

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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MAY 2015

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May Meeting

A Conversation with Mayoral Candidate Jeff Williams

Jeff Williams, P.E.

President of Graham Associates

Wednesday, May 6, 7 pm

Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



For years Jeff Williams has been involved in numerous area projects. Of special interest to ACC members are his roles in the River Legacy Foundation and the Johnson Creek Corridor Plan.

In Arlington, environmental issues rarely figure into the races, so we really don't know how green our candidates are. Here's a chance to learn about matters that concern all of us.

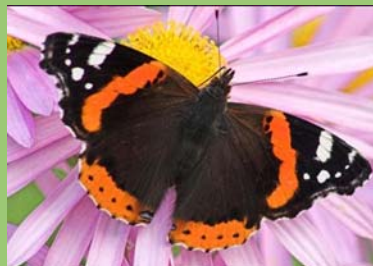
In the interest of fairness, we also invited Mayor Bob Cluck, but he had a schedule conflict and won't be able to attend.

Bring something for the raffle!

Bits & Pieces

Stinging Sensation

We know it's spring already, but it's not too late to relish one of our most gorgeous warm-weather creatures, the red admiral. This beauty is found all over the northern hemisphere and ranges from Canada to Guatemala. Here it may have three broods a year and it overwinters in southern Texas. Oddest thing: Larval host plants include stinging nettle — beauty emerges from the beast.



Today's Inspirational Moment



Humans are the ultimate weed species... We have shown an incredible ability to invade, change, and inhabit every habitat type on the planet.

Richard P. Reading

We're Fine, Really

American Lung Association gives Dallas County "F" grade for its ozone level but says air quality is improving

According to the American Lung Association, 42% of U.S. residents still live in counties with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution. The association gave Dallas County an "F" grade for its ozone (smog) level, a rating in line with urban cores across the nation; the DFW Metropolitan Area came in at No. 8 on the Top 10 Most Ozone-Polluted Cities. Still, the DFW area, like the nation, has much cleaner air now than it did 14 years ago when the lung association issued its first air quality report, so that "F" isn't as bad as it looks -- unless you are breathing it.

From the President **Danny Kocurek**



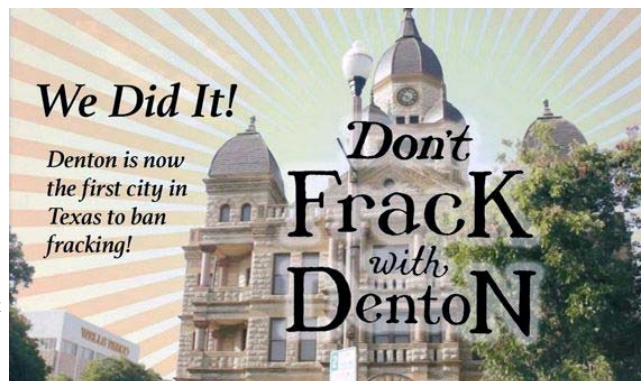
Local Control

I always enjoy it when Jon Stewart shows a clip of politicians saying something followed immediately by another clip of them saying the opposite. It is sad how easy it seems for him.

Texas politicians frequently make the claim that the federal government is usurping the rights of Texans to choose what is best for them. The classic complaint is that the federal government is forcing Texas to stop polluting the air and water and this is not good for big business or oil companies. They shout and scream that the people of Texas need "local control."

But when the locals actually start making laws to get what they want, the politicians quickly change their tune. It seems that sometimes people do not like pollution and make laws to decrease it. When this happens, big business and oil companies get their minions in Austin to change their "local control" rhetoric, and their laws.

When Denton passed a law banning fracking, our statewide politicians started



screaming that Denton has no right to determine what is best for the people of Denton. Same goes for banning single-use shopping bags that litter our streams, parks and streets.

Apparently "local" means a bunch of guys sitting 200 miles away. It would be funny if the results weren't so damaging to our children's future. Next time you see one of our "leaders," tell them to get their big government hands out of our lives.

THE POST OAK

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Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve Photos by Wes Miller



Wildscape Update Marylee Thomason



The crowds are gathering! The Molly Hollar Wildscape is fast becoming a destination for tourists, photographers and school groups seeking an environmental experience in a beautiful place.



Thirteen members of the Keller Garden Club led by their program director, Wanda Stutsman, dropped by April 9 just to explore. Molly Hollar and Marylee Thomason named plants and extolled the value of natives for lawn substitutes, erosion control, weed control and their importance in the environment. Some ladies were so taken with the park that they vowed to return to volunteer.

Twenty-eight students from the Northstar School in Arlington chose the wildscape for a working field trip April

15. Assistant director Amanda Guidotti organized the event. Danny Kocurek may have suggested it when he enrolled his sons.

The industrious students, their teachers and several parents weeded the mulch trail in the erosion area as wildscape stalwarts Molly, Peggy Quinn and Joe Martinez guided the activity. Amanda said they hope to make this an annual event.

Nine members of the Native Plant Society of Texas toured the wildscape and the greenhouse with Molly (she's everywhere) and Josephine Keeney on April 18. They learned about the history, mission and native plants of the wildscape and saw plants in various stages of propagation. The greenhouse



is an all-volunteer operation supplying plants for the park and the annual native plant sale.

Along with this extra activity, all of the regular Wednesday and Friday volunteer days and the third Saturday workday and mini-class continue. The April 25 mini-class offered a peek at fall plans presented by Molly and Joyce Duty.

Meanwhile, the wildscape is showing off beautifully, and photographers are documenting its splendor. Everyone attached to the wildscape (physically, cosmically) really appreciates people taking pictures, but some photographers are overzealous.

One lady brought a table and chairs, which she set up in the middle of the prairie phlox where her clients were to pose. She was not happy when Molly told her that guests need to stay on the trails and not trample the flowers that volunteers spend hours nurturing for everyone to enjoy.



Another guilty photographer was more gracious about removing the table and chairs she placed in the erosion area. There needs to be a sign. There will be one soon.

Welcome to ...

Elaine Gheroff and Mel Block are taking the "prairie" as their Master Gardener project. This long-neglected piece of wildscape will be a great addition.

continued on page 5

Wildscape Update continued from page 4

Our new hard-working volunteer, UTA biology major Darya Inozemtseva, is from Ukraine. She has some free time these days and is devoting hours and hours to the wildscape.

Thanks to ...

Joyce Duty for putting the wildscape on Facebook.

Ann Knudsen for taking responsibility for reporting Master Gardener wildscape hours.

Joyce Duty and Joe Martinez for refreshing the front kiosk and adding Master Naturalist and Master Gardener signs.

Danny Kocurek for making a sandwich sign asking for volunteers.

Veterans Park manager Frank Rivera for moving boulders near the entry to support the arbor that blew down, replacing two sections of fence in the erosion area, and repairing signs that are suffering from age and weather.

Tip of the month: To prevent wasps and hornets from forming nests on the roof of a birdhouse, rub it generously with bar soap. This prevents the bees from getting a hold on the wood.



Clarification: Glass Recycling in Arlington Grace Darling

The City's Program

According to Lorrie Anderle, Arlington's recycling coordinator and my personal sustainability goddess, you may put glass jars and bottles of any color in your recycling bin. Drinking glasses, mirrors, lightbulbs, windows, and porcelain dishes and vases, on the other hand, are NOT recyclable. Why not?, I asked. Here's the unvarnished story.

Single-stream Recycling



Some years ago it became clear to town leaders everywhere that the way to increase local recycling rates was to make recycling as convenient as possible. Besides having wheeled push-carts and curbside pickup, residents can avoid sorting their recyclables by putting paper, plastic, cans, and glass all in the same container = single-stream recycling.

In addition to higher waste diversion rates for the city and reduced carbon footprint for the landfill operator, single-stream recycling has proved very popular with consumers, safer for workers (who do less lifting), and less expensive for haulers. It does have one shortcoming, however: It results in more collected glass breaking as it is compressed in the trucks or processed at separation plants, city and industry officials say.

Broken Glass, Broken Dreams

As large amounts of glass in the recycling cart are broken during collection and processing, the leftover shards of mixed-color



glass cannot be sold for new bottles because no nearby glass manufacturers want it. To make their products, glass factories are then forced to use virgin materials, which require more energy than used glass.

There is optical scanning technology to sort glass shards by color, but the machines are expensive and few recycling companies offer them; none in Texas. In effect, recyclable glass is transformed into an unmarketable waste when the glass breaks and the shards can't be separated by color.

The market value of recycled glass being virtually nil, the jars and bottles that end up at the recycling center (MRF, pronounced *murf*) will most likely be taken to the landfill, where the glass may be ground up and sold to construction companies to be used for road base or — as Waste Management claims for its Minnesota operations — used in environmental projects that collect contaminated water and underground methane gas.



The broken glass that gets wasted in single-stream recycling is "the dirty little secret that nobody talks about," says an industry official. "People believe that what they put on the curb is getting recycled into glass bottles, and everybody's getting hoodwinked," she added.

Another shortcoming of single-stream recycling is that broken glass can snag in the paper or plastic. This can cause problems for manufacturers who use recycled plastic or paper to make new products. Some cities have addressed this by asking residents to put paper (arguably the most valuable recyclable material) in a separate bag from other recyclables, while other municipalities rely on their haulers not to compress the collected material too tightly in the trucks.



Other Glass and China

Why can't we recycle drinking glasses, window glass, dinner plates, porcelain mugs, mirror glass, canning jars, and Pyrex? Online sources explain that these are all different types of glass with different melting points, and therefore cannot be treated the same. The processor would have to sort and bundle each kind separately to be sold to a manufacturer — an economically prohibitive practice. In *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: An Easy Household Guide*, author Nicky Scott says that "a single Pyrex dish or piece of china can contaminate a whole load of recyclable glass." Additionally, potters will tell you that the firing process changes the chemical composition of the clay, not to mention the glaze, of a piece of stoneware or china.

What to Do

Don't forget the first and second Rs of the sustainability triangle: reduce and reuse. One suggestion is to purchase food items in large quantities in plastic, metal, or paper containers; transfer the contents to clean glass jars for storage in the refrigerator or shelf; then recycle the original containers at your next scheduled curbside pickup. Yes, being green can be easy.

The Lowly Anole/The Amazing Anole Dick Schoech



Anoles or Anolis are like Rodney Dangerfield; they are frequently seen, but “don’t get no respect.” To be fair, it is hard to respect a critter that we know so little about. So I’m writing this column to help us give them the awe and respect they deserve.

What are they?

Wikipedia says that anoles are a genus of iguanian lizard composed of 391 different species. Texas has the Carolina anole (*Anolis carolinensis*), often called the green anole. It is a 6-8” long North America native found primarily in the southeastern US. So, unlike many of us invasives, anoles are true native Texans. Anoles are often falsely thought to be chameleons, since they can change from bright green to dark brown to camouflage themselves. However, they are not even a related species to chameleons and are probably insulted by this stupid comparison.

Where do they live?

You often see anoles in trees, shrubs, vines, fences, walls, and on the ground. They are typically just hanging around, sunning themselves, hunting bugs, or bobbing their heads while flashing the red dewlap under their chin. They must be afraid of heights, since some Web sites claim they do not climb higher than 15 feet. It is best to get to know them in your yard, because it requires costly equipment and lots of care to achieve the stress-free environment needed for them to survive in captivity. Besides, many advise having an anole you want to cage checked by a veterinarian for internal and external parasites. I can’t imagine taking an anole to my vet! Another good reason to leave them free outdoors is that reptiles are common carriers of the *Salmonella* bacteria.

What type of social life do they have?



Anoles, like many humans, are skittish, shy, and most active during the day. Unlike humans, they produce no sounds. They are generally not aggressive, but as in most species, males are more territorial than females and often will fight over a female or over territory. Adult females and juveniles of both sexes may have a white stripe down their back.



What do they eat?

Anoles are insectivores and do not eat vegetation. They like crickets, grubs, spiders, moths and cockroaches. So one way to rid your house of cockroaches is to keep a healthy supply of anoles around your house.

At our house, I have found them eating a variety of bugs including grasshoppers and cicadas.

What eats them?

If you have an outdoor cat, you probably do not see many anoles. They seem to be tasty morsels for any number of predators, such as snakes, skinks, hawks and other birds. Luckily, they can quickly shed their tail if caught by their long tail. The shed tail continues to move when broken off so the predator focuses on the tail as the anole runs away. Their tail will grow back, but will not look quite as good as the original. Humans are another predator because anoles are considered a common “beginner reptile” in the pet trade. But, why go to the trouble of setting up an aquarium when you can just go outside and watch them in their natural environment? Handling anoles causes them stress and they often quickly escape never to be found again. However, there are reports of anoles becoming friendly with humans outside, especially if given worms or other favorite treats.

Do they have babies or lay eggs?

Approximately 2 weeks after successful mating, a female will lay one or possibly two eggs in a warm, moist place and cover



continued on page 8

Anole continued from page 7



them. She will repeat this process to lay about 10 eggs per season. The eggs hatch in 30-45 days. Hatchlings are around 1.25" when born and mature to 4-5" in about 8 months.

How long do they live?

Their average anole lifespan is 3 to 5 years, though they can live as long as 7 to 10 years.

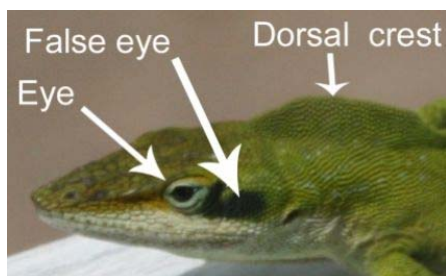
Where do they go in the cold winter months?

Anoles are active throughout the year and can be found basking on a sunny winter day. On cold nights, they seek heat close to anything warm, such as under a rotting stump or a flower pot or in loose soil or a foundation crack.

Is there anything else that I need to know about anoles?

- The throat fan or bubble of an anole, called a dewlap, is displayed in territorial disputes and to attract mates.
- Males have a bright red dewlap while females have a more whitish dewlap.
- Anoles have a dorsal crest just behind their head which they raise in disputes, typically with the dewlap extended.
- Male anoles are 15% larger than female anoles.

- Anoles toes have adhesive toe pads to facilitate climbing on almost any surface.
- Anoles have false eyes which make them look much bigger when fighting.



Now that I know them better, how do I attract them to my yard?

Attract anoles the same way you attract other critters such as songbirds. The first step to having an anole-friendly yard is to keep your cats indoors. To deter a neighbor cat going after your anoles, place a motion detector water sprinkler type device where the cat enters your yard. Use native plants that attract insects so your anoles have plenty of insects to eat. Do not use pesticides that can kill the insects that visit your native plants. Strive for an ecologically diverse yard with access to water and plenty of hiding places like a rock wall. Leave dead logs in out-of-way places so anoles can hide and avoid the winter cold. Finally, a well mowed monoculture lawn of Bermuda or St. Augustine grass will not attract anoles. So get outside and have a closer look at these amazing creatures.

Additional reading

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolina_anole

<http://www.wildtexas.com/wildguides/anole.php>



POSSUM

Caught in the midnight glare
Of a floodlamp on the eave
First a tapered head, then
Beady eyes, sleekly haired
Stout paunch, bald tail
Waddle out.

Not the least abashed
Or maybe not aware
A possum lumbers into view,
Thirst slaked at the basin
I put there for the finches,
Hunger not a problem
In a yard where birds are fed.

Primordial marsupial,
Looking like the first,
And not the best,
Attempt at making mammals,
And yet
Supremely well-prepared
For citified survival,

This one will thrive
So long as there
Are snug dens for daylight,
Strong barriers for dogs,
Ample snacks
To satisfy its questing snout.

©2015 John I. Blair



"How can the spirit of the earth like the
White man? . . . everywhere the White man
has touched it, it is sore."

Wintu woman, 19th century

Friends Go to School Grace Darling

The Friends of the Southwest Nature Preserve got a tremendous shot in the arm this past weekend when officers from S&S Trail Services LLC came to town as guests of Arlington Parks and Recreation Department. (Thank you SO MUCH for making it happen and allowing us to participate, Jay Falgout and Lemuel Randolph!).

Susan and Jake from the Austin consulting firm spent a few hours Wednesday afternoon with a couple of Friends doing on-site assessment and rough-marking the newly designed trail from the parking lot north to the iron knob bluff. The next day about 16 people, half from Parks Department and half from the FSWNP, attended an all-day workshop in which we learned basic principles of trail design, terminology, equipment, and instrumentation, as well as technical details for safety, maximum erosion control, and longevity in trail construction. Then Friday we got to apply at the preserve what we had learned in class.

Since its dedication a little more than 2 years ago, the preserve has been a victim of its own success. Seemingly overnight, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and eager hikers cut unauthorized trails on fragile hillsides while trying to reach the overlook by the shortest possible route. Though the bikers and riders are now prohibited in the preserve, foot traffic on a straight line up a slope soon destroyed the soil-retaining vegetation and hastened natural erosion to the point of deep ruts and exposed tree roots thanks to the recent rains. The Friends' focus was clear: Redraw the ridge trail along topographical contour lines and restore the original hillside to its pre-bad-trail state.

Due to the logistics of cutting a new trail while the old one is still open to

hikers, the project will be staged in thirds. I'm proud to say the middle third is now complete, with a well-designed, properly banked, horizontal lazy-S trail in place of the straight-up-and-down-the-hill tread. That section of the old trail has also been reclaimed -- that is, it has been camouflaged and partly replanted so you can't tell it was ever there. Truly!

Because of the trail imperative of maintaining visitor access to the destination at the bluff, the last two sections, at the top and bottom of the route, will have to be done simultaneously and will need to involve a great many workers so it can be finished in one day.

We hope you will be ready to pitch in when you get the call and marvel with the Friends in our redesign-reclamation success in our beautiful Southwest Nature Preserve.



Above, Class leaders Susan and Jake, from S&S Trail Services. Below, the happy crew.



Above, the crew in their classroom.



Above, Parks Department staff. Below, SW Nature Preserve Friends Lynn Healy and Jan Miller.



The Thing in the Tree John Darling



A neighbor stopped me the other day and wanted to know if I could do something about a creature hiding in the base of a small tree right next to her chain-link fence. Why? It was driving her puffball of a yappy dog crazy. Why me? Wrong place, wrong time. Thinking fast, I wedged my cell phone between the fence and the tree and took a picture (*above*), certain that she'd be calmed by my coolness under fire and I could slink away. Well, that didn't go as planned. I was left counting my fingers and promising to somehow restore suburban tranquility.

Instead, this looked like an opportunity to review opossumology with a pouchful of marsupial bits:

Opossums are North America's only marsupial or pouched mammal. Like the koala and kangaroo, opossums carry their newborns in a pouch by their belly. These animals have been dated back to the time of the dinosaur, leaving them with the nickname "The living fossil".

They have a grasping tail which has a two-fold purpose: It is used for climbing and also for storing extra fat reserves.

Opossums have thumbs on their hind legs used to grip branches; this combination of extra rear thumbs and grasping tail makes them excellent climbers.

Although non-aggressive, opossums have 50 white teeth and tend to drool and hiss, giving the wrong impression to humans.

They are extremely resistant to disease and snake bites. This animal is less likely than most mammals to carry rabies, but like most wild animals are big carriers of fleas.

Although truly nocturnal, they have been known to be active during the day. Piles of wood leaves or abandoned nests are the opossum's primary den. They are extremely transient and are rarely seen in any particular den for more than two weeks at a time.

The diet of opossums is very broad. They will eat almost anything, including small animals such as rats and mice and small insects such as ants, roaches and grasshoppers. They have been known to help out farm crops by killing slugs, snails and overly ripe fruit.

Although opossums are solitary animals, females provide extended care to their embryonic young. The opossum has the shortest gestation period of any North American mammal, only 12-13 days. At birth the young are about the size of a termite or fly and weigh about 1/200 of an ounce. Females usually only give birth to 6-8 babies but they can have up to 18. The survival rate for the young is low. The mother only has 13 nipples, so if there is a large litter only those who attach to a nipple will survive. After about 60-70 days, the babies open their eyes and venture out of the pouch. They stay with the mother for about 3-4 months, periodically returning to the pouch.

Opossums have a unique ability to escape danger. Playing "possum" is a common maneuver among these animals. Falling to the ground, eyes glazed over, tongue hanging out, the opossum clearly looks dead to predators, causing them to lose interest and move on.

Opossums are very slow animals (in several ways), and as a consequence, up to 9 million a year are killed by automobiles.



Gas Well Emergency in Arlington John Darling

On April 11, the Vantage Energy gas well at the Lake Arlington Baptist Church well site had a big problem. Here are some details from the *Star-Telegram* editions of April 15 and 29:

“Thousands of gallons of salty, pressurized frack water back-flowed out of a well. It was contained within 24 hours.

Much of the frack water was contained on the site and was pumped into either tanks or trucks. However, [Arlington Fire Chief Don] Crowson said thousands of gallons of the salty water also flowed into Rush Creek and Village Creek. The water did not enter Lake Arlington...and officials did not express any health concerns.”

The good news is that Arlington has issued three citations to Vantage Energy for violations related to the emergency. The total fine could be up to \$6000. The bad news: \$6000? Are you kidding?

Vantage CEO and founder Roger J. Biemans made \$643,301 in 2013, so if Vantage gets the maximum fine, Roger could pay it himself, losing less than 1% of that year’s salary. And his company makes even more than Roger, so they probably won’t be driven to bankruptcy by this particular financial setback. What’s the point of such a stupid penalty?

And the officials who expressed no health concerns: That’s human health of course, but what about the health of the creeks? Should we think that Arlington’s crack team of aquatic biologists has examined a statistically valid sample of crawdads, sunfish, and water boatmen and pronounced them well and happy? It isn’t just salt in that frack water; there’s secret stuff, too.

When it comes to fracking, Denton has the right idea. But that won’t matter if the legislature has its way.

Photo of the Month

Photographer: Grace Darling. Location: SW Nature Preserve. Note: Green and chaotic, just the way your editor likes it. Note on favoritism: The judge is related to this month’s winner, but only because she was the sole entrant. Note to members whose surname isn’t Darling: Avoid a repetition of this embarrassment by submitting a wonderful photo next month.



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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, May 6
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7:00 – 8:00 pm

A Conversation with
Mayoral Candidate Jeff Williams