

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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JUNE 2015

www.acctexas.org

June Meeting

Using Data to Green Our Cities

Robert Reed,
North Texas Area Director for
The Trust for Public Land
Wednesday, June 3, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)



From health care to energy, the power of big data and analytics is rapidly changing the way we understand and interact with the world, and land conservation is no exception. The Trust for Public Land uses GIS software and cutting-edge computing to create data-driven tools that help communities prioritize their park and conservation goals.

In this presentation, Robert Kent will discuss how The Trust for Public Land is using data and analytics to help cities across the country make strategically smart land conservation choices, including some in North Texas.

Note: the SW Nature Preserve wouldn't have been saved without help from The Trust for Public Land.

Bring something for the raffle!

Bits & Pieces

Flight Lessons

The other day at the Village Creek drying beds a beautiful mix of anhingas and Mississippi kites was demonstrating how to fly.

The anhingas, heavy, determined, businesslike, clearly just going from Point A to B, seemed a little clunky as the kites pretended to be adolescent helium balloons, weightless, floating and twisting while maybe snatching a dragonfly. You never know what you'll see, and that's a huge reason to keep looking.



Today's Inspirational Moment



The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe, the less taste we shall have for destruction.

Rachel Carson

Blinded by Greed

At Exxon Mobil's annual meeting in Dallas May 27, shareholders overwhelmingly rejected several environmental resolutions designed to curb emissions, invest in renewable energy, and combat climate change. On climate change, CEO Rex Tillerson said that models predicting the effects of global warming aren't very good and that it would be very hard for the world to meet aggressive emission-reduction targets....Exxon will not join European peers in developing a climate strategy, saying the company "is not going to fake it." And he repeated his long-held view that renewable energy is not economical yet, adding, "We choose not to lose money on purpose." Shareholders in the hall broke into applause.

Exxon earned \$32.5 billion last year.

From the President **Danny Kocurek**



Beekeeping Anxiety

Bee hive inspections are always anxiety provoking experiences and often for a good reason. So many things can go wrong and beekeepers have such little

control over most of them. On a recent inspection in my bee yard in Mansfield, I was greeted with hundreds of dead bees littering the ground in front of my hives. Although there are several potential reasons for this, the most likely is poison and the most likely poisons are the infamous neonicotinoids. This bee yard is out in the country, surrounded mostly by empty fields, which is perfect for bees. Unfortunately, there are several farms around, and it is a safe assumption that they are not organic.

The foraging bees bring back pollen and nectar contaminated by the poisons and massive die offs result if you are lucky. If you are unlucky, the entire colony dies.

So it was with great hope that I read the story this week about President Obama's initiative to save the bees. You probably heard some of the good things

he has ordered, and it is definitely a step in the right direction. However, his refusal to address the poisonous elephant in the room leaves a lot to be desired. Although he acknowledged the damage that neonicotinoids are doing, nothing will be done to limit them under his plan.

The bees in general will be a little better off as a result of the President, which is good, but I fear it won't do much for my anxiety. Maybe I will start a line of bee suits impregnated with Xanax. I think it could make me rich.

For more on neonicotinoids, see the March 2015 issue of the *Post Oak*.—Ed.

THE POST OAK

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John Darling, Editor
ldarling@sbcglobal.net

Contributors

John Blair, Julia Burgen,
Grace Darling, Danny Kocurek,
Roy Miliner, Jan Miller,
Wesley Miller, Marylee Thomason

Proofreaders

Marian Hiler, Grace Darling

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conserve Arlington's
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Blackland Prairie Nature Preserve Jan Miller Photos by Wes Miller

**Third Saturday
Stewardship workday
Blackland Prairie
Nature Preserve
4907 New York Avenue**

**Saturday, June 20
8:00 am – 11:00 am**

Check out summer wildflowers and wildlife happenings while participating in restoration and management activities at this rare blackland prairie remnant.

Pick up litter, work on entry trails and manage invasive plants. Photo, birding opportunities and more. Please wear sturdy shoes or boots and long pants; bring gloves and water (refills provided). Though not required, an RSVP is helpful in case of inclement weather.

See the links below for more information and latest updates:

Friends of the Prairie www.theprairie.org

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



**First Monday
Prairie Hike**

**June 1
6:00 pm – 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 free and open to the public.

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

Wildscape Update **Marylee Thomason**

They came from the north and they came from the south, walking in wearing their blue shirts with gold lettering: Northstar School. (There was some confusion about which parking lot to use.) The whole student body, all 60 seventh- through twelfth-graders, had arrived for wildscape duty.

Every year on the day before the last day of school, they have a service project. Brilliant idea, Northstar administration. Until this year, it has been a different place each May. After having a great local outdoors experience, the school is talking to namesake Molly Hollar about making this an annual event. More brilliance!

There was so much youthful energy that at times it was hard to keep everyone busy. "I'm OK without gloves, but do you have any more tools?" Joyce Duty said as she emptied the shed. Six new 'forks and three extra wheelbarrows from the Parks Department were filled with mulch and trundled across



muddy ground to build a dry road under Joe Martinez's supervision.

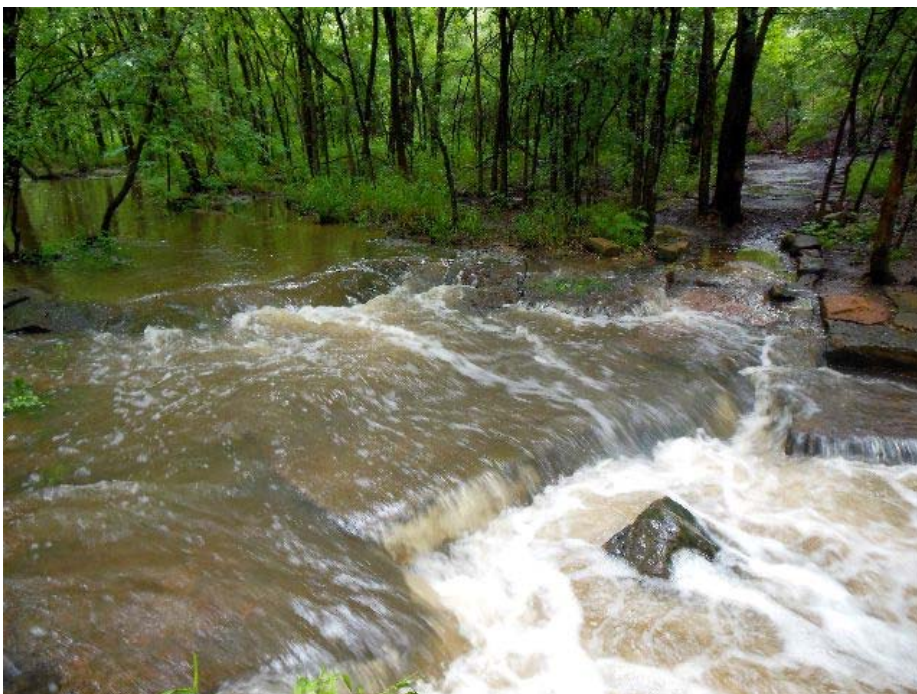
This might sound like drudgery, but to someone who has never guided a wheelbarrow or slung a pitchfork, it was fun.

Josephine Keeney and Jane Oosterhuis kept their group busy planting coralberry and cutting back plants that were overgrown. Diana Kunde and her team tackled the tremendous job of cleaning up the "prairie."

Marylee Thomason snagged four senior women to close the erosion ruts in the trails caused by the recent heavy rains. Peggy Quinn and Molly served as greeters and general supervisors.

Such impressive young people. They worked cooperatively and well. Their summers were planned with fascinating activities, and the seniors had a clear idea of what they wanted to do in life. They remember the new kids who have been on the school tour, too. Kocureks, they know you're coming.

After 2 1/2 hours of fresh air and great exercise, the students left the wildscape having done big projects at amazing speed. "This is an awesome place!" more than one was heard to exclaim. Yes, it is, as are you.



Things are Changing **Roy Miliner**

A lot of things are happening now in our state. This is always the case as the Legislature approaches its last day on June 1 and bills are abandoned or rushed into law. A couple of House bills in particular that should be of interest for people who are concerned about our environment: The bill that bans local bans on oil and gas extraction has already been signed and now takes away local control over important aspects of oil or gas exploration.

Another bill that caught my attention involves the building of desalination facilities off the Gulf of Mexico to supplement future water needs. I did find an article claiming that desalination costs can be lowered, thanks to new scientific processes.

Being born within a couple hundred yards from the Tennessee River (Yes, I was "Born by the River"), growing up in a house with a freshwater spring flowing through the backyard and having rain showers almost guaranteed to happen at least once a week, I never really thought much about the possibility of a good water supply being a problem.

I do want to talk about something new and positive for our town. One really good thing has come out of the last city bond issue. Over time we will replace all of the overhead street lights with LED fixtures. How is this a big deal for Arlington? Since I have had the pleasure of going to a city that started this program three years ago, I have seen the benefits of switching.

Of course you know about the savings that LED provides, and Arlington



should save a lot. Looking at information from other cities, I found projected savings from a 70% reduction in power consumption.

That is the first thing. The second thing is that their lights are computerized so that from a central location they can tell when a light is out and benefit from being able to adjust light levels according to needs. Our current method of street light maintenance requires that whole sections of lights be left on during the day so bad bulbs can be located by city crews. There will be added savings from not burning street lights during daylight hours for maintenance.

Finally, LED lights in other cities point down only. From hilltops you can see where the new lights have been installed versus the areas that have not been done simply by the lack of light beaming upwards from them. That's really good because we get more light where we need it on instead of the wasted glare that the old lights put out.

In short, these lights will save 70% or more in terms of our current power usage and will help greatly in our hopes for Dark Skies.

The current plans call for light replacements starting in the north portion of the city and going south from there. LED lights are already in place on the newly reconstructed part of Lamar Street.

Before I end this rollercoaster of an article I do want to talk briefly about LED light bulbs for home usage.

I have been using LED light bulbs on a limited basis for about 8 years now. I started out slowly because the cost was high and the actual light output was not really that good. I first installed 40 watt light bulbs as perimeter lights, and they probably should have been rated at 25 or 30 watts. Their actual usage was 2.5 watts. Basically, each light bulb was using less than a dollar a year in electric cost. The saving was great but the areas of use were limited, and finding stores that stocked them was even more difficult.

In the last three years that has changed greatly. Now the LED bulbs look like regular incandescent bulbs and have a much higher output of light per watt. Their wattage uses also increased, but are still less than any other type of light bulbs. I bought some 60-watt bulbs at Ace Hardware that were around \$6.95 each. They might have been on sale at that price. Their light output was really bright at 800 lumens and their wattage use was 9.5 watts. These bulbs are stated to last up to 22 years based on usage of 3 hours a night. They are also dimmable.

My goal is to eventually replace all of my interior and exterior light bulbs with LED light bulbs. Right now I have a couple on hand to use as replacement bulbs with several others already in use. They are now being stocked at a large number of stores and should be fairly easy to find if you want to check them out.

Maybe now people who have resisted changing because of the shape of the bulbs and have insisted on using incandescents will have to change their argument. We can hope.



Thanks to Our Last Speaker



We are indebted to mayoral candidate (now mayor) Jeff Williams, who was our speaker at the May meeting. President Danny Kocurek posed a wide variety of environmentally themed questions for a full house, and Jeff responded with considerable knowledge, occasionally deferring to us when a question went beyond his areas of knowledge.

We were glad to learn that Jeff had consulted with the city of Southlake on its latest outdoor lighting ordinance (see below) and was conversant with the Dark Skies initiative. *Photo: Mayor Williams, left, with ACC President Danny Kocurek.*

Shedding Light on a Question Grace Darling

"As mayor of Arlington, would you support a Dark Skies initiative?," asked ACC president Dan Kocurek at a recent meeting of the members.

"Sure; I'm a big proponent of discreet night-time lights in our neighborhoods and streets," said then-candidate and now newly-minted mayor, Jeff Williams. "In fact, I helped the City of Southlake write its lighting ordinance to do just that."

Well, we checked, and here is the link below. Notice in particular the Shielding paragraph on page 7, which codifies the light dispersal to a narrow cone *downward* from the lamp and shows that Mayor Williams was not trying to obscure the issue (sorry) Let's campaign for a similar ordinance in Arlington with Southlake's wording lighting the way! (double sorry).

<http://www.cityofsouthlake.com/documentcenter/view/1240>

JUNE NIGHT

On a June night, very late,
I'm sitting on the lawn alone,
Staring at the stars, the oaks,
Hoping for owls.

Next door the dog growls low,
Not sure if I'm a stranger
Or the man who feeds him treats;
Down the block a toad croaks.

The toad hopes for a mate,
The dog for milk bones;
But the stars are like the oaks,
No hopes and no regrets;

And owls might be
Compared to stars —
Fierce, intense,
Gone by dawn.

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Arlington's oldest event, the 4th of July parade, will celebrate its 50th anniversary Saturday, July 4. The golden anniversary parade is expected to attract 150 entrants who will march through downtown Arlington and the UTA College Park area. The 2015 parade is dedicated to the people of Arlington.

For more information, go to its Web site at Arlington4th.org, call 817-330-9USA or email info@arlington4th.org. You can also follow it on Twitter at [Arl4thparade](https://twitter.com/Arl4thparade) or on Instagram at [arlington_july4th_parade](https://www.instagram.com/arlington_july4th_parade). Its Facebook page is at [Arlington 4th of July Parade](https://www.facebook.com/Arlington4thofJulyParade).

Two new activities will highlight the parade. The First Ruby Odom Patriotic Hat Contest, named for former Arlington first lady Ruby Odom, wife of mayor Elzie Odom, who is known for her high style, particularly when it comes to large, beautiful hats, is open to entrants and spectators.

Also new this year is the association's selection of Arlington Charities as the non-profit for which it will collect canned goods along the route. If the thousands who come to the parade bring just one can of food, we can help feed so many in our community.



Birds and Bugs Around Arlington Grace Darling

Silver Lining for Some

On a recent birding trip to the Village Creek Drying (ha!) Beds, a green heron was busily hunting in the washed out entrance road, so intent on his prey that we were able to creep closer and closer without spooking this normally secretive bird. Was he spearing fish? Crawdads? Aquatic insects? Finally a passing car drove the heron to the sidelines and we could see the liquid buffet line: tadpoles. Granted that many amphibians produce them in the thousands to guard against the likelihood that most of their young will be eaten, but this one bird by himself (yes, it's a he, don't ask me how I know this) must have consumed several dozens in the few minutes we watched. A whole generation of frogs and toads went into the heron's belly instead of growing up strong and slimy/warty to eat mosquitoes and other noxious pests. The editor reminds me that such is nature, the struggle between those destined to eat or be eaten, and soon the ecological balance will be restored. Meanwhile, bon appetit.

Drowning (in) Mosquitoes

Speaking of mossies, as Australians call them: There's been so much rain so often that you no sooner have dumped out the plant saucers and birdbaths than the skies open up again. Your ornamental pond has overflowed — those colorful dots floating down the driveway used to be your goldfish. The gutters are clogged, rain barrels filled weeks ago, and the backyard is a swamp. Standing water is everywhere and you cannot keep pace with the precipitation; almost certainly you will breed mosquitoes, however unwillingly. What's a person to do?

First, a brief refresher on mosquito biology. Adult male mosquitoes do not bite. They live one or two weeks and



feed on nectar and plant juices. Female mosquitoes are blood feeders and may live for more than a month. They generally require a blood meal before laying eggs. All mosquitoes pass through four life stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. The number of days from egg to adult varies with species and temperature, but under ideal conditions, some mosquitoes can complete their cycle in less than a week. Eggs may be laid on the surface of water, at the base of vegetation in low-lying areas that flood periodically, or above the water line in containers or tree holes. These eggs will hatch when inundated, and the immature stages depend on water to complete their development.

Mosquito larvae are called *wrigglers*. They can be seen when they come to the surface of the water to breathe, which they do through a tube in their rear end. The larvae feed on microorganisms in the water and grow rapidly in warm weather. Full-grown larvae become pupae, often called *tumblers*, which transform into adults after a few days.

When you cannot eliminate their breeding sites, the nuclear option is your only hope for controlling mosquitoes: You must kill their young. Larvicides containing either *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti), sold as mosquito dunks, or methoprene, trade name PreStrike and sold as granules in shaker bottles, can be applied to likely sources of breeding mosquitoes. Bti is lethal only to mosquito wrigglers and the larvae of some aquatic gnats and black flies. Methoprene is an insect hormone regulator that disrupts development and prevents the emergence of adult mosquitoes; only a few granules of PreStrike are needed to do the job. Neither Bti nor methoprene is harmful to fish, waterfowl, pets, or humans when used according to label directions.



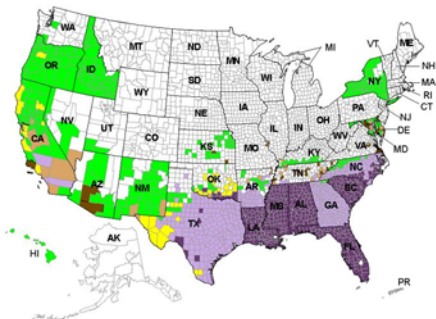
About Those Pesky Fire Ants Grace Darling

(Dedicated to Ann Mayo on completion of the Ph.D. requirements at UTA with *The Spatial Ecology of the Comanche Harvester Ant* - Congratulations, Dr. Ant!)

Zoogeography

The red imported fire ant (RIFA), *Solenopsis invicta*, is a Brazilian native that was accidentally introduced into this country in the ballast of ships docking in Mobile, Alabama, in the 1930s. Since that time, absent their natural enemies that kept them in check in Brazil, fire ant populations have spread rapidly along the southern states and halfway up the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Here in Texas, fire ants range freely over most of the state except in extreme West Texas and the Panhandle, where long, cold winters and insufficient soil moisture keep them away.



Economic and Ecologic Costs

Fire ants are not just a nuisance, they are a national security threat under intense (and expensive) scrutiny by multiple government agencies and educational institutions in the United States and abroad. According to extension.org, imported fire ants

- cause **\$6.7 billion** in annual losses in the U.S. alone
- their painful stings can kill human beings, their pets, and small wildlife, at **large social, medical, and veterinary costs**
- the large mounds they build dot the landscape (average 300 mounds per



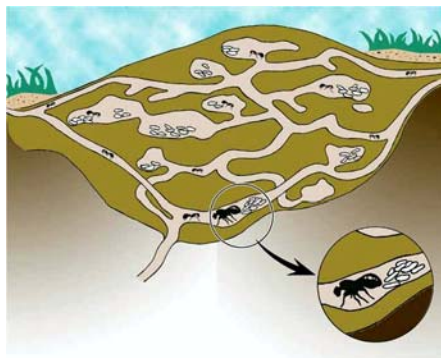
acre in Texas) and can **damage mowers and combines**

- the ants' affinity for electrical equipment can **cause short circuits** when they interfere with switching mechanisms, chew on insulation, and fill utility boxes with soil for nesting
- are a source of ongoing **expense to turfgrass managers**

In addition to the above, red imported fire ants are blamed for the elimination of horned lizards from East and Central Texas, directly and indirectly, by both eating the lizard eggs and preying on harvester ants, the lizards' main diet.

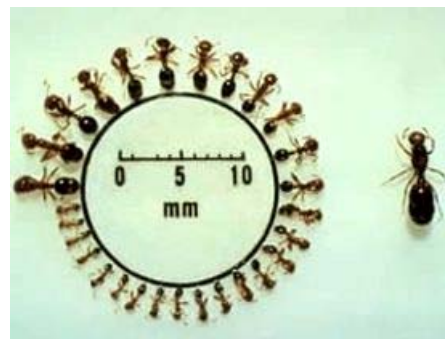
Biology (Source: growing-small-farms.ces.ncsu.edu/)

New colonies of fire ants are formed when a mated queen burrows into the ground and lays eggs. Once the first generation of workers emerges, they begin foraging above ground to feed the queen and the developing brood. Within 30 days, larger workers have emerged and the colony begins to



Eggs are laid by the queen and carried to brood chambers by workers.

grow. Within six months, several thousand workers can occupy the colony and a mound is readily visible. The polymorphic nature of the workers is striking: the largest workers can be up to 10X the size of the smallest workers. The queen can live up to seven years and produces an average of 1,600 eggs per day throughout her life. At maturity, a typical fire ant colony consists of over 250,000 ants. Multiple-queen (polygyne) fire ant colonies are being seen with increasing frequency in parts of the South. These mounds are huge and have ant densities 10X greater than monogyne colonies.



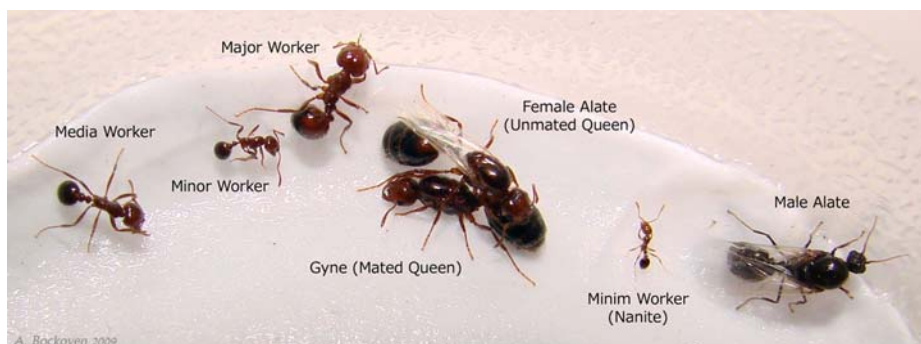
Though omnivorous, fire ants often coexist peacefully with plants while feeding on seeds, seedlings, buds, and developing fruit. But not so with other animals: fire ants can have a devastating impact on native populations of ground-nesting insects, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Large reductions have been documented among populations of field mice, egg-laying snakes, turtles, and other vertebrates when fire ants become established within an area.

Organic Control

The National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service reports that "the aggressive use of insecticides against the imported fire ant has only served to

continued on page 9

Fire Ants continued from page 8

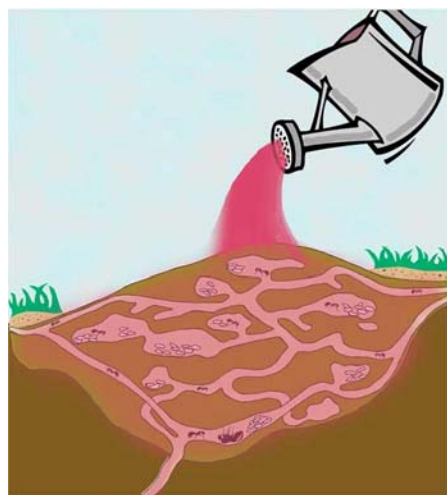


wipe out competing and predatory native ant species and increase the competitive dominance of the imported species by killing off its competition." With that in mind, the aims of any fire ant control strategy should be to (1) kill not only the worker ants but also the queen(s), and (2) minimize effects on native ant populations.

Despite the many home remedies promulgated for organic fire ant control — from Malt-o-Meal to diatomaceous earth by way of boric acid — nothing is as effective or satisfies these objectives as well as the methods recommended below:

Boiling water is most effective when most of the ants are close to the mound surface, as on a cool morning or after a rain. It takes about 3 gallons applied directly to the mound and you must be very careful to avoid scalding

burns. The splashed water will kill all beneficial organisms in the soil as well as any plants it comes in contact with, but is not guaranteed to destroy the queen, which may be several feet below ground.



Use enough drench to thoroughly soak the mound.

Mound drenches of d-limonene or spinosad have little effect on non-target insects and are approved for home use by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI). Spinosad is a natural metabolite of a soil microorganism that affects the ant nervous system and can be applied near most vegetable crops for fire ant control. Four products can be readily purchased in most garden centers: Safer Brand Fire Ant Killer, which contains d-limonene as the active ingredient; and Entrust, Monterey Gar-



den Insect Spray, and Greenlight Fire Ant Control with Conserve, which are OMRI-approved spinosad formulations. Mound drenches are quite effective and relatively quick-killing, but tend to be very expensive.

Spinosad is also the active ingredient in granular fire ant **baits** such as Ferti-lome Come and Get It! Fire Ant Bait and Conserve Fire Ant Bait. The bait granules (corn grit) are impregnated with soybean oil to make them attractive to the ants, which take the bait back to the mound and feed it to the queen and the rest of the colony. The best time to scatter bait is in the early evening. Mound applications are recommended because they will have the least impact on foraging native ants; apply over the mound and for about two feet around. Do not use when the ground is wet.



Southwest Nature Preserve Jan Miller

Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve monthly meeting

Tuesday, June 16

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

8:00 am – 11:00 am (June—Aug)
unless otherwise noted

6/7 Jim Varnum classes at Cedar
Ridge Preserve, 2-4 pm
“How to Lead a Public Nature
Walk” and “How to Sort Out
Wildflower Parts”

6/11 2nd Thursdays, 8 -11 am

6/27 4th Saturdays, 8 - 11 am

7/11 Bird ID Class and Survey (see
www.swnp.org for details and
to RSVP)

Projects focus on habitat restoration and
trail management. Current activities
may include restoration seeding or

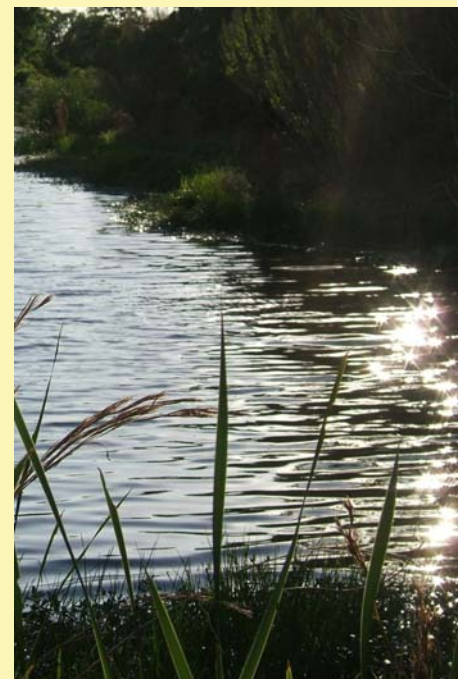
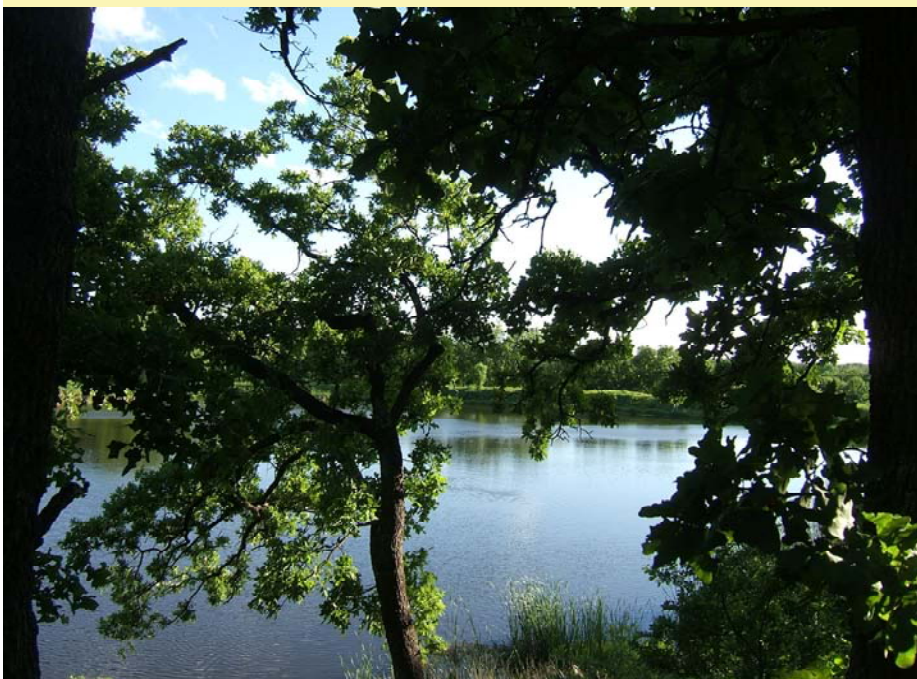
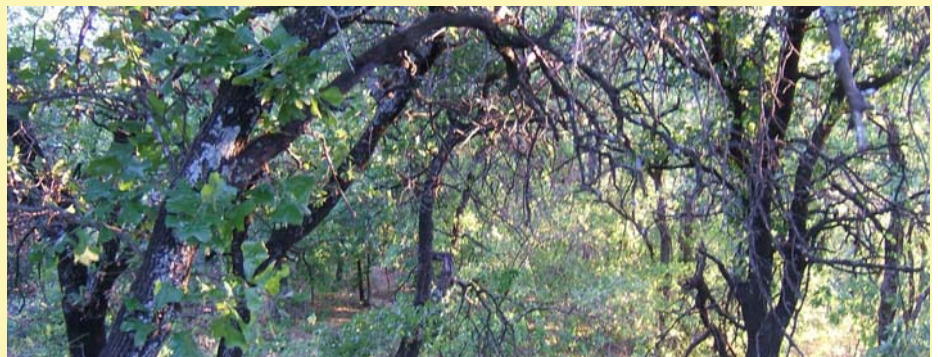
planting, trash/debris pickup, invasive
exotic plant removal, etc. Please wear
sturdy shoes or boots and long pants.
For more information and latest
updates, see links below.

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In Defense of Spiders Marylee Thomason



Spider sat obediently on the white paper placed on the desk by his defense attorney. “Don’t move.” Next to him Clarence Darrow sat sipping from a glass of water. The glass was full. By the time Darrow made the closing arguments, the glass would be empty and Spider’s life would hang by a thread.

Darrow is renowned for his eloquent oratory. Would it be enough to save Spider from the shoe?

Across the aisle sat Mrs. Darrow, wife of Clarence Darrow and prosecutor in the trial of Spider.

All rise as the judge enters the courtroom and seats himself behind the bench.

“Mrs. Darrow, will you please commence with opening arguments?”

“Your Honor, Spider, like all spiders, is despicable vermin. He is a flesh-eating predator who feeds by piercing the body of his prey, which too often is human. He bites!

“Spider bites can cause illness. How can anyone tell which spider sickens and which does not? Mothers fear that their infants will be accosted as they crawl upon the floor. Grown men shudder at the sight of spiders loitering in their webs. Will the creature choose that

very moment to drop down on a hat or bare head and spear another innocent victim?

“Even the noxious mosquito buzzes loudly enough to advertise its intent. Not so, spiders. They creep silently and inhabit every undusted corner, putting up wispy webs that embarrass the housekeeper.

“When one least expects it, spiders will scuttle from the shadows in the most alarming manner. They look like tiny monsters with their big eyes and eight legs. The thought that a spider might run up under clothing is horrifying. They are dangerous and devious and must be stamped out at every opportunity.

“I rest my case.”



“Mr. Darrow, what say you in defense of Spider?”

“Your Honor, if it please the court (for there is no pleasing Mrs. Darrow, I assure you of that), spiders are found worldwide and live in many habitats, including homes. Despite their reputation as fearsome, they dine primarily on insects. What other guest is quiet, unassuming and actually benefits humans by keeping insect populations under control? The prosecutor is much more likely to be bitten by a mosquito, which is known to carry disease, than by a spider, which has never transmitted an infirmity to a human.

“The spider can no more control its

method of movement than can we, nor its appearance. And those ‘embarrassing’ webs are the structure for catching dinner. Many spiders eat yesterday’s web and create a new one each day. Any thoughtful housekeeper would applaud such diligence.



“Although most spiders have venom, only approximately 30 species are dangerous, but rarely fatal, to humans. Of these, two live in the United States and can cause a reaction that requires medical attention. Both are easily identified. The black widow wears a red hourglass on the abdomen. The brown recluse displays the violin tattoo. Such markings make those species easy to see and avoid.

“Indeed, spiders do not attack and only bite when molested. In the past five years not a single man, woman or child has died from a spider bite in Texas. Surely that fact demonstrates the lack of threat from spiders to humans.

“Your Honor, It is said that the accused should receive a swift and straightforward trial; that proceedings should not be hindered by delay; that the uncertainties of punishment furnish the possibility of escape and therefore burden the populace with the fear that a ‘criminal’ might soon be among them. I can see no basis in logic or experience for this suggestion.

“The immediate execution of any spider rids the house of that one individual. Even if other spiders witness his



continued on page 12

Spiders continued from page 11

demise, they do not learn from his misfortune. Like all living creatures gifted with specific functions, the spider will continue to carry out his mission, capturing and eating copious quantities of insects. Rather than succumb to prejudice, it is better that we be kindly and helpful toward our fellow passengers who are clinging to the same speck of dirt we call Earth.

“Could not the spider be encouraged to mount a slip of paper and be covered with an empty glass? Thus imprisoned, he can be safely carried to the door or window and set free. No harm will come to the kindly person who carries him, nor to the prisoner within the glass. Another life saved. Can we not contain our fears in the face of facts and grant all spiders asylum in our presence?”

As he spoke, Darrow placed his now empty water glass over the top of Spider, who sat quietly on the paper. The famous defense attorney carried the paper and glass to the window as if to demonstrate the process of ridding a spider from the home in his recommended fashion.

“The defense rests, Your Honor. Mrs. Darrow, are you ready to go home?”

“Yes, Mr. Darrow, I am.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Darrow,” interrupted the judge, “you may be ready to retire, but this court has yet to make a decision. There are times when my duties incline toward that of moderator rather than jurist. In such cases, being heard is more important than winning.

“With a clever trick, Mr. Darrow has allowed the accused to escape. That could be construed as a win. Mrs. Darrow does not appear to be aggrieved, however, perhaps because the dreaded defendant has passed on in a way that is satisfying.

“I believe justice has been served. This case is closed. Court is adjourned.”

Flagrant oratorical liberties were taken with Clarence Darrow’s original words in the writing of this transcript.



Photo of the Month

Photographer: It’s just too embarrassing. Enter next month or come to grips with eternal obscurity.



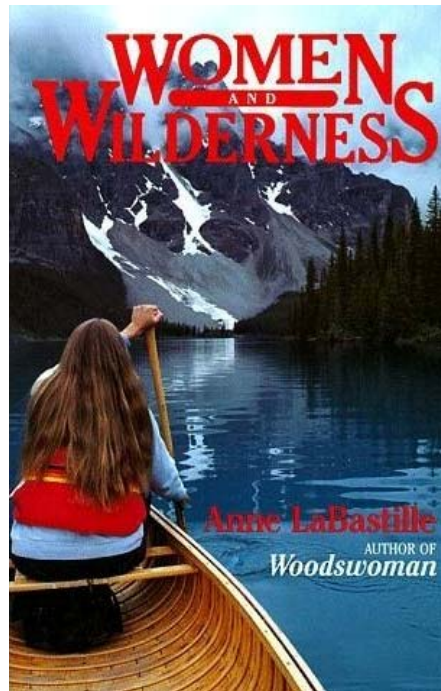
Books: *Women and Wilderness* by Anne LaBastille Julia Burgen

Sierra Club Books, 1980, hard cover
My copy: Softcover, 1984, includes an afterword, extensive bibliography and index

My evenings usually end with reading a chapter or two of some book. *Women and Wilderness* has been my evening companion this spring. Soon I will re-read John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierras* as I do most summers, starting on Jun 3 with Chapter 1, "Through the Foothills with a Flock of Sheep."

With the exception of Isabella Bird's *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, I could not remember any others I had read that were written by and/or about women. When I found LaBastille's book, I latched on to it and have been pleased to read about so many fantastic women involved in our history.

Granted, a few I knew about: Margaret Murie, who followed her biologist husband to his fame in Alaska and later Wyoming; and Margaret Owings, who gave her all for the Monterey Peninsula and later served on the board of the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation.



In *Women and Wilderness*, the five chapters of Part 1 ("Finding the Way") deal with the reasons women early in our history were not keen on wilderness living.

Then the author proceeds to describe a few who lived in wild places in the 1800s through case studies of

pioneers and homesteaders, gold rush women, army wives, teachers, and Native American women who made a difference. She ends the section with those who were part of the beginning of changes that involved achieving professional status.

Chapters on case studies of frontier women and frontier women in fiction are included.

Several are referred to as the "wildest women" such as Calamity Jane, "rough yet literate American 'free spirit'" and Isabella Bird, "cultivated and genteel English world traveler."

In Part Two (The Wilderness Women), LaBastille details the lives of 15 women, referred to as "real professional wilderness women" who achieved a certain cachet, broadly considered natural scientists. In some cases wilderness is widely defined in terms of careers that led to design work for the 1980 American Olympic Games, or "Outdoor Journalism in the Urban Jungle."

I have really enjoyed this book and recommend it, even for the guys who sometimes think they don't understand us women.

Star Slime

This is backyard exotica at its best: *Nostoc commune* or prairie lettuce (or any one of dozens of names worldwide) is an ancient cyanobacterium (formerly blue-green alga) that can do just about anything. In dry times it looks blackish and crunchy (*below left*), but after wetting it resurjects itself to become green and slimy (*below center*). This creature fixes atmospheric nitrogen, making it available to plants in spots where none might otherwise be present.

Prairie lettuce lives in polar regions, in spaces between desert rocks, and even around Arlington. With all the recent rain, look for the green, slimy version and remember to be impressed.



Little Camera on the Prairie Grace Darling

If you haven't had the pleasure of taking one of Jeff Quayle's prairie hikes lately, don't wait any longer: The spring rains have elicited blooms from even the rarest of specimens in our region, and the spectacle is truly awe-inspiring.

Accompanied by a number of native plant enthusiasts who seem equally generous in sharing their botanical knowledge, Jeff will patiently — and repeatedly — identify the lush vegetation callously being trampled for those of us who can't remember plant names from one week to the next (sorry, but this is where I play the age card to alibi my brain). Photography is encouraged but does not begin to do justice to the experience.

Below is a tiny sampling from a recent outing at Stella Rowan Prairie in Fort Worth. A future hike will take place at the Fort Worth Nature Center, a Grasses Walk on June 21. For a complete calendar listing, Google fortworthnpat.wordpress.com/calendar.



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Don't Forget!

Wednesday, June 3
Fielder Museum
7:00 – 8:00 pm

Robert Kent
Using Data to Green Our Cities