of potential health and pollution threats from greater levels of toxins in the environment." But since the winter of 2006-2007, more than two million bats in the eastern U.S. have died from a deadly epidemic. The disease causing this die-off is called white-nose syndrome (WNS) because of the



fuzzy white fungus that destroys the bats' skin in areas where there is no fur, such as the muzzles, wings, and tail membranes.

The Culprit

The cold-loving fungus, *Geomyces destructans*, is well known in Europe where it sickens, but does not kill, bats – presumably because the two groups evolved together over millennia and surviving bats became adapted to coexist with the fungus. Unlike their European counterparts, however, American bats have little or no resistance to white-nose syndrome and mortality rates of 90% to 100% have been reported in some infected bat populations.



Zoogenesis

The epicenter of our WNS epidemic was a cave in Upstate New York, where the fungus was probably introduced by a visitor from across the Atlantic. The fungus is currently affecting hibernating bat species in nearly half of the United States and parts of Canada, and it continues to spread westward. Though not yet reported from Texas, white-

nose syndrome has been documented in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana, so its arrival here is practically guaranteed.

Biogeography

The disease has the potential to infect at least half of the 47 bat species in North America. Bats that migrate to Mexico and Central America for the winter may not be affected, but hibernating species and southern bats that go into torpor during the winter are susceptible to WNS. Currently, the little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*) is the worst hit, some cave populations having been completely wiped out. Significant losses have also been reported among northern long-eared bats, big brown bats, tricolored bats, eastern small-footed bats, grey bats, and Indiana bats — the last two already endangered.

With 31 species, Texas has the largest diversity of bats in the country, though many are represented by only one recorded specimen. Our most common bat is the official state flying mammal, the Mexican free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasil-*

continued on page 9



Bats continued from page 8

iensis). Other year-round possibilities in Tarrant County are the big brown bat, eastern pipistrelle, eastern red bat, and evening bat.

Pathophysiology

The fungus damages the connective tissues, muscles, and skin of the bats as well as disrupts their hibernating behavior. Hibernating bats try to conserve stored energy (body fat) by lowering their metabolism: heart rate, respiration, and body temperature. When infected with *G. destructans*, bats show physiologic imbalances, such as body-wide acidification and high potassium levels. Worse still, infected bats wake up from their winter torpor as often as every 3 to 4 days, as opposed to the normal every 10 to 20 days. Aroused early and frequently by the irritating fungus — the itch-and-scratch hypothesis — bats wake up dehydrated and hungry during the winter, when there are no insects to eat. On fungus-damaged wings they fly outside the roost in freezing temperatures, hopelessly searching for a meal while wasting precious energy, but ultimately become emaciated and literally starve to death.

Epidemiologic Challenges

Factors contributing to a slow recovery from WNS include: 1) the fungus is easily transported from one site to the next attached to clothing and fur of visiting humans and wildlife; 2) fungal spores can persist in cave sediment after bat colonies leave their hibernacula in the spring, lying in wait to infect next winter's arrivals; 3) American bats tend to be considerably smaller than bats in other continents, with less potential for fat reservoirs to get them through the cold season; and 4) most species of bats only produce one pup per year, so infection inhibits at least two generations.

How You Can Help

1. Do not enter caves, mines, and buildings where bats are known to live to avoid disturbing bats and potentially spreading the disease to unaffected areas.
2. If you must enter a bat roost, make sure to decontaminate all equipment and clothing according to established protocols.
3. Do not handle animals that appear sick or are found dead.
4. Notify officials at Texas Parks & Wildlife or the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service immediately if you suspect you have seen bats with WNS or if you see bats flying outside during freezing temperatures.

**SW Nature Preserve****Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve
monthly meeting**

**Tuesday, April 21
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**

**Southwest Branch Public Library*
3311 SW Green Oaks Blvd.**

(west of Bowen Rd, east of Park Springs)

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

Volunteer events

9 am – noon (Sep – May) unless otherwise noted

- | | |
|------|---|
| 4/9 | 2 nd Thursdays |
| 4/11 | UTA's Big Event |
| 4/25 | Bird ID Class and Survey (see www.swnp.org for details and to RSVP) |
| 4/25 | 4 th Saturdays (start time TBD, see www.swnp.org) |



Projects focus on habitat restoration and trail management. Current activities may include restoration seeding or planting, trash/debris pickup, invasive exotic plant removal, etc. Please wear sturdy shoes or boots and long pants. For more information and latest updates, see links below.

www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Southwest-Nature-Preserve Friends of SWNP Facebook

www.swnp.org Friends of SWNP website

info@swnp.org Friends of SWNP e-mail

www.facebook.com/SouthwestNaturePreserve APRD Facebook

Jim Varnum Wins Special Award Jim Folger

North Texas Master Naturalists Recognize Significant Contribution

At the December 3, 2014, awards dinner at Trinity River Audubon Center, The North Texas Master Naturalists honored member Jim Varnum with a new award: the Award for Exceptional Service.

Before he retired, Jim was an engineer, and after receiving his master's degree from Carnegie Tech in Pennsylvania (and work-

ing on his PhD thesis), he moved to Dallas in 1969. There he was introduced to native plants and grasses and got hooked on botany. He developed a substantial knowledge as a result of reading and self-study and became a North Texas Master Naturalist in 1999.

It is unusual to find a day when Jim is not traveling somewhere or exploring the meadows and woods. He has lead more field trips than anyone and has been an excellent teacher to the communities in North Texas.

Jim is thought of as "the connector piece in the Master Naturalist world." If by chance he doesn't know what something is, he will take the time to connect with others who can tell him, and then report back to the interested party.

As a North Texas Master Naturalist, Jim is known for his always interesting "This & That," and for approving and announcing volunteer and advanced training hours opportunities. His volunteering is also outstanding. In 2014, Jim passed the 10,000 volunteer hour (VH) mark.



Jim Varnum receives award from Judy Parsons, President, and Jim Folger, Public Relations Officer.

Jim Varnum really embodies the mission of all Master Naturalists which is: "To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service..."

In addition to the award plaque that was presented at the dinner, a Western red cedar patio bench was installed at Cedar Ridge Preserve in his honor. An attached plaque says, "Dedicated to Jim Varnum, Naturally." We are hoping that Jim might even sit down on it to relax sometime.



Jim Varnum relaxing on the bench dedicated in his honor

Photo of the Month

Spring calls out for photos, and so do newsletters. Take a particularly good one and send it to the editor by April 15. If yours is selected, you'll surely be well on the way to international fame and *National Geographic* assignments, at the very least.



Texas Legislature now in session Jan Miller

You can't miss the daily headlines, but as today's FW Star-Telegram said, "'The Kumbaya is Over' in the Texas Legislature". As the June 1 regular session deadline nears, things are about to get interesting.

There are many bills impacting our environment either directly or indirectly: Several bills would remove "local control" by canceling city/county ordinances regarding gas production, pipelines, plastic bags, smoking ordinances, tree preservation/mitigation, etc. Others would remove incentives for renewable energy, limit public participation in environmental reviews, restrict penalties for environmental damage, etc. There are even a few good bills that could improve recycling availability, create a Global Climate Change Commission, create a greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan and provide a ballot item for a constitutional amendment to adequately fund TPWD from the Sporting Goods Sales Tax.

To find out how to contact your legislators, or who they are, plus information about specific bills or to track bill status, see **Texas Legislature Online (TLO)**:

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us>

Alliance for a Clean Texas provides timely information, has a weekly Sunday Legislative Call (7pm) and coordinates events:

<http://www.acttexas.org>

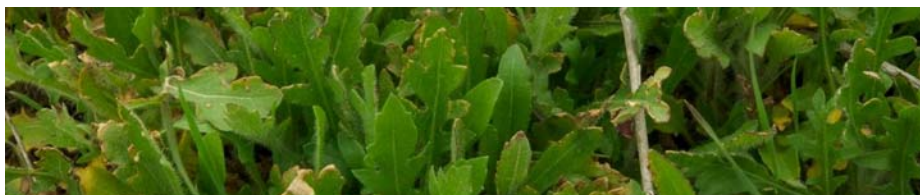
Also good information on bills at **Texas League of Conservation Voters**: <http://www.tlc.org/news/>

GRACKLE

The glossy, bossy grackle
Swaggers through the grass,
His beady yellow eyes
Staring, glaring
At everything in sight
That might be weak.

Slender as a sword
And black as night
He displays
A classy form
Belying bullying ferocity –
Count Dracula reborn
With feathers
And a beak.

©2015 John I. Blair



Water, Spring Classes, and Events Dustan Compton

Since my last email we have had significant ice, snow and rain to raise our lake levels up to 74%! This is great news since we were staring at possible Stage 2 (once per week, if needed) drought watering restrictions when our supplies were close to 60% in January. We are still in Stage 1 (twice per week, if needed) drought watering restrictions, and we would need a significant amount of additional precipitation to get out of them. Water supplies would have to be at a comfortable level for the foreseeable future to avoid going in and out of a drought stage and the associated communication concerns. In other words, Stage 2 seems unlikely but remains a possibility for late summer depending upon rainfall, temperature and water use, but continue your landscape planning with the twice per week, if needed, watering restrictions for another summer.

Build Your Own Rain Barrel Workshop: Friday, March 27, 3 – 5 pm, River Legacy Living Science Center, 703 NW Green Oaks Blvd. Participants will learn the basics of rainwater harvesting and leave with a 50-gallon rain barrel that you help build. Space is limited and only 25 barrels are available. The cost of the class is \$50. Pre-registration is required so please contact me today to reserve your space.

Drip Irrigation DIY: April 9, 2015, 6 - 8 pm, Southwest Library - Community Room - 3311 S.W. Green Oaks Blvd. Water slower, deeper and more efficient with every drop. Convert your spray heads and watch your sprinkler system save you money from our hands on drip conversion class. You will learn how to install drip irrigation tubing from your faucet or how to convert an existing zone to drip. Drip irrigation is the most efficient irrigation method and essential to sustainable landscapes. Drip irrigation for foundation watering will also be covered. This class will have a hands-on/DIY learning experience.

Don't forget about our Texas SmartScape plant sales this spring. The Arlington event will be on Saturday, May 16. Click here for more information: <http://www.txsmartscape.com/events/plantsale.asp>

Dustan Compton, Conservation Program Coordinator
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www.SaveArlingtonWater.com

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 ☐
E-mail _____	Sponsor \$100.00	
	Lifetime Individual \$250.00	
	Other \$ _____	

How did you hear about us? _____

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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
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Don't Forget!

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Debbie Branch

Talking Trash: Wasted Resources, Missed Opportunities, and Hope for the Future